

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT



**YEMEN IN CRISIS:
WHAT ROLE
FOR
THE EU?**

AFET





DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION

DIRECTORATE B

POLICY DEPARTMENT

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

YEMEN IN CRISIS: WHAT ROLE FOR THE EU?

Abstract

This briefing scrutinises the status of the transitional process taking place in Yemen. It analyses the political, economic, humanitarian and security conditions in Yemen. This briefing aims at helping Members of the European Parliament to have a better understanding of the country's situation and the latest developments. The case of Yemen suggests that overthrowing a despotic regime could be relatively easy but building new democracy to replace it is much harder. Adding to these difficulties is the fact that Yemen remains one of the least developed countries in the region making the short-term socioeconomic impact of the transition pose further challenges. Moreover, the prevailed conflicts in various parts of the country and the absence of state institutions exacerbate the crisis. While the GCC initiative was successful in facilitating the appointment of a new president and forming a new transitional government, it fell short of providing solutions to the massive and intractable challenges threatening the unity and a sustainable peace in Yemen. This briefing provides a policy-oriented action plan to strengthen state building in Yemen, which is the core of many problems Yemen is suffering from. It is only through effective state building that an accountable and transparent state could be created. The EU, in the context of the GCC initiative, can play an important role to facilitate the process of state building in Yemen. This role varies from consultation, training, diffusing experience, to direct contribution to the process.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This briefing scrutinises the status of the transitional process taking place in Yemen. It analyses the political, economic, humanitarian and security conditions in Yemen. This briefing aims at helping Members of the European Parliament to have a better understanding of the country's situation and the latest developments. The case of Yemen suggests that overthrowing a despotic regime could be relatively easy but building new democracy to replace it is much harder. Adding to these difficulties is the fact that Yemen remains one of the least developed countries in the region making the short-term socioeconomic impact of the transition pose further challenges. Moreover, the prevailed conflicts in various parts of the country and the absence of state institutions exacerbate the crisis. While the GCC initiative was successful in facilitating the appointment of a new president and forming a new transitional government, it fell short of providing solutions to the massive and intractable challenges threatening the unity and a sustainable peace in Yemen. This briefing provides a policy-oriented action plan to strengthen state building in Yemen, which is the core of many problems Yemen is suffering from. It is only through effective state building that an accountable and transparent state could be created. The EU, in the context of the GCC initiative, can play an important role to facilitate the process of state building in Yemen. This role varies from consultation, training, diffusing experience, to direct contribution to the process.

1. PRELUDE

Shortly after Arab Spring protests erupted in both Tunisia and Egypt in late 2010 and early 2011, protestors in Yemen took to the streets in large numbers demanding political and economic reforms. Protests were driven by causes not hugely different from their counterparts in other Arab countries. Grievances included dissatisfaction against more than a three-decade long rule of former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and frustration over the lack of economic opportunities, unemployment, corruption, and government inefficiency. Moreover, the weakness of the Yemeni state prevented it from providing basic services and from tackling massive long-term challenges – from the worsening economic situation to declining water resources to transnational terrorist groups.

In November 2011, after months of negotiations amid escalating armed conflict, the main political parties of the country signed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) agreement. The agreement created a two year political transition process. The agreement saw Saleh stepping down from power in exchange for immunity whereas former vice president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, was confirmed as an interim president in a referendum that set in motion the agreed transition process. The building blocks of that process were the formation of a government of national unity and a National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC started in March 2013 and was scheduled to end in September of the same year but had its term extended after groups failed to reach consensus on issues related to the Southern Issue. This issue, however, turns to be the main one in NDC to solve the southern grievances regarding the political and economic inequalities between the southerners and northerners that have escalated lately to call for the south independence. In January 2014, however, the conference concluded with the signing of the NDC Document. However, the violent conflict escalated and prevailed in the country by the *Huthis*. The *Huthis* called (*Ansarullah*) is an off-shoot *Zaydi* militant movement with close ties with Iran and involved in six wars with the state between 2002 and 2010. *Ansarullah* have exploited the rivalry context and with help of some intra players conquered the northern part of Yemen and took over many military regiments and defeated its rivals militarily. With the seizure of the capital *Sana'a* by *Ansarullah* in September 2014, the country has descended into further instability.

2. CAUSES BEHIND THE CURRENT POLITICAL AND SECURITY CRISIS IN YEMEN

Many of the roots of the current political impasse in Yemen can be traced back to the GCC initiative that was signed by the Yemeni president and the opposition in November 2011 to end the political crisis. Although that initiative succeeded in removing Saleh from power, it did not introduce substantive political reforms to pave the way for sustainable peace in Yemen or address the security challenges that the country was facing. The initiative could also be criticised for ignoring the various violations against human rights in the country by giving the ruling party the chance to play a major role in Yemeni politics without adopting any political reforms. In addition, the southern separatist movement (called *Harak*)¹ and the *Huthi* rebellion² (called *Ansarullah* – or God's Partisans) were not included in the GCC initiative, which stipulated that only members of established political parties are to be included in the new government. Consequently, the *Huthis* have been at the forefront of popular criticism of the agreement and its outcome.

¹ The civil protest movement under *Harak*'s banner has been ongoing since 2007. Although initially it focused mainly on a series of grievances and civil rights issues, starting from 2009, elements within the group began to push for secession.

² Some accounts trace the origins of the Shi'i *Huthi* movement back to the 1980s and to a religious movement centred around Zaidi religious leader Hussein Badreddin al-Huthi. Over time, however, they have evolved into a militia, based mainly in the Northern district of *Saa'da*. Between 2004 and 2010, there were six rounds of fighting between the *Huthis* and the government, which alleged that the former were backed by Iran.

From a wider perspective, the GCC initiative is seen as aiming at achieving 'regime renovation' rather than 'regime change' by establishing a fragile peace that has led to the current instability.³ One indicator behind such perception is that although the GCC initiative required Saleh to resign as a president, there was nothing that obliged him to leave the political sphere altogether. Therefore, he was able to shift to a new political position after his resignation from the presidency; namely the head of the General People's Congress (GPC), the former ruling party in Yemen. His occupation of this key post has led Yemenis to believe that Saleh is trying to 'roll back the revolution' and circumvent the initiative made by the GCC.⁴

The consequence was that Yemen went through a period of increased instability and radicalisation of the society. Instead of achieving real reforms and improving the Yemeni conditions, the post-revolution transitional process worsened the situation.⁵ Up until now, the government did not succeed in gaining people's trust as it failed to introduce the required reforms to meet their demands and to provide adequate basic services. One example is power shortages, a situation worsened by the current security challenges and the ongoing attacks.

Furthermore, there were no real efforts from the government's side to achieve the 20 points it previously agreed to in order to deal with the southern issue.⁶ This gave no incentive to separatist groups to hamper their secession calls, including *Ansarullah* that refused to hand its militia's heavy weapons to the government and to participate in the political process. In addition, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)⁷, which has a strong presence in Yemen, found in this unstable condition a golden opportunity to expand by exploiting absence of state institutions and authority.⁸ Adding to that is the fact that in rural Yemen, where AQAP is based, there are few government services, shortages of water supply,⁹ electric power, and job opportunities. In the honour-based culture and poverty of the rural areas, many young men also join AQAP to make a living and to avenge their families. Another category that joins the AQAP is some local prominent figures who have been neglected by the central government for long time and found their desire for a public status met by being a member of AQAP.¹⁰

³ Ibrahim Sharqieh, 'A Lasting Peace: Yemen Long Journey to National Reconciliation', Brookings Doha Center Analysis paper No. 7, February 2013, p. 3.

⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

⁵ Ahmed A. Saif, 'Yemen's Perspective on the WMD-Free Zone in the Middle East', in Paolo Foradori and Martin B. Malin, (eds.), *A WMD-Free Zone in the Middle East: Regional Perspectives*, Project on Managing the Atom, BelferCenter for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, November 2013, p. 41.

⁶ These 20 points included, among others, the establishment of two committees assigned to address the situation of the South (such as civilian and military forces laid-off after the civil war of 1994 and the issue of stolen property following the war), compensation for the violations committed in several Yemeni regions, apologies to the South for the 1994 civil war, the six wars on Sa'ada that ended in 2010 and the release of detainees resulting from those wars.

⁷ Many accounts trace the roots of AQAP back to those Yemenis who returned to their country in the early 1990s after fighting alongside the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan. They were largely held responsible for the suicide bomb attack on the *USS Cole* in October 2000. It was not until 2009, however, that AQAP emerged as a cohesive component of Al-Qaeda's general command.

⁸ Ibrahim Qatabi, 'A Fragile Unity After 24 Years', *Yemen Times*, 21 May 2014.

URL: <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1783/opinion/3881/A-fragile-unity-after-24-years.htm> Accessed on: 28.11.2014.

⁹ Water shortages is a highly critical problem in today's Yemen. Only about 47 % of the rural population have access to an improved water source. Dozens of people die every year in Yemen as a result of violent water disputes. As per some predictions, in a few years, Sana'a might become the world's first capital city to run out of water. See [Manuel Almeida](#), 'After Dialogue, a Daunting Challenge for Yemen', *Alsharq Al-Awsat Newspaper*, 1.12.2014.

¹⁰ Ahmed A. Saif 'Yemen and Its Environment: The Situation on the Arab Peninsula and Al-Qaida as a Uniting Threat', in 'The Arab Spring as a Complicating and Enabling Factor for the Helsinki Conference: Identifying the Stumbling Blocks and

Additionally, it has to be said that Yemen continues to suffer from structural developmental problems that necessarily exacerbate the political crisis – now and before. Yemen remains to be one of the least developed countries in the region. Its population has almost tripled since 1980 from 8.4 million to 24 million. If the current population growth is sustained, it will double in the next 20 years. The implications for Yemen's already overstrained infrastructure are daunting. Oil revenues represent 70 % of the government's total revenues and oil constitutes 90 % of total country exports, which will be depleted within a decade if new reservoirs are not discovered. Other important developmental challenges involve high poverty rates, high illiteracy rates, dwindling water reserves and a sharp rise in unemployment as a result of high population growth combined with economic decline. It does not come as a surprise thus that Yemeni citizens have low confidence in the government's ability to successfully handle the country's future economic challenges.

Finally, an analysis of the causes behind the crisis in Yemen cannot overlook the fact that the central government has only limited control over the state's territory. The central government remains confined mostly to the major urban areas. With three quarter of the population living outside the cities, service delivery to remote areas is extremely difficult. Filling the vacuum left by the state, the tribes continue to play a strong role and have penetrated the state institutions. They assume significant roles in Yemen's legislative and executive bodies, the armed forces, the security apparatus and the political system as a whole. Political decision-making thus requires consultation, compromise and trade-offs in a context of constantly shifting alliances.¹¹

3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NDC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The NDC has been viewed as the core of Yemen's transitional process. It provided a forum for larger political negotiations - from the southern and *Huthi* issues to questions of power sharing, institutional reforms, social justice concerns, and other policy issues. In January 2014, the NDC produced its recommendations after exceeding its initial time plan by four months. In spite of that, it was hailed back then as a positive model of inclusive and constructive negotiation.

The implementation of the NDC's recommendations however was always going to be quite challenging – and indeed, it proved to be. One obstacle, which was envisioned right from the start, has been the potential unavailability of material resources to compensate the families of the martyrs and injured, develop the areas damaged in past wars, and set up the committees, institutions, departments, and agencies demanded by the NDC recommendations. Another difficulty pertains to the weakness of state institutions and divisions within the army, which affects their ability to disarm the militias and armed groups. Moreover, local critics also believe the old elites and power circles used the process to secure their own interests.

Notwithstanding the above, one of the major stumbling blocks facing the implementation of the NDC's recommendations has been the territorial gains achieved by the *Huthis* in 2014 which caused a change in the balance of power in Northern Yemen. The immediate trigger for this has been the events of May 2014 when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) ruled that fuel subsidies had to be cut in order to grant Yemen the loan it was seeking. The cuts were implemented in August 2014 leading to a 90 % increase in fuel prices and consequently a public rage against the government. *Ansarullah* made use of that situation and organised several protests in front of government ministries.

Opportunities for Disarmament', ACADEMIC PEACE ORCHESTRA MIDDLE EAST Twelfth Performance, CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNIT 27, Nicosia, June 12-14, 2014.

¹¹ Migdal, J., *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 28-29.

The increase in fuel prices was thus the trigger for political and economic grievances to re-surface and cause a renewed period of instability. Soon, the peaceful protests turned violent on 18th September. By threatening a civil war, *Ansarullah* managed to defeat their rivals, General Ali Muhsin, Ahmar family and Islah party, and controlled Sana'a on 21st September. It also forced President Hadi to dissolve the reconciliatory government and appoint a new technocratic one.¹² And after being completely isolated from the political process, *Ansarullah* and the southern *Harak* gained now the ability to reshape the country's political future and to influence the formation of the government.

This challenge to the government from an extra-parliamentary opposition sheds light on the shortcomings of the GCC transition agreement, which – while aiming at guaranteeing the survival of the traditional political elites – has failed to establish an inclusive government. Moreover, no transitional justice system was put in place, none of the politicians and military accused of human rights violations have yet been brought to justice.

Moreover, the NDC's proposal to end the political impasse in Yemen was centered on establishing a six-region federation. After seizing Sana'a, however, *Ansarullah* pushed all players into signing 'the Peace and National Partnership Agreement' that calls for revisiting the six-region federation proposal. This move by *Ansarullah* can be explained by its dissatisfaction with the method of determining the six regions in the federation because *Saa'da* governorate, which *Ansarullah* controls, was isolated from resources and access to a port in the proposed division.

It has to be said however that several criticisms were directed to the suggested division already before that. On the top of those was the failure of the presidentially appointed regions committee to discuss all the possible options to the federation's division. In addition, the committee did not give the adequate time to the process of discussing options. The proposed divisions were also made on the basis of political and sectarian considerations, ignoring the economic and developmental criteria. In addition, the call made by *Ansarullah* to re-discuss the federation plan will most likely encourage the southern *Harak* to call for an independent south, marking an escalation to the already protracted situation.¹³

On the ground, *Ansarullah* succeeded in weakening the state and achieving territorial gains by providing services to the regions that the state was either unwilling or unable to manage and thus won significant public support. In doing so, *Ansarullah* made use of the widespread opposition to the government, the perceived significant level of corruption and the injustice of the previous regime. And while a considerable part of Saleh's supporters chose to remain neutral in that battle, some of them – especially the Republican Guards – gave their support to *Ansarullah* given that their tribal affiliations have aligned them with the group.¹⁴

Since seizing Sana'a, *Ansarullah* have continued to expand their territory southwards, taking the major Red Sea port city of *Hodeida* and central provinces like *Ibb* and *al-Bayda*. Yet, they are now met with stiff resistance from AQAP and the local tribesmen fighting alongside them. At the moment, *Ansarullah* are aggregating to conquer *Marib*. There have been some observations that *Ansarullah* have been backed by artillery units from the Yemeni army, suggesting that the Sana'a government could be gearing up to joining forces with *Ansarullah* in the fight against AQAP. Above that, US

¹² The Huthis were always critical of this government on the bases that it overrepresented the rival *Ahmars*.

¹³ 'The Huthis: From Saa'da to Sanaa', Crisis Group Middle East Report N°154, 10.6.2014, p. 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

drones strike AQAP fighters along with *Ansarullah* existence, though there are some allegations that the drones are actually hitting tribesmen.¹⁵

In official statements, the government asserts its continuous commitment to implement the recommendations of the NDC. In November, 2014, the Yemeni Minister of State for the National Dialogue Conference's Outcomes, Ghaleb Mutlaq, confirmed that his government is committed to implement the outcomes and will start with the first group that includes the Southern Issue - especially the easy solutions involving returning 1 600 people to the military, 800 to security apparatus of the interior ministry and compensating around 100 thousand people wronged by land looting practices.

4. ROLE OF EXTERNAL PLAYERS

Historically, Yemen used to comprise many peripheral powers that revolve around and influence the centre. Though the influence is reciprocal between the centre and peripheries, each tries to advance its leverage by mobilising support beyond the country's national borders. Traditionally, this has made the state susceptible to external intervention. In this sense, and in addition to the endogenous problems, Yemen has always had exogenous problems and also sought external solutions.

Over the past four decades, Saudi Arabia used to be the sole and most powerful player in Yemen. This has stemmed from the huge financial power Saudi Arabia has at its disposal of the one hand and the high level of Yemen's economic dependency on Saudi Arabia on the other. In part, Saudi Arabia consciously realises that the weaker the state is in Yemen, the more influence it will have on it. For that, most of Saudi support has gone to individuals rather than to the state which has consequently contributed to the further weakening of the state *vis-à-vis* the peripheral powers in Yemen – such as the tribe, the sect, individual military officers etc. However, this unique status of Saudi Arabia in Yemen might have experienced some change recently. The events of 2011 and those that followed show that there are many external competitive players in Yemen who can at some times go neck to neck with Saudi Arabia, such as the US, UK, Qatar, Turkey, Iran and lately the UAE.

Based on the political orientation and direction of the influence, one can categorise external players in four groups. The first one comprises Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Those players advocate the status quo as it was prior to 2011 and try to reinstate the traditional conservatives in Yemen. They financially support tribal leaders, military officers and moderate religious Salafist groups. Their influence is quite significant in spite of their shaky performance in 2011, 2012 and 2013. The elimination of General Ali Mohsen, Ahmar family and *Islah* party has strengthened the status of the local allies of those two players in Yemen.

The second category comprises Turkey and Qatar. Their local allies are mainly the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Yemen (*Islah* Party) and General Mohsen and *Ahmar* family. The peak of their influence was reached back in 2011 and 2012 when their local allies forced Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down from the presidency. Nonetheless, the events of 2014 when *Ansarullah* swept the country in coalition with some forces belonging to the former president and eventually controlling the capital, has remarkably weakened the roles of both Turkey and Qatar. Moreover, the rolling back of Turkey from northern Syria and Iraq caused by the war against ISIS and the exerted pressure upon Qatar by other GCC members have further weaken the role of those two players in Yemen.

¹⁵80 Huthis killed in clashes with al-Qaeda in Yemen', Middle East Eye, URL: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemen-646834738> Accessed on 20.11.2014.

The third category includes a single player, Iran. For reasons related to religious ideology, Iran has invested heavily in *Ansarullah*¹⁶ and provides remarkable direct financial and technical support to the movement through the Lebanese *Hizbullah*. With the recent sweeping victory of its ally, Iran has now massive influence in Yemen to the extent that no agreement can go through without taking Iran into consideration. With this new powerful card and the ability of *Ansarullah* to control *Bab Al Mandab* Strait, Iran is given new negotiating leverage, which it can use on other fronts like Iraq, Syria, and its nuclear programme.

Finally, the last category of players includes the US and the UK. From a pure perspective of interests, the US would be satisfied with the victory of *Ansarullah* as the latter seems sincere – and to a certain extent effective – in fighting AQAP (unlike the former regime which played gimmicks and blackmailed the US and Saudi Arabia over this issue). The UK, by comparison, is more concerned with its legacy in the South and particularly in *Aden*. Both players support the unity of the country but they do not mind the possibility of separation should a stable South is guaranteed. This however is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Finally, it should also be said that there are what could be called ‘marginal players’ whose influence is felt – though certainly smaller compared to the four above-mentioned ones. France, for instance, is showing a growing, but subtle, influence in Yemen because of oil and gas interests. There are reports that France also stations the drones hitting Yemen in its military base in Djibouti and has a small surveillance base on the Yemeni Prim Island in the mid of *Bab Al Mandab* Strait. The EU also has a significant metaphoric presence, yet still absent on the ground. Germany comes as amongst the biggest economic and technical aid providers to Yemen. Nonetheless, it has very little political influence, not by any means comparable to the categories mentioned above.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Firstly*, there is hardly a resolution to the situation in Yemen unless significant effort is done on the state-building front.¹⁷ Reforming state institutions should entail reforming the civil service, improving and simplify procedural processes in state administration, judicial reform, in addition to improving public services as health, education, water, security, among others. Moreover, the state inefficiency in managing resources should also be addressed. This does not only cause the economic crisis to further deteriorate but rather has severe political ramifications. The reason is that wasted resources – in combination with the depleting oil resources – might eventually cripple the regime from buying off the tribes. In such a case, the whole system might descend into a practical collapse of the state.

Therefore, fifteen core functions are proposed here that state of Yemen must perform in order to survive and compete in the modern world. These functions are: (1) legitimate monopoly on the means of violence; (2) administrative control; (3) management of public finances; (4) investment in human capital; (5) delineation of citizenship rights and duties; (6) provision of infrastructure services; (7) formation of independent functioning market; (8) management of the state’s assets (including the environment, natural resources, and cultural assets); (9) balanced international relations (including entering into international contracts and public borrowing); (10) rule of law; (11) a balanced state-society relations; (12) equal citizenry; (13) just distribution of wealth to

¹⁶ It should be noted that *Ansarullah* does not embrace the Twelvers *Shi’ite* jurisprudence of Iran. Instead, *Ansarullah* is of a *Zaydi* ideology, but embraces the *Jarudiah* the most fanatic faction within the *Zaydism*.

¹⁷ Ahmed A. Saif, 'State Effectiveness: State's Capacity Building in Yemen', (Policy Paper), *British-Yemeni Society (BYS) & London Middle East Institute (LMEI) Conference "YEMEN: CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE"*, London, 11-12 January 2013.

create even provincial development. (14) correlation of federalism, civil society and taxation system and; (15) reforming civil-military relation. Other functions may be required to be performed at particular moments, such as the repatriation and integration of refugees and those displaced, and transitional justice.

These functions constitute a comprehensive strategy for effective state building that includes the development of a framework to define and understand the above-mentioned 15 functions that Yemeni state must perform in today's interdependent world. For each state function, we should identify the followings:

- define the function
- assign the state institution(s) responsible
- diagnose the shortcomings
- propose the suggested solutions
- describe in details (guidance) the implementing methods and means
- gauge the time frame of implementation
- assign the domestic implementers
- assign the external assistants
- implement monitoring and evaluation scheme

Consensus on these fifteen functions would lead to a consensus on the structure of the state. Each function can be delineated through a capacity program with timelines, benchmarks and indicators that serve both as goals towards which the public can be mobilized, and also as a means of accounting by which the momentum and achievements of the program can be reported to the public. The preparation of a state-building strategy would require starting from agreement on the goal of state-building and the functions the state should perform, agreement on timelines for creation of that capacity, and methods for institutional transformation. To win and keep the trust of the public and implement credible programs that would result in delivery of benefits to them and their increasing participation in the process, leaders and managers need to acquire new skills. These functions, however, will create an accountable and transparent state through the creation of inclusionary processes that involve the citizenry in decision-making. Accepting these functions by political and civil bodies would allow legalizing and institutionalizing them through a capacity-building program with timelines, benchmarks and monitoring and evaluating schemes. At the same time, the public have to be remained continuously reported on the progress and/or obstacle to mobilize their support and keep the momentum of achievement steady. Such a process becomes critical to the establishment of trust between the state, as the organized power of society, and citizens.¹⁸

- *Secondly*, any plan must work on both, long-term approaches to deal with structural dysfunctions, and short-term ones that tackle pressing issues affecting the daily lives of people.¹⁹ Unemployment, for example, is a daily pressing problem. Conservative figures put overall unemployment at 35 %, while youth unemployment stands above 55 %. Last year's tightening of labour laws in Saudi Arabia has aggravated the problem and caused between 300 000 and 400 000 Yemenis – most of them living illegally in the Kingdom – to return home.²⁰ One measure that may mitigate the economic hardship situation thus is to acquire the Saudi agreement to open borders for free labour movement, or to get labour quota from each GCC state. Sustaining

¹⁸ Ibid. 2,3

¹⁹ Indeed, during the NDC, the Yemeni government was criticized for giving their full attention to the conference at the expense of addressing the issues that affect the lives of ordinary Yemenis

²⁰ Manuel Almeida, 'After Dialogue, a Daunting Challenge for Yemen', *Alsharq Al-Awsat Newspaper*, 1.12.2014.

high levels of joblessness increases frustration and makes the recruitment process much easier for radical groups.

- *Thirdly*, Saudi Arabia is a major player in Yemen in the sense that its perceptions and orientations must be understood and a common understanding must be reached. In March 2014, for example, Saudi Arabia designated the *Huthis* a terrorist organisation along with the Muslim Brotherhood. Such actions directly influence the dynamics of the political process in Yemen.
- *Fourthly*, in the context of the GCC initiative, the role that the EU and other international sponsors can play is to facilitate the process of state building in Yemen. This role includes consultation, training, and diffusing experience to direct contribution to the process. The EU could also provide a catalyst to promote the political dialogue, trade and economic cooperation, development cooperation and democratic reform. The EU can also help in improving the security situation, addressing water shortage and introducing economic diversification. Yemen should also be enabled to benefit from the western Instruments for Democracy and Human Rights. However, in absence of a common agreement between domestic leaders and the international community, a long-term effective strategy will hardly materialise. The consent of the president of Yemen, the government and other parties are thus crucial to ensure the success of any assistance. Only when such an agreement mobilises internal and external actors behind a common agenda, can progress be created.

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