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The European Union and South Yemen: Between Thorny History and Available Opportunities

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Summary

The European relationships with the Southern state (the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen), and later with the Southern issue, have witnessed many phases and dilemmas. The tense and cautious relationships cast its shadow during the Cold War, as each party adopted a different approach. Later, during the transitional period following the Unity, the relationships passed through certain circumstances. After the 1994 War, many developments have occurred in the Yemeni file that pushed the European group to increase the degree of interest as it presented a comprehensive strategy that reflected its vision and the possible partnership opportunities. There have been a lot of developments in recent years including the outbreak of the peaceful movement in South, going through the events of 2011 and the entailing transitional period before the 2015 War which has produced highly contrasting positions. During the modern era, South has witnessed horrible fluctuations and probably it is one of few regions in the world that underwent all of such vicissitudes in less than half a century, rendering dealing with it a very complicated task. This paper aims at reviewing the international European organization's visions and strategy towards Yemen, as well as positions and roles it has played throughout the past years, with special focus on its vision to the Southern Issue by using the Descriptive Analysis approach.

The nature and phases of the EU'S, relationships with Yemen

some references¹ indicate that the relationship between the EU and Yemen passed by several stages, the first of which began before the Unity, as an official agreement for development cooperation was signed in 1984 between the European Community and the Yemen Arab Republic. According to it, several projects were implemented, while the cooperation between the European Community and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was limited to supporting one project. In 1995, the Agreement was extended to include all the Yemeni territories. Two years later, the agreement was developed to include many domains such as health, fisheries, and rural development. In 2003, a political dialogue initiative between the EU and the Yemeni government was launched and focused on the ways to back and develop the democratic process,

¹ Durac, 2010, p. 655.

human rights and anti-terrorism cooperation. Accordingly, an EU's official office was established in Yemen. It was clear that Yemen entered a new phase of interest after the 11th of September attacks in the wake of some terrorism attacks on the Yemeni coasts against American and other foreign ships.²

The third stage is considered the most important in the history of the relationship between the EU and Yemen, after taking into effect the document prepared by the European Commission as a strategic paper that covered the period between 2007-2013, in cooperation with the Yemeni Government and the international community. The document included a comprehensive analysis of the Yemeni issue in the political, economic and social domains, as well as the most haunting issues and problems, in addition to solutions and support proposals for helping Yemen to achieve "the Millennium development goals" set by the UN which selected Yemen as one of eight pilot countries.

The strategy focused on two main goals: rational (good) governance and combating poverty. As for the first, it was agreed on the following three points to be the focus of attention: backing the democratic transformation by strengthening the democratic institutions in Yemen, enhancing the human rights and the civil society as well as supporting the Yemeni Government's reforms in judiciary, civil administration and decentralization. As for combating poverty, there was a focus on enhancing the private sector development through backing sustainable development within agriculture, fisheries sectors, besides the reforms which aim at improving the organizational frame of investments, business and commerce which contribute in developing the human capital by supporting the reproductive health policies and better provide for the basic services.³

As a fragile state which faces complicated problems, the Paper proposed a wider framework to implement the "strategic partnership" between Yemen and the EU. This included continuing the political dialogue between the EU and Yemen, backing the Yemeni efforts for making the necessary political and economic reforms, facilitating Yemen's migration in the regional and international

² Bonnefoy, 2020, p. 71.

³ European Commission, 2007, p. 7.

community, enhancing the democratic process and respecting human rights in Yemen.⁴ For such a purpose, periodical quarterly meetings were held in Sana'a between the Yemeni Government and the EU'S heads of missions to follow up the pledged commitments, report about any developments and discuss the mechanisms to carry out the agreed upon procedures.

During that period, some financial subsidies were provided to the Yemeni government under the items of limiting poverty, encouraging good governance, sustainable development and developing human resources as well as implementing funded cooperative human rights programs.⁵

Although the preparators of the Paper admitted the challenges and the big obstacles that Yemen has witnessed such as the spread of poverty, the high unemployment rate, the poor level of healthy and education services, the weak public services, maladministration, the lack of internal security, porous borders, the government's inability to control land, internal conflicts, terrorism groups danger, the limited implementation of political and economic reforms, the decrease of oil and transfers revenue.. Etc, to the extent of expressing pessimism towards achieving the Millennium development goals in 2015 according to the UN plan, but on the other hand, it promoted for some promising indicators such as: the Yemeni Government's apparent commitment by democracy, economic liberalization, political and economic reforms, improvements at the social and economic level, the existence of relative free journalism, steady growth for the civil society organizations and achieving a unique developments in the fields of civil freedom and democracy in the region to the extent of claiming that the Yemeni Government is moving ahead in implementing the reform program for building a modern viable state.⁶

Yemen was looked upon as being the country with the most promise of major political reforms in the Arabian Peninsula, even at the level of the Middle East and North Africa. By regional standards, It is a state which enjoys "developed" democratic experience and based upon a multi-partisan regime which is being

⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵ Durac, 2007, pp. 656-658; European Commission, Preparation of the Multiannual Indicative Programme 2011-2013.

⁶ European Commission, 2007, p. 6, 7, 10 & 13; European Commission, Preparation of the Multiannual Indicative Programme 2011-2013.

directly elected by citizens.⁷ Those perceptions that dominated the EU's decision maker matched with principles and normative values that control the EU'S relationship with the states, and adjust the cooperation policies with them such as: respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms, peace, democracy, good governance, gender equality, rule of law, solidarity, justice, active pluralism...etc.

Those initial perceptions led it to consider Yemen an acceptable pattern with which it can engage in a strategic partnership, regardless the contradictions between those perceptions and the nature of reality, the reality of the political regime and its emerging democracy, the nature of the ruling Kleptocracy elite which marginalized the real organizations that have the ability to make reforms in favor of Shadow institutions & Organisations working to consolidate its dominance over the public sphere, with both the ruling and opposition sides. Apart from the exceptional establishment period between 1990-1993, the ruling regime developed a strategy based upon emptying "the emergent democracy" from within, in a way that maintain an amount of despotism allowing it to keep authority and serve the power inheritance project while preserving the foreign aids conditional with enhancing democratic practices. ⁸It constituted an emergent pattern of a state of duplicity between the deep tyranny infrastructure and the "democratic festivals".

While the regime allowed holding elections that it guaranteed winning them in advance, it never showed toleration towards the peaceful demonstrators belonging to the Southern Hirak whom they were shot by its bodies in broad daylight although those protests were initially launched against the backdrop of demands of equality and some rights due to blatant acts of injustice caused by the 1994 repercussions. Regarding the economic development, it was a result of emergent factors, not a reflection to any reform procedures. In the end, the most tragic paradox is that after all those years, and while the state was about entering the worst humanitarian crisis, a report by the UN Security Council Panel

⁷ Durac, 2010, p. 648; European Commission, 2007, p. 11.

⁸ For more on this early debate, see Burrowes, 1998; Schwedler, 2002; Youngs, 2004; Phillips, 2007; Hamzawy, 2009.

of Experts, after investigations, concluded that the wealth of one of the regime's leaders may reach \$60 billion.⁹

While analyzing the Strategic Paper about Yemen, Durac previously noticed the lack of clarity and coherence in the EU'S policies towards Yemen, in addition to the “administration complexities” which prevent its improvement. He concluded that «Indeed, the limited level of its financial support, the reluctance to disturb the status quo, and the acknowledgment of the need for ‘partnership’ with an intrinsically undemocratic regime together reveal the unsurprising triumph of pragmatism over normativity».¹⁰

The youth Uprising in 2011 produced a transitional phase which forced Saleh Regime to bow to it in the wake of targetting, murdering and injuring its top icons. This thorny track that enjoyed wide international support was the only exception in the region. The European situation was at the same status of ambiguity, confusion and hesitance when the “Arab Spring Outbursts” swept some Arab states. As for Yemen, entering a quick transitional stage amid those circumstances increased the complexity of the situation. It was agreed to transfer power through voting on one candidate, and to form a “consensus Government” between the General People's Congress Party and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) in light of the Gulf Initiative. The then EU's Ambassador said in a press interview that the transitional phase is “exceptional and historic opportunity” adding that the acclamation of the only presidential nominee is “historic election” describing the EU in partnership with the International Community as “guardians of the Gulf Initiative”.¹¹

Some argue that the EU's confidence and enthusiasm towards the transitional phase as well as participating, sponsoring, supervising, supporting many projects, initiatives and field activities, along with promising Yemenis that the road became paved to move to “modern state that respects the people's democratic rights conceals beneath many signs such as: confusing (and may be contradicting) feelings in the European organization, and a feverish competition

⁹ UN Security Council, 20 February 2015, p. 44.

¹⁰ Durac, 2007, p. 661.

¹¹ Interview with Bettina Muscheidt, 2014, November 14.

between its member states that perplexed its role, and reduced its influence in favour of the first grade actors; the Gulf states, the US and the UK.¹²

Before coming the pages of the “awaited constitution” together, and completing their words which were like catching hot coal of the modern state, the quarrels among the dialogue\dispute parties in Sana’a reached its peak. The National Dialogue Conference didn’t make a breakthrough nor it reduced the tension or opened the awaited new stage, in spite of the extraordinary international efforts to make the Yemeni pattern an exception in the region. It was clear that all “under the table maneuvers” were consumed. The snake dance, a Yemeni political term, had to completely change its rhyme and moves, leading to a situation in which the war was around the corner.

After 2015, The EU- as an organization- has had the most consistent position in its vision of the political track as the only solution to the Yemeni crisis. This was clearly reflected in its advanced decisions against the export of arms to the parties to the conflict. However, it was not able to oblige this vision and these decisions on its member states to impact their relations with the disputing parties. The EU failed to transform its vision about the solution into an executable project to block the way for regional actors and their allies on the ground from turning the war into a possible long-term investment.

In his paper about the EU’s role in the Yemen crisis, in which he highlighted the post-2015 War, Bonnefoy¹³ pointed to other reasons that obstructed the EU from playing a more active role to reduce the bleeding of this open conflict, top of which are:

- Lack of proper information and understanding because of negligence due to the alleged complexity of the situation in Yemen.
- Randomness in the EU and its member states' policies and initiatives, and the contradiction in motives and interests.
- The decision makers in the European organization don’t look at Yemen as a vital interest.

The EU and the Southern Issue

It can be said that the prevailing perception of the European decision maker about the “Southern issue” has been mingled with a lot of ambiguities, and has

¹² Bonnefoy, 2020, p. 71.

¹³ Ibid., 2020, p. 71 & p. 79.

passed through thorny stations and bumpy roads, being affected by the compass of different international conflicts. To make a clearer understanding of the picture, we have to go back to an early stage.

In the pre-Unity era, the relationship with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen "PDRY", the only state that adopted a Marxist attitude, was governed by the fluctuated tracks of the cold war.¹⁴

As we mentioned earlier, the European Commission didn't support South Yemen apart from an only project in 1982. As for the Western European states which constituted the EU's hard base from its very beginning, Halliday indicated that its relationship with the Marxist states has witnessed a lot of reservations.¹⁵ Although the ruling political system was issuing a foreign discourse clearly directed against Western countries, it discovered that there is a kind of contradiction in imperialism between the US and Europe, or varying degrees of imperialism, which enables the third world countries to benefit from these differences. To avoid adopting the suicide North Korean approach, and amid the paucity of the foreign aids, 50% of the volume of foreign trade exchange were related to those states,

For the Southern leaders, this was useful due to various reasons.¹⁶ It is worth mentioning that this perception about the shape of the relationship with the West was not steady along the line, and may be transformed to an accusation that deserved the maximum penalty. This was one of the charges brought against Ali Nasser Mohammed after ousting him from power.¹⁷ France was the only exception that engaged in a good relationship with South Yemen, and the only state that received the most prominent Southern official who visited Western Europe since Independence in 1967. Moreover, France along with Sweden delivered some aid to South. In contrast, other states believed that establishing relationships with PDRY is of little interest.¹⁸ There is no doubt that the attempt to export revolution to the neighbouring states, as well as embracing the terrorist "Carlos Group"¹⁹ had a lot of impact towards attempts

¹⁴ Katz, 1995, pp.86-87.

¹⁵ Halliday, 1990, p. 38.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁸ The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the South, Paris in 1976, met with French President Giscard d'Estaing, and they agreed to maintain security, stability and peace (Halliday, 1990, p. 75)

¹⁹ Clark, 2010, pp. 120-121.

to open communication windows with the Western states and the establishment of natural diplomatic relationships.²⁰

When the Yemeni Unity kicked off in 1990, the current form of the EU wasn't yet established. The writer of this paper has not found any reference that indicates the position of the European Community (a European joint framework prior to the EU) towards the Yemeni Unity. However, according to Katz,²¹ the Western European states' position was in tandem with the American one in backing the Unity between the Northern and Southern states. Later, they expressed their strong enthusiasm and support of the political regime and the new tendencies announced by the fledgling country: A pluralistic parliamentary system in which the House of Representatives is directly elected, a constitution that guarantees the right to vote and run for office for all adult citizens, legal equality for all citizens, the independence of the judiciary, the right to freedom of expression, knowledge and access to information, and other great promises that made it a unique model in the history of The entire Arabian Peninsula.²² Between 1990-93, the political life- in spite of assassinations, liquidations, and the fierce competition among the political and ideological²³ agenda- has witnessed a boom and qualitative activities, as the number of community organizations and feminist movements remarkably increased as well as their influence. Moreover, the media outlets increased and witnessed its brightest days in expressing all different points of view and criticisms against the ruling elite with full freedom.²⁴ In spite of some violations that accompanied this, the 1993 Elections came as a bright coronation for this interesting and simultaneously rough marathon. The Economist described it as "the most democratic elections in the Arab World".²⁵

Regardless to the real reasons behind painting this bright picture of such a snap pluralistic democratic celebration which was looked upon as a "strategic option" to prevent each party's hegemony against the other, according to Julian Schwedler and Sarah Phillips by using the same old elites and structures of the two pre-Unity regimes.²⁶ Unfortunately, this democratic celebration didn't last

²⁰ Although in this period, North Yemen was one of the most important epicenters for moving Mujahideen to Afghanistan, but the terminology and descriptions were completely different in that period due to the calculations of the Cold War.

²¹ Katz, 1995, pp. 86 – 87.

²² Phillips, 2007, p. 5.

²³ In his articles about "the Post-War Quarrels, Hudson revealed the other side of the picture, or what was happening in the backstage of politics. (Hudson, 1995)

²⁴ For an in-depth analysis of the background on this period, see Carapico, 1998, pp. 140 - 169.

²⁵ Katz, 1995, P. 87.

²⁶ Schwedler, 2002, p. 48; Phillips, 2007, p. 4, Carapico, 1998, p. 140-145.

for a long time, as the 1994 War was looming amid regional and international complicated and confusing circumstances.

The positions of these European policies towards this war had a lot of similarity with the American attitude including backing the efforts to stop war through the initiative adopted by the Gulf States. However, those positions were fully against separation, so they refused to provide any support to South Yemen during that period, and turned a blind eye towards cease-fire violations by the Northern forces. The irony here is that this position towards the disputing parties intersected with the Iraqi one although fighting against each other during the second Gulf crisis just four years earlier.²⁷

After the end of the 1994 War, there was a dubious silence towards what happened in Yemen and towards all humanitarian violations and the destruction of the fundamental needs for the majority of the Southern people. Moreover, no one talked about the international decisions issued during the war.²⁸

The democracy and the war: Incomplete explanations

The analysis and the revision of many studies and papers written about this stage are useful to understand the reasons that led to belittling what happened in South, and that's definitely besides the main reason: the reluctance of backing any " separatist movement" even if it was much bigger than those other movements across the world.

The Yemeni Unity occurred during the period in which the US became the world's only "policeman". As Yemen was one of the hot confrontation plazas between the two camps, there was no ruling out that the perceptions about South Yemen were fed on the deposits of the Cold War. To make liberalism prevail in the world, the Communist pockets had to be eliminated. On the other hand, early attempts had emerged to adjust the Yemeni pattern to the American model, considering the latter as the most perfect, final and dominating political regime which must be the source of inspiration for "the Last Man" according to some famous theses about the post Cold War stage.²⁹ Therefore, the Congress Party was portrayed as being an initial form of the American Democratic Party, while the Islah Party was considered an initial form of the American Republic

²⁷ For discussion of that see Katz, 1995.

²⁸ Security Council, 1994.

²⁹ Fukuyama, 2002.

Party. The separation attempt was being put in similarity with what happened in US history.³⁰ We found ourselves in front of predictions claiming that Yemen will clone the same US path!

When reviewing many of the writings and papers that dealt with that period, we will find that the focus is often on the defeat of the Socialist Party in the 1993 elections, and its loss of part of its share of power, as if it was the only or main reason that ignited the 1994 war, the so called “War of Secession”. When reading them in light of what is presented about the experience of the two regimes before the Unity and their foreign relationship, they portrayed a dictatorial socialist regime which was an active member in the socialist system against a traditional, but semi-liberal regime that was supported and adopted by the Western camp, conclusions could be extracted about the driving motives for all what happened even if not declared in public, by claiming that the Southern part can't afford the consequences of democratic practice! Consequently, there has been no mention to the other causes of the War, or at best there were references to them as being marginal reasons, mainly the assassination of a large number of the Socialist Party cadres in the capital city of Sana’a. Moreover, they ignore all factors that led to adopting the democratic option in circumstances that were not qualified for that. If this justification was taken into account, it would probably contribute in correcting and deepening the understanding about the Yemeni case which always looks incomprehensible, and accordingly rationalizing the efforts to support the democratic process as well as installing permanent pilings for overall stability.

What can be agreed upon here is that the Unity operation happened in a hurry without enough preparations at the political, economic and legal levels. The emerging and divided state institutions were not able to manage the multiplicity of powers, in addition to the lack of any previous experience of democratic practice in both systems. Some indicated, as mentioned earlier, that the democratic option was a short-term choice through which each party aimed to alienate the other. It is probably one of the most reasonable causes to reveal the secret behind the “boiled” overnight democracy. However, there is usually an intentional ignorance of the fact that the political elite in South proposed a promising reformatory political and economic program after the “86 Catastrophe”. It preceded the big transformations at the international level, top of which was reforming the political regime by shifting it from the one ruling

³⁰ See Carapico, 1998, pp. 140 – 145; Katz, 1995.

party system to a pluralistic one based upon the democracy, in addition to other political and economic reforms and reconsidering the foreign relationships in a way that leapfrogs the bipolarity that prevailed in the past. It is true that the idea did not pass easily during the discussion, as it faced a lot of opposition, criticism and accusations from various partisan and military circles in South, but the rapid international changes and difficult local conditions eventually prompted the adoption of these new reform trends officially. Later, they were issued in a manual under the title “Critical-Analytical document for the Revolution Experience in South Yemen (1986-1978)”.³¹ Along with these reasons, the emergence of moderate partisan leaders who had deep understanding to all reasons that led to the outbreak of big problems and repeated tragic incidents in the experience of both modern Northern and Southern states, in addition to drastic perceptions for the solutions. The most prominent among those figures are Jarallah Omar, Haider Abu Bakr Al-Attas, Yassin Saeed Noman... etc.³²

After the occurrence of the Yemeni Unity, the Socialist Party was prior in proposing adopting a free liberal civil constitution which focused on equality and justice. On the other hand, Ali Abdullah Saleh sought to obstruct the Unity deal and dodge the adopted constitution through making an agreement with Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Ahmar. This idea led to the emergence of the Islah Party, according to Al-Ahmar himself in his memoir.³³ The party entered the political life as a ferocious opponent of the constitution and with a very extremist Islamist discourse.

When the political crisis between the two Unity partners began to emerge, Al-Attas, the then PM, proposed a program to reform flaws in the ruling authority infrastructure. When the crisis exacerbated and Arab states mediated, the Document of Accord and Agreement was signed in 1993 in the Jordanian capital Oman. Its prominent clauses included administrative decentralization, political reforms related with regulating powers of the executive authority, moving camps away from the cities, reorganizing and merging them. In Hudson’s article, in which he presented the views of all disputing parties, the complaints of the Southern leaders were based on real issues, top of which were putting an end to the immutable killing of the Southern elites in Sana’a, while the Northern

³¹ The Analytical Critical Document of the Experience of the Revolution in Democratic Yemen (1976-1986) without a date of issuance, and according to Jarallah Omar, the date of its issuance was in 1989.

³² See also Omar, 2008; Halliday, 1990, pp. 44-53; El-Gohary, 1992, pp. 352 – 353.

³³ Al-Ahmar, 2008, pp. 255 – 257.

leaders' point of view were based on claims, doubtfulness and aggravated conspiratory Obsession.³⁴ In this regard, it seems that Saleh's position on the Gulf War made him expect a retaliatory reaction against him at any moment. Hudson also noted that the three threats that disturbed Saleh's regime at that time included the Socialist Party, political reforms and the economic file. The Socialist Party's institution constituted the biggest threat for him due to its power and sovereignty.³⁵ Ironically, the points included in the Document of Pledge and Accord, which Saleh regime dubbed as "conspiracy" against the Unity, will be reproduced during the National Dialogue Conference, 20 years after wars, missteps and dancing on the heads of crises' snakes. At that time, South and its organized and disciplined organization constituted a balanced factor and a strong lever to make positive change and pass political and economic reforms. If it continues, this probably could prevent or relieve this tragic destiny, as the country fell into an endless hole. Earlier, Bernard Rougier noted how the regime in North manipulated the political propaganda which transformed the Yemeni Unity into a myth or sacred thing, delegitimizing any attempt for a national building that takes into account the local differences.³⁶

After the end of the War, everything has been wrapped without turning around. They eliminated one of the remaining disturbing Communist pockets, so the world became more prepared to adapt to the new World Order and the final values that guarantee sustainable stability. Suddenly without introduction, the Southerners will suffer from harsh economic, political and psychological situations after dismissing them from their jobs, losing all chances for a better career future, losing everything, even their good picture into the minds of their sons due to their inability to provide their simplest needs. This is related to many consequences on more than one generation and at all levels. Regarding the general situation in Yemen, the country transformed in a few years to one of the most dangerous epicenters that threatens the World security order.

The harvest of the latest years

A peaceful movement "Hirak" emerged in the south that demanded the removal of all grievances against hundreds of thousands of Southern employees in 2007. It was an extension of a long series of small and intermittent needs. The

³⁴ Hudson, 1995, pp. 19 – 32.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 19 – 32.

³⁶ Rougier, 2008, p. 124.

security's use of excessive violence and arbitrary arrests against peaceful demonstrators led to the transformation of the movement from a demand into a broad popular movement calling for secession.³⁷ Meanwhile, hard and hopeless negotiations were underway with Sana'a to persuade it of political and economic reforms. The southern movement will not be seen as a peaceful civil model that can put great pressure on the authority to stop its absurdity and prevent it from dragging the country into the abyss, in a country riddled with weapons, violence and wars. But the focus will be put on three security problems that threaten to thwart the Yemeni state, along with the Houthi insurgency in North and the terrorist organizations. During all years of retaliation against the peaceful Hirak activists, there has been only denunciation of the humanitarian violations without any serious proposals to solve the problem. The differences also have been about if the issue needs security or a political solution! The door was left open in front of the Saleh regime to deal with them. All calls just demanded him to stop killing the peaceful demonstrators at the hands of his security apparatus.

Through the armed insurgency, and by foreign mediations, the Houthis gained political gains all the time, and the doors were open in front of them. On the other hand, the gains of the Southern governorates by the peaceful struggle were very few to the extent that people were about to reach a conclusion that the peaceful strife in Yemen is futile and hopeless.

Meanwhile, the EU engaged in hard marathons to save the face of the "Strategic Paper"³⁸ agenda related to good governance, strengthening the democratic process and carrying out political and economic reforms. The situation continued in this state of hesitance, push and pull, misunderstanding and miscalculation until 2011 when the country entered a completely different track.

After the outbreak of the youth Uprising, and the GCC's involvement in the crisis line, it was an agreement on a transitional period in which the authority moved to "a new president" for two years, and launched a "Dialogue Conference" draft of a new constitution. Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, the then Vice President, was selected to rule Yemen. Hadi, the Southerner, was selected as a VICE President after the end of the 1994 War to add a nominal representation of South. Throughout the seventeen years, he remained without minimum power, and didn't carry out any tasks. He used to sleep until after noon, and then get up to

³⁷ For more, see Human Rights Watch, 2009.

³⁸ European Commission, 2007.

receive his guests. They keep chewing Khat together till late at night. A lot of things were said about the reasons for Saleh's selection of him. Hadi was appointed through elections without any rivalry. He could win this election as soon as having just one vote after the end of the voting operation, according to BBC's correspondent.³⁹ The majority of the Southern Hirak groups rejected the elections to the extent it tried to prevent it. Accordingly, nine people were shot to death by the security forces.⁴⁰ The points of view of Hirak's factions for boycotting the Presidential Election was not based on rejecting transferring power from Salah, as they completely supported those demands, but their objection related to the phony way of change, and pushing a Southerner to be an interim President, for only two year although he didn't make any role or carried out any tasks for a long time, They feared of using this to manipulate the Southerners' demands⁴¹ Some looked to the elections as a referendum on the Unity amid demands by many Southerners to make a UN-sponsored referendum about it.

Hadi was completely an unexpected candidate in comparison with prominent and influential figures (Southern and Northern) who have good reputation, and there were talks about their best chances to win the most important position in the country amid the most difficult and complicated circumstances during the last 50 years. It can be said without exaggeration that no one expected that Hadi became President of Yemen, even Hadi himself. Hadi was involved in the tragic 1986 events, and later led the attacks against South in the 1994 War. Of course, he was not the one meant by the Head of the European Commission's delegation to Yemen during the press interview when she described the transitional period as being historical and exceptional. She criticized those "people from the past" who obstructed the transition, and sour the future mood.⁴² In the Yemeni political dictionary, this is used only to refer to the exiled Southern leaders.

Most Hirak factions rejected the National Dialogue Conference held in Sana'a between 2012-2014. Although their peaceful objection through civil protests didn't impact the conference, they were subjected to strong criticism from foreign ambassadors and international sponsors who worked without all the time for the success of the transitional period and wrapping Saleh's page as well as avoiding a devastating civil war.⁴³ On Feb. 21 st 2013, on the occasion of

³⁹ DW, 2012, February 23; IFES, 2012.

⁴⁰ Reuters, February 22, 2012.

⁴¹ DW, 2012, February 21.

⁴² Interview with Bettina Muscheidt, 2014, November 14.

⁴³ International Crisis Group, 2012, July 3.

passing one year on Hadi's presidency, the security forces in the city of Aden killed and injured tens of the Southern Hira'k's demonstrators who wanted to express their rejection of the Hadi's election. The Amnesty International Organization commented on those incidents saying: «In utter disregard for international standards, the Yemeni authorities have attempted to quash peaceful protests with shocking use of lethal force».⁴⁴ Those horrifying violations were carried out during the preparation period for the Dialogue Conference, days before its kick off, and amid the international promises of moving to the equality citizenship state and the extraordinary future!

The conference allocated a teamwork for the Southern issue, with the participation of representatives of all political forces in Yemen, and was headed by Mohammed Ali Ahmed, the prominent Hira'k leader and one of the Southern state's leaders. At the end of the conference, Written conclusions were reached on the roots and causes of the Southern issue, and they were largely good, but the dispute occurred when solutions were presented, such as how many regions will the proposed Federal State consist of. President Hadi was commissioned to resolve this issue which was probably the most serious one in the Conference. However, the solution proposed by Hadi, and the circumstances about how he was commissioned, got angry the most representatives of Southern Hira'k in NDC. They had to withdraw, accusing the Conference's chiefs of not abiding by the recommendations on the agreed solutions regarding the southern issue, as well as the failure to implement any of the confidence-building measures that were agreed upon before the beginning of the conference.⁴⁵

Saleh's Party and the Houthis who call themselves as (Ansar Allah) had active participation in the National Dialogue Conference from A to Z. After the end of the conference and the political argument about the form of the Federal state, Saleh and the Houthis exploited the big confusion and lack of trust which prevailed at that period, in addition to fatal mistakes by the Presidency and the Consensus Government to militarily bring down the capital and control it, and later to move their forces towards South, for a new stage which has one title represented in war and horrible humanitarian suffering.

On March 26th 2015, Operation Asifat Al- Hazm began under claims of moving back the internationally-recognized Government to Sana'a. In such confusing circumstances, full of missteps and bitter experiences, a lot of Southerners, after

⁴⁴ Amnesty International, 20 February 2013 & 21 February 2013; UNHCR, 27 February 2014.

⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, 2013, Sanaa/Brussels, September 25.

the advance made by Saleh and Houthi forces towards their areas, felt that they would be subjected to what they called " a new occupation" which they can't resist, and it would alienate them as well as depriving them of accessing any opportunities. They also felt that they will face very hard living conditions, especially that the experiences and memories of the 1994 War are still fresh. Therefore, they found the involvement of the Arab coalition" into the war in Yemen an opportunity to "liberate" their regions, and to take steps towards independence. Most of the new generation of Southerners were suffering from a lack of education and rehabilitation, in addition to their marginalization and not listening to their voices during the previous stages, which made them fall into a lot of miscalculations.

Possible opportunities and recommendations

In Yemen, amid the systematic and continuing destruction that has extended to everything, top of which is the human cadre itself, searching for opportunities or even their shadows to constitute a base to build upon in the way to return stability and make peace factors became very hard. However, those intellectual and realistic challenges should not prevent us from exerting more effort and thinking by re- discussing all presented thoughts and perceptions and trying to extract an opportunity or hope among their rubbles!

As for South Yemen and its future, the most important points which can be re-discussed, and could benefit the international organizations interested in the Yemeni file, mainly the EU of course are summarized as follows:

- The political projects are not sacred but they always have to be subjected to discussions, negotiation, and reconsideration. Accordingly, to force a certain reality to walk in a futile road in which results are known in advance means contributing in dragging it towards more problems and devastation, and hinders any better opportunity. Thus, the efforts seeking to find out sustainable solutions should not fall into duplicity due to the political stereotyping and preconceptions, such as those patterns based upon attitudes towards the Unity and separation in the Yemen case for instance.
- Writings, political papers, and recommendations usually have focused on divisions that hit the Southern movement, and the lack of a unified and coherent entity which can represent it in any negotiation, as well as the

social divisions based upon tribal and regional backgrounds. In light of this, they justify alienating them and not listening to their voices or making any efforts that could help them to solve the various problems and challenges which confront the Southerners and are not able to make it alone. Because Yemen has been always looked upon as a security problem, it has not been surprising that the perceptions about proposed solutions focus on the need for the existence of strong, coherent, dominating parties. From a perspective of solving and settling disputes, there is the so-called “ripe moment”, when all parties fall into “mutually hurting stalemate” and it becomes impossible to resolve the matter alone. Those divisions sometimes could be a perfect opportunity to help these parties which who are ready to give concessions for the sake of building a rational political domain based on the minimum degree of democracy, pluralism, accepting the other’s opinion, respecting human rights and a commitment to peaceful civil competition, instead of making big concessions under the pressure of other external forces in a way that could lead to negative results related to the development in these countries in democracy and human rights. In South, the balance among the social forces constantly prevents monopoly and despotism.

However, those forces need developing new and safe mechanisms to rationalize competitions in the public sphere. The rivalry, based upon violence only, can never constitute an option for decisiveness and monopoly in the Southern environment, because it means everyone is lost. As the best political regimes were born out of crises, the current moment could be suitable to establish principles and values that govern and adjust public sphere competition among different Southern factions, and help them to move from the regional and tribal dispute to the political competition, as well as establishing a framework that can defend them in the face of the threats that harm their existence and continuity. But first and foremost, there should be advance preparation to capture this moment, and then, there is sufficient willingness to present large, coordinated, organized and sincere efforts, in light with international standards, such as those made during the "National Dialogue Conference" in Sana'a, instead of the seasonal activities that are held here and there between Southern parties, and do not lead to any notable positive results. This path could constitute a horizon or an alternative option for achieving peace and stability at the level of Yemen as a whole.

- The EU categorically believes that the only solution for the Yemen crisis is the political one, as the military solutions won't reach any goal but will deepen the crisis and increase humanitarian suffering. Based on that, the EU made unremitting efforts to prevent exporting weapons to the disputing parties, in addition to its diplomatic efforts at the international level. The general principle upon which this perception is based is very moral, for not dragging the country towards more violence. However, in return, there should be a pre-tacit agreement among the interested parties, based on joint values and principles, in a way that makes it applicable on the real ground. The inability of the weak groups to protect themselves and the disputing parties' reluctance to adhere to human rights make it difficult realistically and morally. This leads to the exploitation of the crisis by internal and external parties. Therefore, the EU doesn't have to give up this principle, but it should develop a more suitable strategy, especially in the presence of the new UN Envoy. This won't be achieved without making deep and constant strategic discussions and dialogues that skip the traditional previous channels.
- Yemen still constitutes a big threat to world security at many levels. The danger of the terrorist organizations is still existent. It is true that there is a retreat in their plans which become more adaptable to the reality of the local conflicts since 2015, but this is not going to last, as the state of instability could render the country to a safe haven for the terrorist groups. Consequently, there is a heavy need to adopt an all-out strategy based on more than one dimension to help the local efforts. The forces which were established after 2015 made a lot of progress in the file of combating terrorist organizations, however, these security forces lack institutional standards, qualifications and training on the one hand, and on the other hand, they practice some human rights violations, which may lead to negative results in the future. The EU can contribute to the qualification, training and upgrading of these forces not only in the field aspects, but also with regard to the humanitarian aspects. This requires new strategies and partnerships.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ -González Laya, 24 September 2021; Lovatt, 30 September 2021.

- The EU tries to work on a long-term path in dealing with the Middle East's problems and crises through what some called "the graduation philosophy" based on persuasion, partnership and the soft power conception.⁴⁷ This distinguished it from the American position. In this regard, the European Union and its states worked to support and qualify many civil society organizations, cadres and local experts, which rendered them to international competencies, and their presence, voice and representation became strong and effective at the global level, and helped them a lot in maintaining their independence. This saved them from entering the buying loyalties Bazaar which has flourished in a horrible way since 2012. These elites are the most important wealth for Yemen currently, and they are ready to rebuild the country if there is an available opportunity for stability. On the other hand, and for different reasons the Southerners have been deprived from enjoying any appropriate opportunities to develop and qualify themselves. The weakness and fragility of representation is clearly revealed during the international events. A state like Yemen which passes through such tragic circumstances and is subjected to shocking collective besiege at all levels needs more support, care and rehabilitation. However, due to the current local divisions, the support and rehabilitation in one direction could lead to establish a permanent state of injustice, depriving many groups from representing themselves well in the occasions that require high competence.⁴⁸ (This didn't exist in the same way 20 years ago, for example.)

When the unqualified Southern representative goes to one of the international events which he doesn't participate except only in a transitory and accidental way and he doesn't know their customs and traditions regarding dialogue, discussion and communication, he will think that the world would understand him if he just delivered simple talk about his fair case, especially within the organizations which strengthens on the matter of justice. However, because he is not able to devote his time for that, and his lack of experience in such events compared with his colleagues, as well as a lot of political, economic and security details, he finds himself in a fragile and tense situation in spite of the fairness of his case. This badly impacts his psychology and has a lot of effects on his

⁴⁷ Youngs, 2004, pp. 3 – 4.

⁴⁸ For more debate on this issue, see Barry, August 1998.

subsequent positions and perceptions. In general, the state of exclusion, marginalization and the destruction of institutions had a severe impact on awareness of political values and principles related to human rights, freedom, democracy, citizenship and justice, as well as the intense competition between different ideological currents and forces, including extremist and religious currents, in a geopolitical location that makes foreign interventions with their interests, policies and an agenda difficult to resist... All of this makes creating highly qualified elites to implement the tasks of awareness, enlightenment and rationalization a very important matter, from the long-term perspective.

- The EU's efforts and projects are subjected to a matrix of values and standards related to human rights and basic freedoms including the freedom of opinion and expression, and respect for pluralism. Based on that, it is constantly subjected to accountability. Thus, the local parties have to work hard to prevent human rights violations and all illegal practices, as well as allowing the freedom of expression and practicing the civil political rights, encouraging diversity, enhancing the participation of women in the public sphere... etc, if those parties want to build partnerships with international bodies that can help them to restore and develop their institutions, organize the general field and creating a reality which is viable for sustainable stability solutions.

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