

Yemen: Another Somalia in the Arabian Peninsula

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ABSTRACT--- *The Yemeni conflict has both internal and external dimensions. The main catalyst of the internal roots of the conflict is the unequal development interventions among the Yemeni regions that generated fragmented governance structures and disordered societies which in reality fabricated very fragile relations. This has led certain groups of the Yemeni citizens accumulate catalogue of grievances, therefore, justify their opposition against the state. Not only the internal drivers, but, and without doubt, since the creation of the modern Yemeni state, it has been a laboratory of external initiatives and multiple interventions that complicated the situation and shaped the Yemen's state political dynamics. This prepared the state to pass through political, social, and economic turmoil which broke the hope and aspiration of the citizens. This study argues that the genesis, drivers, and actors of the Yemeni conflict are varied from one to another, yet the major drivers of the conflict are local, but the roles of external actors who persistently engaged in the conflict for political reasons remain apparent. It dismisses that the external actors, both from the region and beyond will bring peace and stability to Yemen. The study proposes possible solutions to some critical issues include: how inclusive Yemeni state can stand on its feet vis-à-vis its quest for long lasting political stability to overcome the very weaknesses of its institutions, thus, strengthen the capacity of the state in the long-term.*

Keywords--- Conflict, Houthis, Shia, Sunni, Yemen, 'War on Terror', Al-Qaeda, Intervention, Arab Spring

1. INTRODUCTION

The present Yemen, whose formation dates back to 1990, has had two different historical and political experiences. The northern part of the country was under the Ottoman Empire and gained its independence in 1918; while the southern regions remained under the British rule known as the Aden British Protectorate until it became independent in 1967 (ICG, 2003; Sungtae, 2015). Since independence, Yemen has been trapped into vicious cycles of intrastate conflicts which made the viability of the Yemeni state remain in limbo, while on the other hand Yemen showed poor economic performance with a fragmented governance system which prepared it to be the poorest compared to the other Arab countries in the Middle East (ICG, 2013a). The genesis of these multiple troubles has both internal and external dimensions (Barak, et al. 2010). Indeed, over ninety years of independence, in the case of the northern part, Yemen has not yet shown any sustained development with inclusive policies to tackle the multifaceted political and social challenges it faces, while much of those problems has to be blamed to the Yemeni leaders who failed to break the cycles of the social insecurities and political instability existing in Yemen.

Certainly, much of the Yemen's turmoil has internal root causes such as unequal development, rampant poverty and citizens' misery, and society driven by tribal politics among other factors that cripple the Yemen's political and social stability. But, the penetration of the external actors for geopolitical and economic interests has had also a significant and adversary impact for making a viable state in Yemen (ICG, 2003). At the moment, the Yemeni state is the only ill-fated state in the Arabian Peninsula that suffers multiple external interventions which complicated the internal dynamics of Yemen like Somalia. Since the state collapse in 1991, Somalia has been a victim of external interventions and a safe-haven to different actors both in the form of state and non-state (Dirk, 2008; Bjørn, 2009; Bulhan, 2013). Therefore, Yemen is at risk of becoming another failed state on the other side of the Red Sea after Somalia (Alexander, 2010; ICG, 2015).

The political conflict and instability in Yemen has made the complex state institutions that responsibly in providing social services to the public plus security very fragile and prone to any foreign intervention (ICG, 2003). The present situation in Yemen is not basically the continuation of tribal conflict and prolonged disharmony among the state institutions and the citizens; but it is an outcome of an external intervention both from the region and beyond against the

Yemeni state (ICG, 2014; Jeremy, 2015). In the post-Arab Spring, Yemen remained in a state of dilemma and political limbo with an ineffective authority relied on the support of the Saudis and other regional states¹.

The two states, Somalia and Yemen, are interwoven with history, culture, religion, ethnicity and share many commonalities² such as colonial legacy that makes the two states still remain in a state of conflict and crisis. Hence, any development being positive or negative that takes place in Yemen directly or indirectly affects Somalia as well. It is thus clear that there are great intertwined factors that both countries have, for instance, Somalia emerged from the union of the two regions which was under the British and the Italians rules, in the northern and the southern regions respectively (Peter, 2008). Correspondingly, Yemen comprises the Ottoman Empire-ruled northern part, and the southern regions that served as the Aden British Protectorate in the Arabian Peninsula. Similarly, both Somalia and Yemen situate geographically strategic locations, share social structure such as tribal configuration of the society, underdevelopment, intervention from the region and more specifically their neighbors³, 'War on Terror' and the cold war misfortunes. The presence of violent radical elements such as *Al-Shabab* of Somalia and the *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* is another facet of their similarities (Alexander, 2010; ICG, 2014). In this respect, since Somalia and Yemen situate two significant regions vital for the world interactions, this strategic importance made the two states victim of their locations and became the center of the world powers attentions which severely affected the interests of the two states.

This study, therefore, adds a political dimension to the previous studies of political, social, and economic dynamics in Yemen. It critically examines two separate, but interwoven key factors that influence the state politics: a) internal factors which prevail in Yemen and have political, social, and economic dimensions, and, b) the external factors which produced waves of conflicts, confrontations, and mistrust among the Yemeni people. The major purpose of the study is to analyze and examine the internal and the external actors that engaged in the Yemen's policies and troubles since the Arab Spring and even before that period with competing interests. In addition, it extensively discusses the impact of the intervention not only on the Yemeni people, but also on the other neighboring regions. The study suggests strategies that could serve as a milestone in preserving the Yemeni state and prevent further penetration of external actors not only in the Yemen's state internal dynamics, but also to the entire fragile nations in the world.

2. THE GENESIS AND ACTORS OF THE CONFLICT

The root and the immediate causes of the Yemeni problems are linked to a number of factors which has both internal and external dimensions. More importantly, when the root causes of the Yemen's conflict and state fragility are analyzed, there are multifaceted factors which lack any single explanation and logical point of view. While some see the causes of the Yemen's trouble as a tribal politics (ICG, 2003) and linked to the Yemeni social structure – similar to the Somali social and political structures – political and governance-related factors, others could consider it as an external-driven – an extension of the Iranian–Saudi rivalry and the role Yemen played in the 'War on Terror' (Sarah, 2010; Peter, 2015). Though the conflict in Yemen may have one, two or all of these factors, the role of the external actors engaging in the conflict seems obvious.

Undeniably, the Yemen's corrupted leaders and the poor governance it remained has a role in the conflict, and could be considered as the source of the destructive tribal conflict in the state (ICG, 2014). This not only undermined the state harmony, caused social disorder and endangered the institutional capacity and worsens its economic performance, but also created a vicious cycle which in turn detailed the path towards sustainable development and any efforts and initiatives aimed to overcome the structural challenges present in Yemen (Imad, 2015; Peter, 2015). So in essence, though the problems in Yemen have both tribal identities, political and economic dimensions, including resource allocation, on the other hand, it has direct link with institutional weaknesses and fragmented governance structures present within the post-unification state institutions intended to provide social services and protection for its citizens (Barak, et al. 2010; Sarah, 2010; Imad, 2015). Nevertheless, after 25 years of its unification, Yemen has one of the world's worst development indicators which distorted the euphoria of the public at large and made its fate remain in limbo.

¹ The Arab coalition fighting the Iranian-allied Houthi militia is arguing that they are supporting or reconstituting the legitimate Government of Yemen, but above all, they are pursuing their own interests. For instance, the Saudis are now regretting the support they extended both the Muslim Brotherhoods and the Houthis at different times for different political purposes

² Discussions with an expert on the Yemeni socioeconomic and political dynamics, Djibouti

³ In 2006, Ethiopian Defense Forces overthrew the Union of the Islamic Courts (UIC) with the support of the United States of America. The UIC drove out the self-appointed warlords in many parts of the south-central Somalia and successfully reconstructed the state for the first time since its collapse in 1991. But, as Eritrea appeared an arch-rival of its former partner, Ethiopia. Ethiopia regarded the Islamists as proxy agents of Eritrea established to destabilize Ethiopia, thus, decided to intervene the situation militarily. Similar to the Ethiopia's response, Saudi Arabia decided to go to war against the Houthi who seemed as a proxy agent of Iran and controlled much of the Yemeni territory like the UIC control much of the Somalia's south-central regions in 2006. The Houthis overrun the Yemeni armed and its allied forces as the UIC defeated the Somalia's self-appointed and heavily armed warlords

In an apparent form of analysis, one may question why Yemen, which has both human and natural resources, failed to prosper? Why are there so many citizens' misery and conflict in the state? Indeed, underdevelopment has different dimensions and number of factors obstacle to the political, social, and economic viability of the Yemeni state deserve identification (Alexander, 2010; Charles, 2011). These factors include: a) corruption both administrative and political; b) political violence and destructive tribal conflict; c) policy faults committed by Yemeni political elites, and, d) regular external interventions for political reasons. These are the major factors that hamper the Yemeni state's development, and criminalized both the state and the economy (ICG, 2003). For instance, resource allocation is an important facet; which remains the source of the Yemen's lingering conflicts and fragility which made the Yemeni state to move deeper into chaos and tribal politics.

The conflict in Yemen has another dimension. The role played by the political parties in the conflict remains obvious. Really, Yemen's political parties are confusing and intricate, even for those who follow closely the new political developments. In post-unification period, two pro-Saudi political parties took the lead of the newly formed state of Yemen. The General People's Congress of Saleh dominated the executive branch of the state, while the Yemeni Congregation for Reform⁴, officially known as *Al-Islah* chaired the legislative body of the state and remained close allies with the People's Congress. Remarkably, the 2011 revolution changed the atmosphere and dynamics of the Yemeni politics as the coalition of the Saleh party and *Al-Islah* collapsed. This new political development led the *Al-Islah* suddenly shifts its strategy by supporting the popular uprisings and those who were demanding the step down of the Saleh-led Government⁵. In post-Saleh period, the division among the political parties in Yemen and their struggle to retain or remain power with the support of the regional states in particular the Saudis has continued and still remains apparent.

Apart from those various causes and drivers of the conflict, the main actors of the Yemeni conflict vary from one to another and have different dimensions and ideologies (Sarah, 2010). Certainly, analyzing the conflict in Yemen produces at least five major dichotomies that engage in the conflict and play a significant role: a) the Sunni and Shia Muslims competition, b) a struggle between the People's Congress Party for one hand, *Al-Islah* and its allied political parties on the other, c) local organized movements who are against the regime on power such as the Houthis and Al-Hirak, a Southern Movement operating in the southern part of Yemen, and the Government of Yemen, d) the Islamist insurgencies present in Yemen on the one hand, the Americans and its allies on the other, and, e) the Saudi-Iranian competition for preserving or expanding respectively⁶ their sphere of influence in the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula (ICG, 2013; Peter, 2015). However, the most powerful competitors in the region are the Iranians who are the only backer of the Houthis, and the Saudis who persistently supported the Government in Yemen and the political parties in the country such as *Al-Islah* for various times (Sungtae, 2015). Both the Saudi and the Iranian involvement in the Yemeni internal politics have been deeper for decades or even for centuries.

3. THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DRIVERS FOR YEMENI STATE FRAGILITY

3.1 Sunni-Shia Conflict

The conflict between the Sunni and Shia Muslims in Yemen is one of the major drivers of the Yemen's state fragility, and the violence between the two sects changed the Yemeni state into an ungoverned island of chaos and anarchy and invited both regional and distant actors. But, the coexistence between the Zaidi-Shia and the Shafei-Sunni has been characterized by mutual acceptance and lived on Yemen side by side for centuries. The Sunni are the majority sect in Yemen, while the Shia, particularly the Zaidi, the oldest branch of Shia Islam, makes the second largest sect after the Sunni (ICG, 2003; Barak, et al. 2010). However, the deepening Sunni-Shia disagreement in Yemen was precipitated by the civil war in Iraq following the collapse of the Saddam regime, hence; its subsequent disintegration has had an impact in Yemen as well as in other countries in the region (Anthony & Sam, 2014; Philip, 2014).

It is not the aim of the study enter into a debate about the differences between the Shia and Sunni Muslims. But, the argument advanced here is that the Sunni-Shia Muslims in Yemen play a significant role in escalating the conflict and crisis happening across Yemen with the involvement of external actors, most specifically Saudi Arabia and Iran who are supporting the opposing Sunni and Shia groups respectively (Alexander, 2010). Truly, while the Gulf States remain at war with Yemen and bombing both civilian and military sites across the Yemeni state, Iran calls on the international

⁴ Yemeni Congregation for Reform or *Al-Islah*, is the Yemeni version of the Global Muslim Brotherhood who stick on a greater unity among the Muslims and their ultimate objective remains establishing an Islamic State not only in Yemen, but also the entire Muslim world

⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶ Saudi Arabia wants to maintain its political, social and economic influence in Yemen, while Iran on the other hand wishes to expand its regional influence into Yemen. Both countries aspire for regional supremacy and hegemony

community to intervene the situation and end the ‘military aggressions’ in Yemen. But, this call doesn’t guarantee and represent the Iran’s official position in regards to the Houthis and the conflict as well.

Over the decades, Saudi Arabia was and still injecting billions of dollars to the Muslim world to implement and safeguard its foreign strategy. The argument advanced here is that the Americans and its Western allies are contented about the Saudi policy engagement as it neither condemned nor prevented from doing so. For this reason, the idea that the U.S. is opposed to radical Islam is ludicrous as Saudi Arabia is the most extreme fundamentalist Islamic state in the world (Andre & Noam, 2013). Being similar to many Muslim states, radical elements of the Sunni Islam were coming from the neighboring Saudi Arabia and have become increasingly influential in Yemen and not favored to Shia Muslims (ICG, 2003; Robert, 2005; Alexander, 2010; Barak, et al. 2010; ICG, 2014; Sungtae, 2015). Indeed, the petrodollar-oriented foreign policy of Saudi Arabia towards the Muslim states serves the interest of the violent extremists, those benefits from the rise of anti-Shia feelings and conflicts not only in Yemen, but also in any other conflict that erupts in any part of the wider region⁷. The latter argument is true when analyzed how the Islamists benefited the popular uprisings in Libya, Tunisia, Syria, and Egypt, though the latter were destroyed and disbanded by the Egyptian army and ended their rule⁸.

The fact remains, however, as a clear dividing-line, indeed, there are series of questions to consider: Why the Houthis were labeled as ‘*Shia rebel group*’ when other groups do not? Like *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Levant, who are exclusively ‘*Sunni groups*’ or any other non-Shia group? This kind of differentiation is exacerbating the already deteriorating Sunni–Shia relations in Yemen. Like any other political groups in Yemen or beyond, the Houthis have defined themselves through their demands, not their faith, as the Saudis and their global patrons claim. Certainly, most of those that fighting for the Houthis are not fighting for religion or in a broader sense sectarian interests, but for social and political justice (Charles, 2011). Unfortunately, the Houthis people were excluded from the state opportunities and lived in one of the least developed regions in Yemen in terms of governance, infrastructures, and social service provisions. Therefore, the Houthis are oppressed, Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan (1985) argues that the oppressed are the primary victims of structural violence and the prevailing paranoia and remain victims of others and of themselves.

In this regard, the manipulation of power and corruption in the economic, social, and political processes lies on the shoulders of the Yemen’s political leaders who fabricated the uncertainties, thus impacted on the state–society relations. On the other hand, Yemen politics have tended to be contentious along politicized tribal factor and radicalized faith, with the contentiousness sometimes stimulated and exploited for political and faith-related reasons (ICG, 2014). The Islamist control in many parts of the south–central Yemen, the Houthis armed uprisings in the northern regions, and pro-secessionist movements in the southern regions as well are heartrending. Hence, these are the outcome of increasingly worsening internal political dynamics on the one hand, and the involvement of the Yemeni Government in the ‘*War on Terror*’ for political and financial reasons on the other, thus criminalized the state and made it to remain a very fragile state of affairs.

3.2 Unequal Development and Inequality

The causes of the Yemeni hostilities are interwoven factors which deeply influence the state-society relations and impacted the harmony of the Yemeni citizens (Barak, et al. 2010). For instance, unequal distribution of power among the Yemeni tribes, economic marginalization of certain groups such as the Houthis, and unequal distribution of the state natural resources and wealth among the Yemeni tribes, repression and intimidation against the Houthis tribes who are predominantly Shia Muslims are the source of the rivalry that currently exist among the Yemeni tribes (Alexander, 2010; ICG, 2015). The Houthis was not without challenges, but remained in a state of political, social and economic dilemmas. The Houthis indeed, faced harassment, detention, prison, and violent reaction from the Yemeni governments. This ultimately led the Houthis take arms and revolt against the government in Sana’a (Charles, 2011; ICG, 2014).

The political, social and economic isolation existed in Yemeni led the state into the path of inequality which has long been a defining feature of the Yemeni politics and has been increasing, thus, impacted on the Yemeni citizens. With this in mind, immense and increasing disparities of wealth, of power, and of security shape the Yemeni state internal dynamics. Furthermore and very important, the multi-million dollars, which the Saudis provided in Yemen also

⁷ Discussions with an expert on the Arab and the Middle Eastern region, Hargeisa, Somaliland

⁸ Following the Arab Spring that rocked in many parts of the Middle Eastern and the Northern African regions, several Islamist elements benefited the popular uprisings. For instance, Tunis, which was the cradle of the Arab Spring, a moderate Islamist element won the state leadership though they lost later. In Libya, violent element associated with *Al-Qaeda* took the control of several towns. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood benefited the fall down of the Mubarak regime and took the state leadership, though the army later destroyed their system and jailed both the leaders and members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Syria, violent elements emerged, such as the *ISIS* and the *Ansar Al-Islam* from the Sunni–Shia conflict that ravaging the Syrian state since 2011

exacerbated the gap between the rich and wealthy and the deprived weak within virtually all sectors of the society in Yemen in particular the Houthis Shia-dominated areas (Robert, 2005; Barak, et al. 2010; Charles, 2011; ICG, 2014). At the same time, other elements were increasing or already increased the inequalities of political power and influence, as well as highlighting new dimensions of inequality such as the injustices and oppressive structures of the Saudi supported ruling elites that continued in the post-unification period⁹. These in turn fabricated weak state institutions that neither served the interest of the citizens, nor produced institutions that could move the state on a path of development and prosperity.

Undoubtedly, the Yemeni state is neither inclusive state to meet the needs and expectations of its citizens, nor devoted strengthening the state security in an attempt to preserve the state to survive, or building and establishing strong and viable state institutions responsible for governance in order to strengthen domestic control to prevent the people or the government not felt further intensified fears and threats (Alexander, 2010; Barak, et al. 2010; Imad, 2015). But, ended up in-between difficult to characterize it, but certainly one may describe the nature of the state in Yemen as an instrument of exploitation and oppression of certain groups over another. Unfortunately, while the modern state in Yemen is a product of two united regions from two different political traditions, this unification has had no positive impact on the Yemeni citizens at large, but threw the state opportunities over the hands of a few. This form of rule has served as the source of the Yemen's protracted fragility, distrust and discontent among the Yemeni citizens that rocked the entire state. In the Yemeni context, the argument of Lenin (1976) seems valid to mention as it illustrates that the state is a political instrument, a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another which produces an antagonistic class society.

The Houthis in Yemen have experienced decades of social and political exclusion, leaving their areas absent from the Government interventions that affect the livelihoods of the communities', or sometimes provides limited services. Of course, social service provision is important to ensure that essential assistance is delivered to all needy and vulnerable people. In the Houthis areas, poor infrastructures and social service providing institutions remain a constant threat to human security due to the contribution of a number of factors¹⁰. This part of the Yemeni citizens experiences decades of socio-political exclusion and isolation, this made the social indicators such as literacy and education levels as well as the health situation among the lowest in Yemen¹¹. Therefore, the political segregation and isolation from the government services is regarded as the major if not the sole source of the conflict between the Government and the Houthis who have had grave concerns and still have a catalogue of grievances which aggravate the already worsening situation¹².

3.3 Iran–Saudi Rivalry

The two competing powers in the Middle East, Iran and Saudi Arabia were having and still have uneasy relations. The Iranian–Saudi relations are flawed by distrust and suspicion deeply rooted in their state practices (Peter, 2015). Of course, the Yemeni conflict has produced a number of actors opposing each other and involve in the internal politics of Yemen. Since the unification in the 1990 or even before that period, the Yemeni state fell under the influence of opposing domestic, regional and international actors (ICG, 2015). In fact, the neighboring countries of Yemen in particular the Saudis have been supporting the Yemeni governments for political reasons (Alexander, 2010; Jeremy, 2015).

The Saudis promised unlimited petrodollars support for the Yemeni ruling elites to remain in power and extended other assistance as well¹³. The external actors, for geopolitical and geostrategic reasons, seem to benefit from the fragility of the state, and not favored the establishment of functioning economic and political systems in Yemen, instead, their involvement, continue to undermine Yemen's political and social stability through the militarization of the conflict for geopolitical and geostrategic determinations. In the current state of affairs, Yemen is considered to be another Arab state in the throes of a civil war aggravated by the regional Sunni–Shia rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran (ICG, 2015; Jeremy, 2015).

Fundamentally, Yemen is situated in one of the most strategic and geopolitical region for one hand, while it is the most vulnerable and fragile state in the Arabian Peninsula to the other, because of the multiple interventions from the transnational actors and their local clients. In essence, the rule-mongering traits and the tragic visions of the Yemenis should be described as the epicenter of the country's chronic difficulties and can be perceived as an important cause. While the suspicion and mistrust that existed among the major external actors involving in the Yemen's internal dynamics in post-conflict period and the 'War on Terror' is another viable cause, for instance, Iran and Saudi Arabia are

⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰ In the Houthis areas, especially the Saada region is one of the least or backward region of Yemen in terms of health and education provisions, economic and roads infrastructures as well as access to water. Though the water problem is common to the entire state

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹² Ibid., 2.

¹³ Ibid., 2.

deeply divided over the Yemen's question and never accepted or unreservedly to accept each other's initiative to restore peace and order (Ephraim, 2012; Peter, 2015).

The rivalry and the political conflict between the Iranians and the Saudis spread in Yemen and aggravated the situation as the two states' propose contradicting initiatives to deal with the Yemeni issue, thus, hampered the Yemenis from taking a common position and complicated the situation than expected (Peter, 2015). Due to this disagreement among the external actors and the internal division and fragmentation within Yemen's elites, the conflict will be a long-time, contrary to many who conceive that the conflict will be a short-time crisis (ICG, 2015). Therefore, the competition between the local and the regional actors changed the Yemeni state into ungovernable region encircled by chaos and anarchy.

In the present situation, both Saudi Arabia and Iran are critical about the Yemen situation for strategic and security reasons. Without doubt, Saudi Arabia's long standing suspicion and mistrust with Iran determines its engagement to the Yemen affairs in the post-conflict period as it targets the Houthis and other allied groups. This policy engagement is aimed to dismantle the opposition armed forces and obstruct possible Iranian influence in Yemen¹⁴. Though Iran has engaged in the Yemeni politics since the known history, both countries, Iran and Saudi Arabia use their best efforts to disturb the strategy of the other and challenge each other's initiatives and policies. Therefore, the Saudi-Iranian competition in the region for hegemony¹⁵ has an impact not only in Yemen, but also on the other countries of the region, including Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain¹⁶, to name a few.

3.4 The 'War on Terror' and the Presence of *Al-Qaeda*

The concept 'terrorism' is considered as one of the primary concerns of the contemporary world and increasingly becoming a major factor in all international relations and politics at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Although the goal of this study mainly remained not to go a thorough definition of the term, its definition and even causes as well as actors have demonstrated controversies (Harry, 2001; Noam, 2003; Webel, 2004; Dipak, 2006; Eric, 2007). Thus, without going into further details on those controversies, its impact and implications not only for human capital but also on state's security become apparent.

In addition, what deserves to be identified is to provide valuable insight in discovering various religious radicals and violent groups; those operate across the world which has links with the three monotheistic religions: the Islam, Christianity and the Jew. In this regard, there are various violent groups, being the Christian American Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord those operate in the U.S., the Palestinian Hamas, [*Al-Qaeda*, *Al-Shabab*, *Boko Haram*], the Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba, and the Israeli Temple Mount Faithful and Jewish Defence League (JDL), among others (Jessica, 2003). Not only the three Abrahamic religions: the Islam, Christianity and the Jew, in which many regard it for being the source of violent extremists, but other beliefs have their own versions of radical elements, for instance, the Hindus.

Without going into further details about the great disparities among the above listed organizations, the changing patterns of security both in the region and the globe have made the Yemen's security and stability to be threatened by the new political developments in the world. Essentially, though the 9/11 and the America's response has changed or radicalized the practices of the Islamist elements in many parts of the world, in the Yemeni context many cells associated with *Al-Qaeda* came into being and remains as pitfalls and critical challenges which increased the burden on the region (L. Ali, 2006; Alexander, 2010; Jeremy, 2015). This doesn't mean that the Islamists of Yemen has emerged in post-9/11, but, the militant Islamism in Yemen goes back long before *Al-Qaeda* appeared in the news outlets (ICG, 2003).

One of the critical challenges against the Yemeni state and has an adversary impact on the state and society is the 'War on Terror'. This war is regarded the precursor for the decaying relations between the state and society in contemporary Yemen. In reality, 'War on Terror' created insecurities which put the human and the state survival in danger¹⁷. Truly, the

¹⁴ The disagreement between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudis emerged during the reign of King Abdullah, this led Saudi Arabia support the Houthis. But, this support was a counterproductive and not produced as the Saudis expecting. Instead, served the interest of the Iranians, and the Iranians greatly benefited this unwise support of the Saudis to the Houthis

¹⁵ Many Somalis believe that the conflict in Yemen is beyond a conflict between Shia and Sunni Muslims. Rather believe as a conflict that instigated by the Saudis and the Iranians for geopolitical interests, thus, used the Yemenis as local agents to implement their national agendas

¹⁶ The Saudis and its Sunni allies are always against the emergence of Shia or pro-Shia power in the region. During the Arab Spring, when Bahrain experienced violent uprisings from the Shia Bahrainis, the Saudis, the Emirates, and some other Gulf States engaged in the conflict and intervened the situation militarily and finally ended the popular uprisings. This intervention was aimed to impede the Iranian influence in the region

¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

Yemeni Government engaged in the war against terror and sided with the Americas. This raises the questions: what role Yemen played in the 'War on Terror' and what are the benefits associated with the participation of this war?

There are a number of variables that need to be examined, including: the role Yemen played, and the impact of its action on the state security. Beyond doubt, Yemen hosted the campaign against 'terrorism' and looked at it as an opportunity because of its strategic location which coincided with the interest of the United States, thus, secured financial assistance (ICG, 2003). In other words, Yemen has been a reliable partner of the U.S. in combating 'terrorism' and cooperating on security matters, hence, the U.S. Command combating terrorism based in Djibouti carries out its critical drone operations in the Arabian Peninsula targeting the Islamists elements based out in the southern regions of Yemen (ICG, 2003; Robert, 2005; Alexander, 2010; Sungtae, 2015).

Whatever the impact, negative or positive, Yemen found itself trapped in an international conflict. The 'War on Terror' is a calamity and political disaster that faced the Yemeni state in the dawn of the twenty-first century (Robert, 2005). For sure, the campaign against 'terrorism' has had political, social, as well as economic repercussions on Yemen (Sarah, 2010). For instance, the emergence of waves of radical groups across the Middle Eastern region such as the *Al-Qaeda* operatives known as *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* as well as the Islamic State are believed to be the outcome of the Yemen Government's alignment with the Western states long before the emergence of *Al-Qaeda* and also its involvement of a war in which one may characterize it as a war aimed by some Western¹⁸ states to secure and dominate the strategic gates not only the Arabian Peninsula, but also other parts of the world (Andre & Noam, 2013). Without doubt, the U.S.-led campaign to combat international 'terrorism' has negative implications on the Yemeni state, and its effect both in Yemen's domestic and regional security remains apparent.

4. THE SAUDI-LED OPERATION AGAINST HOUTHIS: A SOLUTION OR ESCALATION?

Although the Arab states' responses toward Saudi-led air strikes on Yemen and its decision to go to war against the Houthis not maintained great disparate positions when it comes to battling the Shia groups in the region¹⁹. The overwhelming question regarding the war against Yemenis is the extent to which the Saudi-led coalition operations in Yemen have been successful²⁰. What is Iran's role in the war against the Houthis and what are the benefits associated with destroying the Yemeni state for political reasons? Answering these questions requires an in-depth research and analysis not only condemn and criticize the coalition's strikes against Yemen, but also of the role played by Iran in escalating and arming the Houthis demands critical examination.

The issue of security has emerged as one of the most critical challenges in the post-Saleh period, where the uncertainties of new political orders have emerged. There is, however, a foreign policy component of this intervention. To reach its goal, Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its relations with Yemen into a security interest as Houthis appeared an ally of Iran, the arch-rival of Saudi Arabia in the region. This is why Saudi Arabia labeled this group as a proxy agent of Iran to destabilize the region (Peter, 2015). The fear of the Iranian expansion and its sphere of influence to the Saudi's southern neighbor, led Saudi Arabia publicly declare its military intervention into Yemen with the help of the other Gulf States against the Houthis. Beyond these claims, Iran repeatedly denies involvement of the Yemeni conflict, in either view; one cannot underestimate the existence of some form of external support to the Houthis. While it is difficult to conceive that the Houthis are not getting any support from external actors, however, the Iranians and Hezbollah of Lebanon appear to be the major actors that backing the Houthis.

Therefore, though conflict breeds conflict, during the reign of King Abdullah, Saudi relations with the Muslim Brotherhood deteriorated. Remarkably, Saudi Arabia supported the Houthis to deter those organizations that engulfed in several countries in the region²¹. But, this support was counterproductive and not served the interest of the Saudis. Therefore, in the present time, Saudi Arabia engaged in this war for at least two reasons: a) as a part of its national security strategy to deter its enemies, particularly the Houthis that may control its southern neighbor, according to its point of argument, and, b) support the Yemeni Government which Saudi Arabia was and still remains its chief backer in the region²². In the Middle East, it would be fair to conclude that Saudi Arabia is involved in the Yemeni affairs for political and security reasons and publicly expressed its support for the Yemeni Government institution's survival (Peter, 2015). For the time being, Saudi-led coalition air forces intensively raid in many parts of the Yemeni state aimed to

¹⁸ In his book, *Islam: Between Globalization and Counterterrorism*, Ali Mazrui argues that the global 'War on Terror' is a war between the Islam which is universal and the West in general and critically underlines that even before the America came into existence, Islam has had a global presence for centuries

¹⁹ Most of the Arab States and other Sunni countries sided with Saudi Arabia in its war against the Shia armed groups and wholeheartedly supported the exile Yemeni Government by regarding it the only legitimate Government of Yemen

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

topple or weaken the Houthis forces and reconstitute the ousted Government²³. Beyond doubt, the Saudi-led intervention is a state destroying.

Really, the Houthi fighters and army units loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh successfully overrun the Yemeni Government forces and control much of the Yemeni territory²⁴. But, the Houthis and its allied fighters are under the raid of the Arab coalition mainly from the Gulf States aimed to remove their threats or at least impede their advance with the support of the United States of America (ICG, 2014; Peter, 2015). Without doubt, the Americans as usual unanimously oust any government or system that it does not like (Aisha, 2012). Therefore, the Yemeni state is a victim of an external actor, both from the region and beyond who messed the already worsening situation in Yemen and used it as a shield to protect their own national interests. In fact, the relations between the transnational patrons and their local clients in Yemen impacted the nature of the Yemeni state-society relations. This convergence of interest of the Gulf States and their global patrons meant divergence from the Yemeni societal interests and aspirations.

Not only the Saudi-led coalition fighting to assert their control and influence in the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, but, and without doubt, since the creation of the modern Yemeni state, it has been a laboratory of external initiatives and multiple interventions that complicated the situation and shaped the Yemen's state political dynamics. For instance, in the 1960s, Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein of Egypt with the support of the Soviet Union sent thousands of the Egyptian ground troops and other military supplies to Yemen to intervene the Yemeni Civil War (ICG, 2003; Alexander, 2010; Sungtae, 2015). Not only to help the Yemenis, but also expand his ideology of 'Arab Socialism' and further solidify Egypt's leadership role of the Arab Middle Eastern region (Eugen & Ragip, 2011). A similar argument would also apply to this intervention, hence, the Saudi intervention in Yemen is a litmus test for its sphere of influence in the region, and will define a new dimension of the Middle East.

In a roundabout way, and this highly advanced degree of intervention, one could argue that the intervention of the Gulf States in Yemen will eventually lead to the relations of those states with Yemen into mistrust and suspicion. Of course, the presence of strong sentiments against the military intervention in Yemen will also determine the future role of the Saudis in Yemen, which has had a key influence on the Yemeni politics in the past. This intervention will have a legacy that will persist, and the way that legacy would be interpreted by the Yemeni people will effectively define the future of the Saudi-Yemeni relations²⁵. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia will pay the price for this state destroying intervention.

5. WHO LOST YEMEN

The America's foreign strategy towards the Middle East combines a number of elements as the Middle East has long been a source of tension and concern (Noam, 1991; Jeremy, 2015). The U.S. offensive policy engagement in the Middle Eastern political dynamics has also been considered as a critical issue. The U.S. and West's interests in the wider region have generally been due to oil as well as preservation and protection of the State of Israel, which serves the America's Empire²⁶ in the Middle East (Noam, 2003; Nasir, 2014). Pragmatically speaking, the America's unbalanced foreign strategies towards the Middle East in particular the Arabs and the Israelis radicalized the Arab people and forced many moderate Arab youths join the extremists and the violent groups to retaliate the America's defiance to their position in the region²⁷.

With this reality on the ground, the threat posed by the global 'War on Terrorism' in post-9/11 has had an adversary impact in Yemen. In fact, the Americans are behind the radicalization not only the Yemeni ordinary people, but also the entire Muslim world. The Americans aggressively channel arms, guns, and military supplies to their political favorites in any part of the world (Aisha, 2012). In the Middle East, for example, the State of Israel, which is in a state of war against its rivals in the region, secures frequently the latest and the most sophisticated weapons from the U.S. to deter its enemies

²³ Saudi-led coalition claim that its intervention is aimed to reconstitute the legitimate Government ousted by the Houthis and its allied forces, but indeed, this argument is far from the reality on the ground. Saudi Arabia paid billions of dollars to overthrow the first democratically-elected Government in Egypt led by the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013. This intervention which is categorically state destroying is a politically-driven intervention aimed to secure the interest of the Saudis in the region, but boldly not the interest of the Yemenis

²⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

²⁶ Noam Chomsky argues that the Israeli State serves the America's Empire in the Middle East

²⁷ Is it a mutual collaboration or conspiracy? If the Western countries are honest about helping the oppressed wherever they are in this world, why they were silent about what has happened in Bahrain during the Arab Spring? Did the Bahrainis don't deserve to be protected and saved from the vicious acts of the ruling Royal Family in support of the Saudis, the Emirates, and some other Gulf States? This is showing the oil-led U.S. Foreign Policy to the Middle East, because already Bahrain and the other Gulf States' oil resources and reserves are under the control and surveillance of the Americans. Thus, any uprisings from the region, whether it is seeking democracy or raising human rights issues are contrary to the interest of the United States and deserve to be cracked down, that is the real policy of the West to the Middle Eastern countries

in the region. The militarization of the region produced lingering conflicts between the Arabs and the Israelis, security dilemma, the war and the fear of war among or/and within the states in the Middle East which impacted on the state–society relations the entire states in the region.

Given the emphasis on this point, the chaos in Yemen is a major setback against the America's 'War against Terror' which Yemen was one of its key players in the Arabian Peninsula and laboratory of its drone operations²⁸. For this matter, control of Yemen by Iranian-allied groups is a blow to the U.S. interest in Yemen. However, Iran's government repeatedly denies all these charges and its relations with the rebels in Yemen and regards it as 'false' and 'baseless' fabricated by foreign powers and enemies of Iran (Alexander, 2010; Peter, 2015; Sungtae, 2015). In fact, Americans haven't lost Yemen in post-Arab Spring period, but, the America's war against the Sunni-led Government in Iraq in 2003 was a blow both to the Sunni states in the region and the U.S. itself, and gave a window of opportunity to the Iranians who were an arch-foe and rival of the Iraqi Government led by the late Saddam Hussein (Anthony & Sam, 2014). Not only against the Saddam regime, but Iran also is critical against the America's presence, interests, and policies in the region, including the State of Israel²⁹.

Hence, the America's political mistakes and miscalculations to the region, and the removal of Saddam Hussein from the power served as a precursor for the Iranian influence not only in Iraq, which Shia-led Government came to power, but Iran also expands its influence in the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula following the Arab Spring (Ephraim, 2012). This doesn't mean that the Iranians involvement in Yemen is a new phenomenon, but indeed, the Iranian engagement in the Yemeni internal affairs dates back for centuries, even before the emergence of Islam as a religion in the 7th century (Alexander, 2010; Peter, 2015).

An equally important feature of the Arab coalition military intervention is to impede the Iranian influence in Yemen, thus ensure their national interests and safeguard the Government in Yemen. Hence, Yemen, as a member of both the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Saudi Arabia was successful in influencing the policies in Yemen (Alexander, 2010; Peter, 2015). Not only the Saudis, but also Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar; play a significant role in Yemen politics (ICG, 2013). Undeniably, the Gulf States have not lost Yemen when the Iranian-allied rebels ousted the legitimate Government of Yemen, but, they lost it when the Gulf States entirely celebrated and highly praised the America's unilateral invasion of Iraq and its subsequent removal from the power a Sunni-led Government in 2003. Without doubt, the Iranians have a strong influence in the Iraqi politics in post-Saddam period as a Shia-led Government is in power. In this respect, the support and assistance of the Houthis by the Iranians should be regarded another milestone and a political maneuver aimed to control one of the most significant regions in the Arabian Peninsula. The Iranian influence in this particular region is not favorable to the Saudis and its allies.

6. THE CONFLICT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HORN OF AFRICA

The Horn of Africa and Yemen have interlinked history and naturally attached each other. The Horn region bridges Africa, Arabia and India rooted in the ancient human civilizations. This makes the two regions, the Horn and the Arabian Peninsula, influence each other in the political, social, and economic as well as security terms (Robert, 2005; Nasir, 2014). During the Cold War, the Horn of Africa for instance, was caught up in the strategic military and political policies of both the Soviet Union and the United States (Schwab, 1978) which severely impacted not only on the Horn African region, but also other neighboring regions such as the Middle East which has the largest reserve oil in the globe.

The political vulnerability or fragility in Yemen will give a room and opportunity for multidimensional actors that benefit the situation which bothering and deeply discouraging the people of Yemen and breaking their hope. The Saudi-led coalition air raids on Houthi targets attached with geopolitical interests, and the 'War on Terror' have not helped the Yemeni state stabilization efforts³⁰. But, these recent developments in Yemen invited new actors that involve in the Yemeni internal dynamics and spreading to the other neighboring regions such as the Horn of Africa. Because of this, the Horn of Africa has its own concerns, thus has a fear that instability in Yemeni will send waves of refugees to its borders which could have an adversary impact on the Horn security.

The influx of refugees into the Horn region perhaps may lead the region to be a battleground of the 'violent elements' who are escaping the Yemeni conflict and going along with the refugees coming to the region for one hand, and the Americans and its allies for the other. This kind of conflict will complicate the situation in the Horn of Africa which is

²⁸ On a regular basis, the Americans carry out drone operations. These operations are mainly targeted to the Islamist elements affiliated with *Al-Qaeda* based out in south–central Yemen as well as Somalia to dismantle their networks including killing their leaders

²⁹ Iran regards the State of Israel as an illegally established state in the heart of the Muslim world. For several times, former president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad publicly declared that the Israeli State deserves to be wiped out from the map of the world

³⁰ Ibid., 2.

already deteriorating³¹. The Horn of Africa has long been the victim of the Yemeni weapons, for instance, Yemen was the source of weapons that used by the self-appointed warlords in Somalia throughout the post-state collapse period (Ken, 2008; Alexander, 2010).

In 1991, the Somalia central authority for all intents and purposes came to an end and its institutions collapsed and ceased to function as a state (ICG, 2006; John, 2007). The Somalia conflict has had an impact on the neighboring countries including Yemen. Due to the conflict, thousands of Somalis crossed the Red Sea and get refuge and shelter from the Yemeni Government. Since then, it has been the home of the largest Somali refugees in the Arabian Peninsula and the main source of small arms, and also a primary transit stop for Somali migrants seeking employment opportunities in the Gulf region (Ken, 2008). The Yemeni host to the refugees has a reason; in fact, Yemen is regarded the natural friend of the Somalis on the one hand, while Yemen has signed the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol which removed geographical and restrictions from the Convention on the other. Therefore, it is the only country in the Arabian Peninsula that has signed the Convention and its subsequent Protocols (Alexander, 2010).

Not different from the Somalia's political conflagration and instability, the conflict in Yemen has an adversary impact on societies in the Horn of Africa, which could be linked to its proximity and socio-cultural and economic connection with the region. One of the emerging challenges and perhaps threats against the Horn of Africa is the arrival of refugees' from Yemen³². In the current conflict, thousands of Somalis and Yemenis as well as other ethnic groups in the Horn of Africa fled in the opposite direction and get refuge the regions on the other side of the Red Sea, such as Djibouti, Somaliland, Puntland and Somalia³³. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) thousands of Yemenis, and others previously from the Horn region reached Djibouti, Somaliland and Puntland³⁴. For instance, Somaliland Minister of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction announced that Somaliland has received 900 families of Yemeni refugees comprising around 3,000 individuals as well as other ethnic groupings from the Horn region³⁵.

In reality, there are legitimate concerns both from the region and beyond, though appear exaggerated state that Somalia will become a cradle and a safe-haven to members of *Al-Qaeda* fleeing Yemeni conflict³⁶. Although *Al-Shabab* of Somalia announced its merger with *Al-Qaeda* and its operatives in the Arabian Peninsula, it has not yet offered direct support to that network³⁷. The recent political developments in Yemen and the expansion of the Houthis influence in many parts of Yemen as well, is a blow to the Sunni radical elements present in Yemen. Therefore, the possibility those *Al-Qaeda* operatives in the Arabian Peninsula may go along with the refugees to join their violent comrades in the region, such as *Al-Shabab* cannot be underestimated³⁸. This will pose security threats in this volatile region³⁹. For the time being, *Al-Shabab* spreads its operations in Kenya aimed to press Kenya drive out and end its military presence in Somalia⁴⁰. Not only in Kenya, but also *Al-Shabab* carried out suicide attacks both in Djibouti and Uganda capitals killing a number of people⁴¹.

On the other hand, the various Somali authorities in the Horn of Africa, including Somaliland, Puntland, and the Somalia's Federal Government, without hesitation sided with the Saudi-led coalition storming against the Houthis. A

³¹ In the Horn of Africa, there are concerns that related to security issues. Since the Horn of Africa shares people, religion and culture with Yemen, and economically interdependent each other for centuries, the conflict without doubt, have both socioeconomic, and security impacts on the Horn region

³² Ibid., 2.

³³ Yemen Situation Emergency Response (April - September 2015) Supplementary Appeal 2015, available at

<http://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-situation-emergency-response-april-september-2015-supplementary-appeal-2015>

³⁴ UNHCR reports some 900 refugee arrivals in Horn of Africa from Yemen, operations inside Yemen continue, available at

<http://www.unhcr.org/552799a79.html>

³⁵ In June, 2015, in a press conference held by Somaliland Minister of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, stated the exact number of refugees from Yemen that reached Somaliland so far

³⁶ Discussions with an academic and political writer on the Horn of Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

³⁷ In February, 2012, hundreds of Somalis gathered on the outskirts of Mogadishu to celebrate the union of *Al-Shabab* with *Al-Qaeda*, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/15/al-qaedas-merger/>

³⁸ Ibid., 2.

³⁹ The UN warns that trouble in Yemen could open a corridor for so-called jihadists through Somalia, available at

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2015/05/crisis-yemen-horn-africa-150521172613744.html>

⁴⁰ Though the Kenyan troops are in the Somalia territory, on the other hand, elements of the Islamists are infiltrating deep into the Kenyan territory targeting the economic infrastructures in particular the tourism sector which is one of the Kenya's sources of revenues. For instance, the Islamists carried out a number of operations in the Lamu tourist resort and killed dozens of Kenyan citizens. Not only in Lamu, but different places in separate attacks, including the most recent deadliest attack that the Islamists targeted the Garissa University College, which claimed the lives of 148 students. These are some attacks, but there are other incursions which frequently carried out by those elements in Kenya

⁴¹ In 2010 and 2014, *Al-Shabab* elements carried out suicide attacks in Uganda and Djibouti capitals respectively, killing dozens of both Djiboutian and Ugandan citizens

large question mark remains over the extent to which the Somali leaders have analyzed the impact of their support for the security and safety of the thousands of the Somali refugees living in Yemen, which relied on the support and assistance of the Yemeni citizens who are under the fire of the Saudi-led forces. It is unfair to underestimate the Houthis both their political and defense capability; the Houthis have a strong presence on the ground with security and administration capacity. According the ICG Report (2014) the Houthis controls a large territory in Yemen and provides both security and justice in the areas under their control, thus, gained political and moral support from the grassroots.

Therefore, the overwhelming question regarding the position of the Somali leaders is the extent to which the Somalis are aware the possible retaliation from the Houthis who may revenge the Somali refugees in Yemen if the situation persists and deteriorates. What is the Somalis role in the war against the Houthis and what are the benefits associated with supporting the Gulf States military offensives against the Yemeni state?⁴² Though it is neither confirmed nor denied by Somali authorities, the Gulf States in particular the United Arab Emirates with the support of Saudi Arabia pledged the Somalis millions of dollars in return facilitate the Arab coalition operations against the Iranian-allied Houthi militia, particularly offering the coalition to have access to the Somali airspaces and waters, especially the Berbera Airport, which is facing Yemen.

Not only offer its facilities, but send Somali troops to the Gulf to take part the ground military offensive planned to deploy against the Houthis⁴³. In Somaliland for instance, the latter brought the opposition political parties and independent politicians and the public at large in protest and regarded it as illegal, ridiculous, and contrary to the constitution and other rules of the state. Though the Government of Somaliland clearly denied and labeled it as baseless fabricated by domestic political opponents, there are other sources which confirm its existence, but connecting it to training opportunities offered by the UAE to the Somaliland armed forces. If the latter is true, offering training opportunities to over hundreds of military personnel all at once raise critical questions against the Somaliland statehood status⁴⁴. As usual, Somaliland officials entertain the public, conceal or misrepresent the truth which in one way or another unveils the deceptive character of those who run the state.

For one reason or another, the war against Houthis is a politically-driven war aimed to secure the strategic locations of the Arabian Peninsula and impede the Iranian influence and its aspiration for regional hegemony. Therefore, the question arises here is the extent to which the Somali position affects their relations with the Shia Muslims. The idea that the conflict in Yemen is a Sunni–Shia conflict is ludicrous, but it is a war driven by geopolitical and geostrategic interests. The competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia for regional supremacy and hegemony is in reality exacerbating a number of existing disputes in the region, where the two powers are backing different opposing sides, for instance, in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen (Peter, 2015; Sungtae, 2015).

For a long time, Saudi Arabia was the regional backer of the Yemeni ruling elites and was involved in the Yemeni internal dynamics long before the emergence of the Houthis forces. In the 1960s, when the civil war broke out in the northern part of Yemen, both Saudi Arabia and Egypt maintained disparate positions in regards to the conflict, for instance, Saudi Arabia supported and extended financial assistance to pro-royalist forces, while Egypt supported and supplied troops and other military equipment and supplies to the revolutionary Government and the republican forces⁴⁵. Interestingly, nearly after five decades, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are against the Houthis and share common position⁴⁶. In the post-Houthis emergence period, Saudi Arabia adopted security and military approaches combined, therefore, making security and military response the prime priorities in its relation to Yemen.

7. THE PROSPECTS OF THE YEMENI STATE

Since the unification of Yemen in 1990, the most significant actors that involved in the Yemen's internal politics are the regional governments and the U.S. who are pursuing their own interests and militant Islamists (ICG, 2003). Hence, due

⁴² Ibid., 15.

⁴³ The Somaliland President visited the UAE in June, 2015, regarded by many as a persuasion to permit the coalition air forces use the Berbera airspace, a Soviet constructed military airport stretched along the Red Sea. In return, the UAE offered Somaliland various development projects costing millions of dollars. On the same day, the UAE Minister for Foreign Affairs paid an official visit to Mogadishu and has had discussions with the Somalia Federal Government officials including the President. Indeed, there are strong arguments which link these UAE political maneuvers in the Somalia regions as part of an Arab initiative that planned recruiting thousands of Somalis to join the ground offensive troops that the Arab States planned to deploy against the Houthis

⁴⁴ The Arab States are entirely pro-Somali Unity and not in favor of the Somaliland separation from the rest of Somalia. Therefore, the current engagement of the Gulf States to Somaliland what does it means? Is it favourable to Somaliland interest and its long awaited demand to *de jure* recognition? Or it is an interest of the Arab States which has a relation to the Yemen's deteriorating situation

⁴⁵ North Yemen Civil War (1962–1970) available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/yemen.htm>

⁴⁶ In this conflict, not only Saudi Arabia and Egypt, but all the Sunni States maintained a common position for political and sectarian reasons

to numerous differences among the Yemeni internal political actors, those foreign powers have managed to penetrate deep into Yemen's internal affairs for their own interests. Thus, the opportunistic interference escalated the deteriorating living conditions of the Yemeni people. For instance, Saudi Arabia with the public support of the Americans has involved in the Yemeni domestic affairs in post-2014 aimed to fight the Houthis elements in Yemen, which resulted many death casualties among the Yemeni unarmed citizens and destroyed properties and state infrastructures. This intervention had no contribution for the ordinary Yemenis, for whom life is not getting any easier, but beyond doubt is a state destroying operation⁴⁷.

Without doubt, Yemen will likely confront a number of challenges which equally affect the peace and stability of the Yemeni state. These challenges have local, regional, as well as international dimensions which practically involved in the Yemeni's troubles. There is no doubt that the peace, security and stability in Yemen are necessary to the region in general and the neighboring states in particular. Instability and insecurity in one country in the region can spread and affect other countries in one way or another. However, the fact that Yemen's conflict is complicated and involved by multiple actors is evident; without doubt, this conflict invited different external actors, such as transnational violent extremist elements, regional and other distant state benefactors.

The external actors have different and diverse interests in regards to Yemen, for instance, there is a fundamental difference between the Saudis and the Iranians in resolving the Yemen internal political conflict and its prolonged state fragility⁴⁸. For this reason and for many others, one may question to the extent that external actors engaging in the Yemeni internal affairs can bring sustainable peace and stability? And how do their actions help the prospects for a more resilient political settlement? Confidently, this study dismisses that the external actors, both from the region and beyond will bring peace and stability to Yemen, and this will not likely produce sustainable peace and bring together with the internal actors into one place with a unified objective. Despite the fact that the conflict in Yemen has international implications in peace and security, international action is suitable for providing facilities and other logistical elements and supporting the Yemeni state institutions and peace building efforts take a breath, and encourage the local peoples' engagement and willingness for peace and stability.

Ending the involvement of external actors in Yemen's internal politics and dynamics will open a window of opportunity for building peace and the state as well. The conditions and risks that have sustained the conflict in Yemen continue to exist, such as: the presence of the strong influence of external actors, the fragility of the state in terms of governance and security, presence of a society driven by tribal politics; poverty and misery among the citizens, the presence of violent extremist elements, such as the *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* and the Islamic State; and deeply disorganized international community with competing interests.

Therefore, Yemenis should be given a chance to settle their differences which have an impact on the Yemenis at large. According to this suggestion, any determination to the Yemeni conflict needs endogenous methods and traditional knowledge of facilitation and conflict resolution since it affects the internal peace and security of the Yemeni citizens as well as their destiny. Without a unified grassroots involvement, it is difficult to foresee a prospect of a sustainable peace and stability in Yemen. For that reason, there is a need to reconstitute the state's public and political institutions to seem as a genuine inclusive national governance system to restore the trust and the long-awaited expectation of the citizens. This initiative to generate new vibrant state–society relations that will help the state in overcoming the very weaknesses of its institutions should come from within not from outside to sustain the Yemen's state governance system, thus, strengthen the capacity of the state in the long-term.

8. CONCLUSION

Since the Arab Spring, Yemen has remained in a state of chaos and anarchic situation resulted from the war between the Government loyalists on the one hand, and the Houthis and its allied groups on the other, who sheltered their respective tribes and used it as a means to mobilize both human and financial resources. This conflict has both internal and external dimensions, for instance, the role of external actors in escalating the Yemen's problems is not absent, but remains a constant and an active player. Yemen problem indeed, is multidimensional; and the state became a victim of multiple external interventions both from the region and beyond. In this case, the '*War on Terror*' is one dimension of the conflict and made Yemen a battlefield of the Americans and the Islamist groups affiliated with *Al-Qaeda*. This war has not helped the ordinary Yemenis, but had and still has an adversary impact on their livelihoods, for example, America targets and launch drone attacks against suspects linked to the terror networks as the Americans claim, but indiscriminately kills innocent civilians the entire southern regions of Yemen.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

In the regional context, the Gulf States consistently engaged in the Yemen's internal politics, both pre- and post-conflict period. The Saudi-led military operation against the Houthis for one reason or another is a politically-driven intervention aimed to achieve particular political goals. In this highly advanced degree of intervention, the coalition achieved a little in cracking down the rebels or at least impedes their advancement to the southern part of the country, but the threats and danger of the Houthis and its allied groups remain serious. However, the onset of the Saudi intervention represents a historic opportunity for the Saudis and other Gulf States that can be used to impede the Iranian influence in the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Hence, the conflicting interests of the regional states, as well as the internal division of the Yemen's political elites made the Yemen's hope to restore peace and order uncertain.

Without blaming the regional and distant actors who are after their own national interests, the Yemeni solution remains in the hands of the Yemenis through their own mechanisms. For peace and stability to happen, *Yemenization* of the conflict is necessary and remains the most significant factor that needs to be taken into account, thus define their fate and generate durable institutions. Indeed, peacemaking must accommodate the efforts of all sectors of the society to address the underlying causes of violence and prepare the space and the environment in which the local people interact with and further understand each other. It is grassroots engagement that can produce sustainable and long lasting stability, thus, empowering, allowing and facilitating local peacebuilding mechanisms are necessary. But, the support of the international community in addressing those underlying factors is also crucial. Nevertheless, the nature of political change in Yemen will depend greatly on the capacity of all-inclusive modern political institutions saturated in human rights norms, accountability, transparency, meritocracy and positive political morality.

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