

## The Multi Ethnics (Tribal / Doctrine) In Yemen, The Case of Houthi Movement

التعددية الاثنية (القبيلية / المذهبية) باليمن: الحركة الحوثية أنموذجاً

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### Abstract (English):

The term multi ethnics minority means the multiple and diversity as well as the difference, A country can explode because of inner conflicts since both environments are completely different in term of functions, every time the conflict rises between ethnics groups and the state as a part in the conflict, the political stability will fall, and as a result the country is ranked in the list of the failed country.

This survey aims to go further in the multi ethnics minority and it's impact on the political stability in Yemen, thus we will study the social and cultural structure of the tribal spirit of the Yemen society, and the relation of the Houthi movement with the Yemen stability.

**Keywords:** Ethnics Pluralism; Political Instability; Democratic Changes; Houthi Movement.

### ملخص باللغة العربية

إن مصطلح التعددية الإثنية يحمل في طياته معنى التعدد والتنوع، وكذا الاختلاف، فقد تتمزق الدول نتيجة للتعارض والصراع الداخلي تماماً مثل التدمير على أيدي قوى خارجية. وكلتا البيئتين غير منفصلتين وظيفياً، فكلما زادت حدة الخلافات والصراعات بين الجماعات الإثنية فيما بينها، وبين الدولة كطرف في النزاع ينهار الاستقرار السياسي، وبالتالي تصنف الدولة في خانة الدولة الفاشلة.

وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعمق في دراسة حالة التعددية الإثنية وتأثيرها على عملية الاستقرار السياسي باليمن، حيث نتناول فيها البنية الاجتماعية والثقافية، والتكوين القبلي/الإثني للمجتمع اليمني، ثم الحركة الحوثية وعلاقتها بالاستقرار باليمن. الكلمات المفتاحية: التعددية الإثنية؛ الاستقرار السياسي؛ التحول الديمقراطي؛ الحركة الحوثية.

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## 1- Introduction :

The etymological meaning of the multi ethnics group is linked with a series of characteristics and specifications of a group of people comparing with the rest of the society components groups . Ethnic means also difference and diversity comparing with the other group of people within the same society, thus the meaning of the ethnic is close to several meanings like ethnic minority, ethnic obedience and tribal spirit.

The ethnic pluralism is always seen as time bomb within the country, and since it's explode it will become the principal obstacle toward the political stability, especially if this minority is trying to cut ties with the central state authority. However, we cannot declare of the negative or the positive side of the multi ethnics groups with the safety political instability.

In the case of the developed countries especially the European countries, we can say the multi ethnics groups will help to strengthen the state system and it's legality, because the multi ethnics groups will help to establish democratic and federal system of ruling a country as well as the political decentralization with all its shapes.

Yet, In the under developed countries the term multi ethnics groups refers to insecurity and instability instead of being a power force for development and prosperity, it's a weak point used by anyone who wants to achieve a project by the use of the gap between classes and minorities in the same country with the ethnic minority differences, ethnic obedience and cultural differences.

For the Arab area, it is still suffering of the negative effects of multi ethnics group and in the first position the tribal spirit, the religious doctrine, which is a big obstacle for the democratic process in this area, especially Yemen.

Talking about the multi ethnic groups in Yemen will lead us to talk about the "Houthi Movement" as a religious minority ethnic group with a political aspect and a military dimension, thus the democratic changes in Yemen is suffering from the power of this movement and the regional support, in this sense we can ask the following questions:

How can the doctrinal and tribal multi ethnic groups affect the security and the political stability in Yemen?

From this principal question we will have a series of questions:

- 1- What is the social and cultural components of the Yemenite society?
- 2- What are the principles tribal ethnic group in Yemen?
- 3- How can the Houthi Movement affect the stability of Yemen?

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In order to answer the principal questions and these 03 questions we may propose the following hypothesis.

- 1) - There is a linked relation between the multi ethnics groups and the political stability of the countries.
- 2) - There is a functional relation between the home and foreign stability of the political system.

## **2- The Survey Aims**

Our study aims to shed the light on the nature between different variations of the ethnic group and the political stability, and how can this ethnic pluralism develops the different divisions in the state components, we will follow the descriptive method in our study by counting the phenomena of the ethnic pluralism steps and the different negative effects on the state .

## **3- The Importance of the Study.**

The topic of this study is of a very tremendous importance in the field of political sciences and international relationships, thus the ethnic pluralism is like a pressure card that can be used by any exterior enemy to threaten the national security in one hand , in the other hand , this study is about the variant of the ethnic pluralism which represents the political stability and its relation with ethnic pluralism as well as, the impact on the societies development, and the aspects and parts affecting the Yemen as a country and the Arab area in general .

## **4-Previous studies:**

We have noticed many previous studies concerning our topic, among these studies we may mention the work of "Ahmed Houcine Elridi" entitled "the regional Yemenite policy within the international changes 1995-2005" (الريدي، 2010) (2010), the author of this work focuses on the international changes and regional changes impacting on foreign Yemenite policy as well as the regional Yemenite policy, that we have taken as political and social structure of Yemen, but we consider that the study neglected the impact of the Houthi movement on the regional area which impact the middle east relationships and especially between Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran and the new factor in the area the United Arab emirates .

The author analyzed the point of "Even war discriminates Yemen's minorities exiled at home" (Rajji, January 2015) with a study of the Yemen Arab spring in 2011, with hopes for democratic transitions and national dialogue as an issue for the Yemenite crisis, the study confirms the violence was between the different parts of the legitimate government, IE, between the president Hadi and Houthi.

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“Tribal Governance and stability in Yemen” (Al-Dawsari, april 2012) is a report of the tribal ruling and the stability in Yemen, since tribal ruling is considered as a partner in governance, even more the state authority was missed in many steps which leads to the growing of the Houthi movement from a minority to political movement, and as a result, we have nowadays the instability in Yemen and countries around as well.

## **5-Definition of Concepts of the Study.**

First of all, we must define the exact terminology in the field of political sciences and international relationships and can be defined in the following points:

### **5-1 Definition of Ethnic Pluralism.**

Mohamed Achour Mehdi defined it as: “There are many specifications for the definition of the ethnic groups which leads to the real concept of the ethnic group such as cultural distinction, the common past, and the singularity of the group”, another definition says that “ Ethnic group is about general specifications existing in a group of people rather than another whatever the specification is like the religious and cultural factor ...” (مهدي، ص30)

### **5-2 Definition of Political Instability.**

Ibn Khaldun defined the political instability as a result of cultural heterogeneous in a country with many tribal groups and minorities, the political instability is widespread because of the division in views.

We may say that political instability is a defect in a political system or in its institutions and a troubles as well or between the political system and the citizens.

### **5-3 The Democratic Changes.**

Mohamed Abed El Djabiri defined it as “ the transfer from a state without any respect for human rights in the wide sense, without any solid basis for institutions, and the power is not taken according to the political majority ... to a state based on these three points” ، (عابد، تموز/يوليو 2006، “ thus, any absence of democratic index like the wise governance, the global development, the peaceful transition, and freedom of speech ..., the democratic changes is the transfer from the lowest level on democracy to the highest level of the western democracy .

### **5-4 The Houthi Movement .**

Abdelkrim Khiwani, the specialist of the Houthi Movement, which is named according to Hocine El Houthi son of Badr Eddine El Houthi, says that the movement was created in an intellectual concept and not a political one with aims, and resolutions in the beginning, as then

majority of the political movements, but some publishing and recordings for Hocine El Houthi in a series of Islamic ideas for a renew in religious field within the Zaidi doctrine.

He added that the name Houthi was given during the Saada war, and the authority called it by this name.

The Houthi Movement was a Chiite minority asking government of Ali Abdallah Salah to improve the life conditions, and during Saada wars the movement acquired military experience with 12 Zaidi doctrine with Iranian support, and thus became a political movement with all state components and after with a powerful army exceeding the Yemenite authority army, asking the independence from Yemen.

## **6-Methods and Approaches of The Study.**

### **6-1 The Historical Method.**

This method will help us to narrate facts and historical events which occurred to the ethnic pluralism in Yemen as well as the instability process, thus history is an essential factor for the political analysis, because it is a source for politicians for asserting or ignoring a phenomenon, event or a theory.

### **6-2 Method A Case Study.**

This method will help us to go deeper in the study of the ethnic pluralism in Yemen as well as the instability process and security, in order to reach results that can be generalized on the whole area or a country that have seen the same conditions and events.

Events that occurred in Yemen are generally seen in Arab area in general.

### **6-3 The Approach of the Relation State / Society. Joel Migdail**

The scientist's approach is based on changes in the political system and the state focusing on impact and influence on the third world countries, the essence of the relation between the state and the society is concerned about the submission of the citizens to reach the national stability and security by the participation of peoples in different programs done by the politicians.

### **6-4 The Approach of the Group.**

The behaviorists school in the field of social sciences in general, and politics precisely focuses on political interactions, and the transfer from the notion of political unit to the analysis of group of people with a common interest.

## 7 - The Study Engineering:

This study will be done according to principal chapters starting with the social and cultural basis of the Yemenite society, then the tribal / ethnic components for the Yemenite society, and at last the Houthi movement and it's relation with the stability in Yemen .

### **Firstly: The Social And Cultural Basis Of The Yemenite Society.**

The basis of the Yemenite society is a natural belonging and innate for human being recognized by the religious and international norms, which is a human development as well as a geographic and religious belonging in addition to ethnic and cultural diversity, and this can be used as a power factor for the state, but the problem arises when this factor is used badly and transforming it to a destructive weapon threatening the national and regional stability and security. (الريدي، 2010، ص211).

We have two views concerning the social components of Yemen,

The first one said the Yemen society is the most homogeneous Arabic societies since there is no ethnic or religious or linguistics minorities.

Yemenite citizens belongs to one Arabic origin divided into two dynasties Kahtani and Adnani, from Kahtani dynasty we have the Yemenite groups which represents the political unity in the social system as well as the other traditional social groups like Judges and the tribal cheikh, the biggest owners and tradesmen, farmers, handicrafts and servants. (الريدي، 2010، ص 211)

The second one said that the country is neither ethnical nor racial homogeneous, which is the truth since there is a series of different ethnic, racial and religious minorities.

The UN commission about the discrimination mentioned that there is no statistics concerning the ethnic composition of the country. Thus there are many ethnic minorities such as the Arab African minorities called "Marginalized" or "servants "and representing 12.7%of the population. most of this population lives in poor areas in big cities like Sanaa, Aden, Taizz, Ibb, Demmar, lahdj and Abine. (Rajji, January 2015, p8)

The survey of mrs: Rania Erradjih entitled " Even war discriminated Yemen 's minorities, exiled at home" mentioned that 99 % of the population are Muslims, 65 % Sunnite,35% chiite. As well as some minorities like Zaidiya Chiite, the biggest ethnic minority, and Ismaili minority known as the second ethnic minority in different part of the country like Aden city. (Rajji, January 2015, p).

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## Secondly: The Tribal /Ethnic Components Of The Yemenite Society.

If the tribal notion is considered in several countries as out of date historical phenomena, it's still a part of the Yemenite society with an impact on social political and voting life, and a state of mind since they have a feeling of belonging to the same social group with a common interest. (الصوفي، ص ص124-125)

The Yemenite society is homogeneous society, without any ethnic minorities outside the social solidity or different in traditions and habits, thus the Yemenite society is tribal in the wide sense. (عيسى، 2012، ص ص123-124)

Some studies mentioned that 80 % of the population has a tribal belonging, local cheikhs are playing a significant role in the interaction with the government and mediation for the claim of the private interests, one the biggest Yemenite tribal we may mention Hached and El Bakil as well as some small groups belongs to these tribals/ social groups, union with a large scale. (martin, 2014, ). The system of tribal litigation management is trying to solve problems in a early step when there is no violence, but has a techniques to solve litigation when violence is settled.

When litigation occurs a kind of mediation started via old men and cheikhs of both parts, they started to discuss and in case of obstacle a third part will enter to mediate and solve the problem, if the case is military they agreed for a ceasefire for a short period of time, and a judge is designated but his function will end if he is not selected, after a long operation of evidences revision, dialogue, meetings with litigated parts, every part has the right for an appeal twice before the other tribal cheikhs, and thus the judgment will become final. (Al-Dawsari, april 2012, p09).

However, the implementation of the judgment is mandatory and under the liability of the concerned part with obligation to present warranties for mediation part. Any crime committed is considered as an offence toward the judge and the warranties holders, in final tribal minorities are liable about their member's behavior and must respect the judgment. In the contrary, when one of the tribal member will not respect the judgment, he will lose his rights and as well, the right for the protection and support from other members. (Al-Dawsari, april 2012, p10).

## Thirdly: The Houthi Movement and it's Relation With The Instability In Yemen.

The geographic limitation between the north and the south was an element for the colonization governance, and an official aspect was given to borders of the north of Yemen after the ottoman era in the Sanna convention in 1934.

In Yemen the idea of an Arab unity with present time expectations was present in the political speech especially in the south, but during the cold war the geographic separation was

discussed since the Republic of Yemen was an ally for soviet union, but after the fall of soviet union, the south of Yemen called for a separation on 1990 (Holzapfe, 2014, p11) .

When we study the chronological order of events, we may say that till November 2020, the Yemen union has seen many troubles, starting from Saada Wars in 1994 till Chabbab revolution in 2011, and the national dialogue to solve the crisis. (martin, 2014, p73).

When the war started against Houthi in 2004 with a little disobedience in Sa'dah city, although the majority of the Yemenite population is Sunnite almost 08 million people representing 30% of the entire population. But since this date, the government persecuted them by creating a thousands of refugees and thousands of died people. (AL-SAKKAF, 2016, p4).

The national dialogue started in December 2011 and finished in February 2013 by the signature of the gulf cooperation committee Salah's party received a strong kick for his political influence, as well as the security elements, and the bureaucracy.

In this sense the president tried hard to stop the opposition of Ali Mohcine El Ahmar and Islah party and in December 2012 he proceed to the dissolution of the army under the supervision of Mohcine which influenced the opposition. (martin, 2014, p73)

The non-official policy followed by the Yemenite elite gave the word "Shebbab" a youth participating in the revolution (Youth revolution or the Yemenite spring) the meaning of uncomfortable, they are seeing this new opposing elite as a mean of creating a new system over interest system with the popular liability which was an obstacle or a difference in youth revolution. (martin, 2014, p55)

The reconciliation method aims to prepare the elite group and the social group warranties to keep their interests with motivating points and cooperation between groups, as well as, the vote system which leads generally to a conciliation between candidates and between political parties on the basis of ethnic group. (Ouma, October 2011, p4).

During the last two decades the federalism was gaining ground but not enough and not a new system in any way. It was as an engine to prepare the union system. the first experience was done with a small regional government with a concentration for a union for economic and security interests such as many former British colonies as Canada India and Nigeria, Pakistan United Arab Emirates to a certain extent. (SAFERWORLD, OCTOBER 2015, p4)

The second and the last wave of federalism wave that constitutes Yemen society is a kind of response of central government with unipolar policy and ethnics. In many times the unipolar government is passing through conflicts and troubles in order to settle peace and stability and



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consolidate the national unity in racial and ethnics environment (SAFERWORLD, OCTOBER 2015, p4).

Generally for an auto governance and regional confederation you must have:

- The Creation of a multiple racial and ethnics unions.
- The setting up of partial representation in the administrative designation such as the amicable decision making centers.
- The setting up of a voting system in a parliamentary shape.
- Thus we may have five possibilities for a conflicts organization.
- The setting up of a mixed union.
- The setting up of a central state.
- To create a majority committee and racial non allied for decision making.
- The setting up of a majority voting system in a sense to get a coalition body before the vote and (Voices Gathering).
- The setting up of general policies about the ethnics and racial minorities. (Ouma, October 2011, p56)

The foreign interference in the management of the racial / ethnics conflicts is an important and necessary element in solving racial conflicts, but this kind of foreign help is always not enough and in all the times, a negative point for conflicts management.

The foreign interference can be non-democratic due to the misunderstanding of home situation that leads to the conflict, in this sense we can mention the Iraqi case and the ethnical conflict is to a large scale a phenomena in this country and the best management must be from the home country .(Ouma, October 2011, p52).

Since the interference of the Saudi Arabia in the Yemenite conflict in 2015 the reasons were clear with some conditions but the result was negative, the Saudis supported the political transition in the beginning of the Arab spring in 2011 and started negotiations with the help of the gulf help committee and implementations ways, in reality, the former king Abdallah Al Saud played a significant role to convince Ali Abdallah Salah to sign the document in November 2011, but although the Saudi retreat in helping Yemen transition, they still positive for the UN resolutions 2219 and 2451, that call for a political solution concerning the ethnics conflict via the dialogue between all parts as mentioned by the gulf help committee., the Saudi kingdom was clear about the unity of Yemen and the stability of all the area .(Report, October 2019, p04).

The interference in Yemen leads to the occupation of the Houthi to the city of Sanaa, and the fall of the transitional government in the time of Abdorabihi Mansour El Hadi.

The Iranian help to the Houthi was as an answer to the Saudi Interference since 2012 whereas the majority of the Yemenite was for the initiative of the gulf help committee, in September 2014 the Iranian support became more and more present and was a kind of a threaten for the south border of the kingdom.

In this frame the Saudi tried to test the conflict in three questions:

- To secure the south borders.
- The absence of the revolution Iranian guards.
- The setting up of a government agreed with the Saudi interests. (Report, October 2019, p04)

The most of all was that Saudi Arabia was for the Houthi participation in the government as a political part but not as a political and military power.

In this context, probably the Saudi Arabia is looking for a new accepted government in Sanaa with Houthi and their allied but asked Houthi to put down their heavy weapons and to accept the security supremacy of the Yemenite government. (Report, October 2019, pp 04-05)

Some views said that military power of the Houthi Movement will help them to control the Yemenite government, and some views said that the military economy will be developed by this movement, this is why some views said that the Houthi Movement aren't ready to start negotiations to end this conflict, thus in 2016 in Koweit and in 2018 in Geneva and Stockholm a was a reasons of confidence in one hand, but in the other hand, the Iranian trouble will have a strategic impact on the Houthi negotiations. (Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°45, 27 March 2015, p6).

Yet, Yemen is going through a long-lasting war and a big separation without a political solution although they reached an agreement in major questions but still enable to stop violence, but with time the trust disappeared and a roadmap for transition with a national commission with two rooms : the upper commission constituted of the parliament majority, and deputies commission constituted of all parts and elements of the national dialogue with the Houthi of course, the south movement, shebbab revolutionary, women and all parts to ensure a national unity government .

Although Mr Abdelmouk El Houthi declared that he would preserve the Yemen unity with the same representative percentage for all minorities in the country, this kind of national harmony between the Houthi Movement and the movement Chiite Zaidi, since both of them are facing a common threaten (30) (Orkaby, March 2015, p06)

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The Houthi Movement was in the past time a marginalized religious movement but are nowadays controlling the north of Yemen and are always asking for a bigger influence in the country with the support of Iran. In 2016 they signed a pact with the former president Abdallah Salah which leads to the end of the peace negotiations with UN support and as a result we have seen the rise of litigate between all parts. (M.Sharp, February 06,2014, p03).

As a consequence, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia closed its biggest southern borders to put an end to the illegal activities, and, both countries signed a convention in a border treaty for Saudi Yemenite borders. (M.Sharp, February 06,2014, p02)

After that the new president started in 2011 to fight the corruption settled up in the period of Salah, so Yemen was ranked 170 in the position of corruption with a total of 176 countries for the year 2016. In 2015 there was a serious effort to solve the political problem, where the Houthi refused to sign the constitution bill, and announced later on, their control over the government.

Thus the UN and the gulf cooperation committee preferred to recognized the Houthi regime, in order to give a legitimating status for the president and support the legislative authorities via continuous military Saudi flights against any Houthi temptation to stop these efforts. (M.Sharp, February 06,2014, p02)

## **8- Conclusion:**

The study of the multi ethnics groups in Yemen is a very complicated topic due to the deep division in this society, thus it's more and more difficult to establish peace, so Yemen is open to every probabilities, because the political stability is linked with the home situation in one hand, and in the second hand, to the regional and international environment .and we may propose certain solutions to this conflict.

The political solution – (United Country), the legal constitutional legitimacy can be established by accepting the peaceful opposition, and this opposition must accept the state as a warrant for national security. i.e The Houthi Movement must stop its military forces and armed violence for a peaceful solution which will give them the participation and sharing the authority.

The institutional solution – legal solution, to establish a democracy they must have an administration with an aim to stop social differences by accepting its ethnical specificity (ethnical, doctrinal, cultural, social, beliefs ...)

Any other solution will lead to a country with two states or more, one sunnite state with the governance of Abdrabih Mansour Haddi, and a Chiite state with the Houthi leading by the

transitional committee, the new factor in the stability of the Yemen who is calling for separation supported in this initiative by U.A.E

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