Impediments of Political Development and International threats in Yemen

Ahmad Zaidon 1, Iman Jafarian
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Humanities, Aden University, Yemen
Department of Political Science, University of Hormozgan, Iran

Abstract
At present, the concept of democracy has turned into a universally popular notion. The nature of participation through political behavior has become meaningful as has happened to the approach to urban life and its values as well as the desirable democracy. Political participation is considered to be one of the foundations of democracy and ground for political growth. It is to be noted that political participation determines the fate of nations. This survey seeks to investigate the grounds for the barriers of the success of political development in Yemen. Moreover, it would be highly helpful in dealing with national and international threats to understand the effective factors in decision-making, namely religious, social and political gaps in Yemen. The article aims at looking into and elucidating the grounds upon which the prevention of political development in Yemen which has occurred for a long time, might be explained.

Keywords: Yemen; Political Developments; Islamic Radicalism; Democracy

1. Introduction
Seemingly, the Arab nations have, for a long time, regarded the politics as a short-sighted matter. The principal question in this respect concerns the reasons for the failure to achieve political development and its impediments in Yemen. This research is based on the hypothesis that since a popular government has not yet been established in Yemen, there is a determinate barrier to achieving political development. It does not seek to recognize the political development as a maximal ideal system governing all aspects of life. However, it is to be regarded as a type of existing political systems and a sort of governance. In this form, political authority is mainly based on a political and legitimate ground which as a result, arises from a highly credited political election through which the votes and satisfaction of citizens are supposed to be determinative [1].

2. Religious Gaps
The population of Yemen is highly diverse in its religious distribution, including Jews, Christians, and their respective sects. Furthermore, there are many Islamic sects, the most important kinds of them are as follows: Shiite sect, including Zaidiyyah, Ismailia, Asna Ashri and Hanbali, Shafi'i, Salafi, Hanafi, among the Sunnis [2]. In this research, two main sects of Yemeni Muslims, Shafi’i and Zaidiyyah, would be examined.

2.1 Shafi’i and their beliefs
Shafi’i refers to the followers of Abū ʿAbdullāh Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī. He was a moderate cleric and expert. His beliefs were a combination of the Iraqi and Hijazi schools of jurisprudence. There is a slight difference in faith between Shafi’i sect and other three sects of Sunni Islam whose integrity is based on three pre-conditions, including the tongue confesses, to accept your sins with your heart and to perform the pillars. Respecting these

1 Corresponding author email: ahmad.z.1909@gmail.com
conditions increases obedience and elimination of the sin [3].
Their beliefs can be listed as follows:
1) To believe in the eternity of God, given all his features, and not to resemble God to other creatures.
2) To believe that Quran is not made by humans but created by God and to believe in heaven and hell and to believe in the grave punishment and to believe that Nakir and Monkar, two angels would question everyone.
3) To believe in the intercession of the prophet and his ascent to ascension.
4) To believe in the fact that humans shall be responsible for their deeds.
5) To believe in the legitimacy of the Rashidun Caliphate (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali) and not to consider the event of Ghadir Khumm.
6) To believe in Hadith and to oppose the theology [4].

2.2 Zaidiyyah and their beliefs
The establishment of this sect which is one of the main sects of Shia may be traced back to the early 8th century AD.
It was first created by two groups of Shia Muslims from Kufa, namely Jaroudiah and Batriyya [5]. This sect had constantly been rebelling against the oppression and cruelty of the central governments, and they had always attempted to challenge its authority and control through rebellions. Zaidiyyah has persistently been active in the northern portion of Iran and plains and Yemen throughout its existence. Moreover, its followers were divided into two sub-sections. Their main beliefs are categorized as follows:
1) Rebelling against cruel and ruthless governments in all situations is mandatory.
2) It is not necessary for Imam to be aware of precedent.
3) There is no need for chastity as a requirement of the pontificate [6].
Zaidiyyah consists of three principal sects:

2.2.1 Jaroudiah
Abul Jaroud Ziyad ibn Mansur founded this sect. He is also known as Shorobiyah. The beliefs of this sect are as follows:
The prophet Muhammad never stipulated the name of Imam Ali, Imam Hassan, and Imam Hussein to be his successors and prescribed their Imamate only as a sort of description which means that the position of Imamate is only confined to the family of Fatima Zahra and would not be out of it. Imam Ali is the truest example of a Muslim after the prophet. Also, we must also admit the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman [7].

2.2.2 Sulaymaniyya
Sulayman ibn Jarir founded this sect whose beliefs are as followed:
While Imam Ali considered the best companion of the prophet, the other companions were not sinful for choosing Abu Bakr for Caliphate. This mistake was due to the respect for Ijtihad not a sort of sin. They only deduced something new about the person supposed to be the legitimate successor of the prophet. Avoiding the thoughts of Uthman was required as he prepared the grounds for political domination of Umayyads. Those who opposed Imam Ali and fought against him are deviant. No one may be exempted. Imam is not needed to be a descendant of Fatima. It is enough that he has justice, courage, and capability of fighting and rebelling with a sword.

2.2.3 Saliiyya
Hasan ibn Salih founded this sect. Its beliefs are as follows:
Imam Ali is considered to be the best companion of the prophet. He has priority over other companions for pontificate [6].

3. Social Gap
Yemen is structured simply, while it is complicated in other structures. As a simply-structured country, the dominant cultural sphere in this country is laid down in tribalism and tribal living styles. On the other hand, while it seems to be structured simply, it has confronted with major gaps which have made it difficult for rulers to make stable governance over this country. These features have made it a complicated-structured country.
Throughout history, Yemen has been divided into two main parts, the northern and southern parts. The northern part is impassable and full of mountains, while the southern part is smooth. The northern part had been known as a quite stable region and a different part of the country when Imam Zaydi formed Zaidiyyah sect in 818 AD. In contrast, the southern part of the country had been under the influence of different civilizations, cultures, and empires. The governments had always endeavored to dominate over this region, because of its vicinity to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, having a view of Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Throughout history, Romans, Ayyubids and then Great Britain ruled over the southern region of Yemen, in particular, the port of Aden [5]. After the commencement of Cold War, Yemen was divided into two separate States, namely Northern Yemen and Southern Yemen, the first one was an ally of the Soviet Union and the second one allied with the West. Both of them experienced revolutions in the 1960s. In Northern Yemen, the Republicans who opposed to the Imamate system came to power through a coup in 1962 and formed the Yemen Arab Republic.
After 130 years of British dominance over the port of Aden, Southern Yemen attained independence in 1967 after a successful revolutionary movement. Subsequently, the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen was established. Northern Yemen was under the profound influence of religious separations and tribal society, including two main tribal federations namely Hashid and Bakil. On the contrary, Southern Yemen enjoyed a secular political regime, respecting human rights and women’s rights [6].

4. Political Gaps
Islamism in Yemen can be divided into five distinct parties as follows:

1) Violent Jihadi armed groups
2) Zaydi groups
3) Muslim Brotherhood political party
4) Salafism
5) Sufism

In this part, we will examine some of the Islamic radical groups, including Al-Qaeda (Sunni) and Houthis (Shiite) [7-9].

4.1 Houthis
Hussein al-Houthi endeavored to unite the Zaydi tribes under a single flag by construing the teachings of Zaidyyah sect. He believed that the prayer is acceptable before God only if it is followed by the slogan of death to Israel and Zionism. In this respect, his followers continued this ritual after their prayers and nowadays the white flag of the Houthi movement is derived from this slogan. His teachings brought about the anti-western thoughts under the attention. Meanwhile, six major fighting happened between Houthis and governmental forces [5].

In 2004, after a complaint by several Yemeni Jews to the local government, three soldiers were sent to the residence of Hussein al-Houthi. The followers of al-Houthi killed all of them, and this incident triggered the first civil war between the government and the Houthi which ended after Hussein al-Houthi was killed.

In March 2005, the second phase of the civil war started when Badreddin Al-Houthi was summoned to Sana’a to consult with the central government. However, he was arrested and shortly after, escaped the house-arrest, while he did not meet Ali Abdullah Saleh. Subsequently, the government launched several attacks against Houthis in the Saada region which finally ended in April 2005.

The third phase of this conflict erupted in July 2005 under the leadership of the younger son of Abdul-Malik al-Houthi. After less than a year, the conflict ended as to provide a secure framework for the elections which were going to be held in 2006 [10]. Furthermore, the next phase of the war began in 2007 following the alleged expulsion of Jews from the Saada region under the direction of al-Houthi. Later, the mediation by Qatar and signing a truce agreement brought an end to this war. The expansion of Houthis’ territory and the possibility of their dominance over Bani Hashish area resulted in the commencement of the 5th phase of the war in May 2008, which ended two months later after the president of Yemen issued a declaration in the 30th anniversary of his coming to power.


4.2 Al-Qaeda
Islamist combatants are an extricable part of Al-Qaeda movement. It is noteworthy that in the early 1970s an Islamic militant organization called Moahede Al Alamalieh played a crucial role in the political sphere of Yemen. They spread extremist Islamic ideologies and teachings [12]. These extremist forces moved to Afghanistan to fight as warriors in the ongoing conflict against the Soviet Union and to get back to Yemen.

In 1993, after the Parliamentary election, a political coalition was formed with the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (al-Islah) and General People’s Congress party. Accordingly, al-Islah party attained much influence in the political sphere of Yemen. As a result, Yemen turned to a haven for the fighters and extremist Islamists coming back from Afghanistan. Yemen became a center for activities –along with Saudi Arabia- of these warriors who called themselves Afghan Arabs [13-16]. After the unification of Yemen which coincided with the end of the conflict in Afghanistan in 1990, Al-Qaeda gradually changed its side as an ally of the U.S.A and Saudi Arabia and became their enemy. One of the main instances of Al-Qaeda strikes against the U.S. troops occurred on 12 October 2000 in the port of Aden through a suicide attack in a battleship called USS Cole Model leading to the death of 17 American forces.

5. Conclusion
In this respect, it shall be reminded that in the past two decades, there have been some significant global changes which have brought about the need for better conditions. Moreover, the strict cultural separation in the religious milieu of Yemen has been due to the existence of a diverse composition of religions and sects, including Muslims (Shiite, Sunni, Sufi, Alawites, and Wahhabism), Christians (Assyrians, Orthodox, and Protestants) and Jews.

Based on the recent events in the politics of Yemen, it could be inferred that despite the growth of democracy in this country, lack of developed regions and non-presence of a stable and long-term
traditional and tribal culture have been undeniable berries for achieving a successful structure. As a matter of fact, no one can deny that on the ground of cultural, political and religious separations, societies may have serious problems in achieving the consensus on the political prospects. This is a dominant and distinctive characteristic of Arab nations in the Middle-East.

There is also another problem with the fragmentation in education levels between the urban and rural population in the Yemeni society which is a considerable obstacle in making long-term decisions. Since the sense of nationalism has not yet been formed in Yemen even thirty years after its unification as well as the religious, political and social fragmentation in this country, there has not been any success in establishing a national central government. Therefore, the political development would not be achieved unless an efficient solution could be found for the abovementioned difficulties.

References