

**THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING POLITICAL
LIBERALIZATION AND STABILIZATION IN YEMEN**

By

Al-Bahri, Nabil Mohsen

THESIS

Submitted to
KDI School of Public Policy and Management
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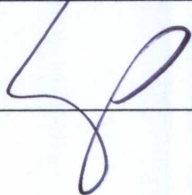
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ABSTRACT

THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION AND STABILIZATION IN YEMEN

By

Al-Bahri, Nabil Mohsen

This study is an attempt ascertain the importance of civil society organizations in Yemen. The researcher tries to analyze and explore the real reasons that prevented the society in Yemen from achieving and maintaining a consolidated and a stable democracy. It will discuss the important role of the Women Journalists without Chains organization in defending and supporting liberties and rights in Yemen since 2005. It concludes that the existence of large, effective, organized and vibrant civil society is a key ingredient to maintain political liberalization and stabilization in Yemen.

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

This study is an attempt to establish that civil society is an essential element in the process of political liberalization and stabilization in Yemen. Because of the diverse nature of the Yemeni society and polity, civil society is very necessary and a key factor for promoting and sustaining democracy and political stability from the bottom-up. Many researchers and authors have proven that the opposite style presents obstacles in transiting societies to participatory democracy, i.e. a grassroots democracy. When citizens cooperate with each other, they create social capital and affect policy-making that influences their life. This activity proved that it is the best mechanism to prevent the political elite and officials from ignoring the public interests.

Thesis Statement

Political liberalization and stabilization cannot be achieved without promoting and establishing civil society and civil movements in Yemen. Without activating civil society and civil movements, the possibility of tyranny and an autocratic state is very high in Yemen. Without establishing and growing civil society and civil movements in Yemen, the country will not achieve political liberalization and stabilization after the current uprising and social protests activities against the authoritarian regime. The reason is that civil society, civic movements and civic activities in Yemen are underdeveloped. They are not large, organized and active enough to carry on the process of monitoring and evaluating the state policies and to form institutions that stand against the state power.

Civil society is composed of the collective actions that contain cooperation among citizens to achieve public good. Citizens of civil society learn to initiate organized collective actions continually to demand rights and liberties and to encounter the political elite to

prevent dictatorship. Social capital enables them to mobilize the public to demand for public good and affect decision-making by the state.¹

Many authors have ascertained that civil society should include the element of “voluntary associations”; such associations should be independent from state interventions and at the same time they should be beyond family. They gave examples of such associations as NGOs, religious associations, unions, clubs, think tanks, movements of different interests such as religious, social, and political ones.²

Alexis de Tocqueville argued that “*unless each citizen learned to combine with his fellow to preserve his freedom at a time when he individually is becoming weaker and so less able in isolation to defend it, tyranny would be bound to increase with equality.*”³

Social capital and civil movements are the most effective entities that make changes in any society. Robert D. Putnam explained the concept of social capital as “*features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.*”⁴

The consequences of the current uprising in Yemen will not be a turning point for the society to transform to a democratic and stable political situation unless there is a strong and supported civil society. Although there many civil society organizations and associations in Yemen, but they are not strong and mature enough to prevent political tyranny. To enhance and promote this goal we have to create and initiate an appropriate civic culture and civil movements in the country.

¹ Suh Doown, *Civil society in Political Democratization: Social Movements Impacts and Institutional Politics*, (Korea University Press, 2006),179.

² Amy Hawthorne, *Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington, DC,2004), 5.

³ Alexis De Tocqueville,1835/1966, *Democracy in America*, (New York: Harper & Row; George Lawrence, trans.; J.P. Mayer and Max Lerner, eds.), 513.

⁴ Robert D. Putnam, Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, 1995) 1, P(66).

This study will examine the Yemeni case of civil society, and state the reasons behind the weak situation of civil society in Yemen and discuss the obstacles that civil society and civil movements encounter in Yemen. It will discuss the role of one successful organization, Women Journalists without Chains, and the great difference that it made in the political culture in Yemen during six years. The study will attempt to evaluate the current uprising “Youth Revolution” as civil peaceful disobedience and the problems that have emerged in the current situation.

When the Republic of Yemen experienced some forms of democracy and pluralism such as electing representatives to parliament and presidential elections, citizens assumed that it was the end of tyranny, the beginning of a new era of liberties of all kinds and a new hope for the new generations to enjoy democracy. The next decade proved the opposite; the regime practiced more tyranny and oppressed the opposition and the civil activists as well. The problem is not with the democratic system and its principles. In fact, it is the absence of strong civil society and active civil movements that monitor the government’s policies which have empowered the relationship. Civil society does serve democracy and serves as a new approach in life which people become more human and cooperative.⁵

The uprising in Yemen has removed an authoritarian regime and a new government was formed after that. The problem of civil society in the Yemeni case is a complicated one because it has many varied and chronic issues; geographical, political, religious and social matters made the situation of civil society more difficult. Civil movements to some extent exist in Yemen and they played a great role in 2011 youth revolution. However, they need to undertake more activities and to initiate more and different types of such civil movements to enable the citizens to practice and monitor the transition process to democracy and participate in the policies that affect their life.

⁵ Ibid.,5.

Significance of the Study

In 1993, the first parliamentary election was a new political experience in Yemen. The people of Yemen assumed that it was the first step to transform from authoritarianism to democracy; however, after seventeen years, the country reversed gradually from semi-authoritarian to authoritarian; corruption and other economic problems became unbearable. The political situation of the country went from bad to worse; many civil wars and social unrests occurred in the north and many demonstrations were organized in the south; the state became unable to control the situation. Yemeni people realized then that their version of democracy gives them only the right to choose the same dictator who stayed in power for 32 years. The transition into democracy in Yemen will not end up with liberal democracy but rather electoral democracy unless there are strong and active civil society organizations. Francis Fukuyama argued that liberal democracy protects and recognizes citizens' rights and minorities' liberties.⁶

Suh Doowon (2006) explains the dilemma of democracy in the developing countries: *“The historical background for Third World movement institutionalization differs from Western Europe. Unlike in revolutions, authoritarian collapse followed by transition to democracy does not summarily remove conventional dictatorial political forces.”*⁷ That is simply because of the absence of strong civil society which stands for public rights.

Achieving a liberal and stable political situation in Yemen is impossible without establishing active civil society and social movements. The case of Women Journalists without Chains organization is a vivid example of the effective and strong role of civil society

⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*._(Los Angeles. Avon Books,1992) , 69

⁷ Suh Doowon, Civil society in Political Democratization: Social Movements Impacts and Institutional Politics. (Korea University Press,2006), 183.

organizations and how they contribute to liberalization, human rights and democratization in the Third World countries.

Research Questions

The questions that this study will attempt to answer are as follows:

- Why is civil society important for Yemeni people?
- How crucial is civil society in promoting political liberty and stability in Yemen?
- How and why has the Yemeni revolution encountered many obstacles whereas the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions succeeded in removing the dictators and their autocratic regimes and encountered fewer obstacles?
- Is the politically unstable situation in Yemen after the revolution going to improve? And what is the relationship between the unstable political situation in Yemen and the weak civil society?
- How are civil society organizations and associations in Yemen struggling to create political and social awareness?

Hypothesis

To guarantee political liberalization and stabilization in Yemen, we have to create, support and defend civil society organizations and movements. Even though that civil society organizations played a salient role in the 2011 *Youth Revolution*, the possibility of tyranny is very high in Yemen because of the absence of large, organized, supported, and vibrant civil society organizations.

Research Agenda

I have surveyed books and studies that discussed and analyzed promoting and strengthening civil society as a key element for consolidating and stabilizing democracy. I have read the studies that discussed, evaluated and concluded the political situation in Yemen

as well as the literature of civil society organizations in Yemen both domestic and international. Interviews, seminars and reports will be analyzed to prove the thesis statements.

I will discuss the following points:

- Political culture of the Yemeni society.
- An Overview of Civil Society in Yemen
- How civil society plays democratic role?
- Why civil society is necessary in Yemen?
- An Overview to the Political Situation in Yemen since 1990.
- Shortcomings of Civil Society in Yemen.
- A discussion on the factors and key players that affect civil society such as the state the political parties, the Islamists Party (The Islah Party), the tribal tradition, the media and the press, and the role of the woman.
- An Overview of the 2011 revolution in Yemen: a New Democratic System or a New Authoritarian Regime?
- Civic Activism in Yemen and Women Journalists without Chains.

1.2 Literature Review

Civil society is a concept that many authors and researchers have discussed worldwide. The following resources are related to my study of “The Importance of Civil Society for Promoting Political Liberalization and Stabilization in Yemen” because they discussed the idea in depth and in detail. They have concluded that civil society and civil movements are important preconditions in enhancing and consolidating democracy. They discussed the nature, function, duties and types of civil society.

Political scientists argued that civil society should monitor the state whenever there is misgoverning, human rights abuse, or deviation from rule of law, and observe how the

government interprets and implements the constitution. It helps in promoting values such as tolerance, humbleness, and hard-work, and increases participation by providing skills to all community sectors and classes.

In his book “*Civil society in Political Democratization: Social Movements Impacts and Institutional*”⁸, Suh Doown suggested that the end of the authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century paved the road for civil society in the Third World to boom. Political scientists became more interested to analyze how civil movements influence the process of democratization. The study ascertained the importance of the process of institutionalization as the major mechanism for promoting democratization. It provides an organized way to affect the policy-making capacity of the state. The author argued that social movement organizations should maintain their autonomy and identity to achieve that effectively and to have the ability to confront the power of the state.

The author discussed the role of civil society in the democratization process from three aspects: (1) types of impacts, especially social movements; (2) the organizational features of civil society such as strategies, leadership, the organizational structure, collective activities and their relationship with other organizations; (3) and how civil society enables certain circumstances to grow.

The author ascertained that social movements need to have permanent collective power and ability to creatively mobilize activities to confront the power of the state. The organizations of social movements need autonomy and independence to some extent to be able to keep their resource base and to be able to initiate collective activities and actions.

Suh Doown discussed the process of institutionalization in which the social

⁸ Suh Doown, Civil society in Political Democratization: Social Movements Impacts and Institutional Politics, (Korea University Press, 2006).

movements become able to compete with the state and the parties as a democratic institution. This stage enables them to realize their political goals and to reduce the risk of being marginalized by the state. However, the author argued that in the Third World, the state can easily revert to dictatorship when leaders tend to hinder social movements from supporting and activating participatory democracy or prevent establishing new social movements.

Ho-Ki Kim discussed the Korean civil society in his study titled : *The State and Civil Society in South Korea: 1987-1999: Civil Movements and Democratization Consolidation*.⁹ The reason for this choice is that South Korea transformed from a military regime into a democratic regime in two decades.

Ho-Ki Kim analyzed the process of democratization in Korea and its relationship with social changes in civil society and social movements. The essay discussed the interaction between the state and civil society since 1987. It explained in depth the role that the social and civil movements have played in the process of democratization in Korea.

Korean civil society improved across different historical stages from the state-centered tradition to Japanese colonialism, to regionalism, and experienced civic culture with familistic traditions and authoritarianism. The uprising of 1987 was the first step in the transition to a democratic system. The role of the social movements was very important and influenced effectively the process of democratization and the peaceful transition of power. During the military regime, the political representatives for civil society became vulnerable and the parties ruled the country undemocratically.

The author argued that Korean civil society is still underdeveloped in comparison with the civil society in advanced countries like western Europe and the United States, where civil society plays an essential role in monitoring the policies of the state. A top-down process

⁹ Ho-Ki. Kim, *The State and Civil Society in South Korea, 1987-1999: Civil Movements and Democratization Consolidation*. (Asian Perspective, 2001).

that characterized the Korean civil society is another problem. The author argued that control of the state over civil society in Korea is still hindering its spontaneous growth to some extent. Labor unions were active players that pushed for more political and economic changes.

However, civil society organizations in South Korea nowadays are well-developed and strong enough to promote liberalization and democratization. Civil Society Index (*CIVICUS*) concluded that civic activism of civil society organizations in South Korea is strong and vibrant. Civil society organizations became extremely effective in political mobilization and became very highly trusted among both social and public institutions. During the last decade, Korean civil society had great political impact, dynamic development process, public policies influence, and citizens' opinion effect. Civil society organizations became strong in many dimensions such as; holding the state accountable, breadth of volunteering, level of membership and organization, citizens' participation, and citizen's advocacy activities. The cooperation among civil society organizations in Korea became vibrant.¹⁰

Because of the diverse nature of the Yemeni society and polity, Yemen is in a crucial need for promoting and supporting civil society organizations and movements more than societies such as South Korean one. Yemen is still a fragile country with very traditional tribal culture, ethnic and religious groups.

In their study “*Civil society under democracy in Nigeria (1999-2006)*”¹¹ Offiong and Felix Oriakhi analyzed the agenda of civil society advocates in their struggle against the military dictatorship in Nigeria and analyzed the ways of promoting and rooting

¹⁰ Sungsoo Joo, Seonmi Lee, and Youngjae Jo, *The Explosion of Civil Society Organizations and Citizen Participation; An Assessment of Civil Society in South Korea*. (Hanyang University. Seoul, 2006).

¹¹ Offiong Offiong, and Felix Oriakhi. *Civil society under democracy in Nigeria (1999-2006)*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2008).

qualitative democracy by public participation for mass and popular class ethos. When the state repressed the society and prevented people from enjoying fundamental rights, civil society organizations mobilized citizens to defend their rights against the autocratic regime. The regime abused its coercive apparatus to protect the ruling elites' interests only and neglected citizens' rights and ordinary people's interests in the country.

The authors discussed the role of the press as one of the important elements of civil society and one of the most important channels of expression that stokes the fire against the oppressive regime and influences Nigerian society positively and effectively. It served as the grave-digger of authoritarianism. The president controlled policy-making and authorities in the country. He weakened civil society organizations, crushed the press, and harassed and imprisoned civil society activists and leaders who demanded political change. Civil society organizations and activists mobilized many campaigns and agitated public opinion against the military regime. Civil society struggled to find an alternative agenda to confront the state and the elites in power. The authors concluded that civil society is the pillar of hope in a fascist regime and a source of power for the ordinary citizen to maintain and demand democracy, cultivate democratic spirit and behavior, and to press for good governance. They offered, however, an important counter-argument, that to some, civil society organizations represented foreign interference.

Nigerian society, regime, political situation, civil society and civic engagement are similar to Yemeni ones. Both are developing states with military regimes. Islamists parties and tribes are key players in public life.

Some political researchers assumed that Arab countries have a special case, i.e., Islamic and tribal culture, the oppressive regimes and the extremist Islamists who have extreme ideology against democracy, which prevents civil society from achieving liberal transformations of the state.

In their book “*Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World*,”¹² Francesco Cavatorta and Vincent Durac argued that there is no active and effective civil society in the Arab World. The activism of civil society in the Arab countries is not correlated to the democratization process. Because authoritarian regimes created a counterproductive kind of democratization process, civil society organizations did not serve as an effective mechanism to establish and promote political liberalization and democratization.

The authors argued that if civil society is established in an authoritarian circumstance, it tends to face many obstacles. Some of these problems are the regimes’ legislation and the rule of laws which are either weak or non-existent. Civil society organizations that are financed by the government are biased in favor of the regimes and the organizations that are financed by foreign agencies are also biased to the agendas of these agencies in explaining a certain ideas about the ideology of democracy. The Islamists parties had different agenda that did not provide open, cooperative, and pro-democratic perspectives of civic engagement.

Democratization and political contexts in Arab countries had a great effect on the dynamism of civil society. The regimes controlled civil society organizations and used them as a façade for pluralism; in reality, Arab countries are ruled by generals and security officials. In Yemen, for example, political power used to be in the grip of former president, Saleh. The tribes played a pivotal role in the policy process; legislation is another problem. There are many socio-economic obstacles, and the society is still possesses deep social conservatism.

The authors suggested that policy-makers reconsider their policies and strategies. They concluded that instead of investing in civil society activities to promote democratization and transition of power, it is better policy to focus on defending human rights cases.

In contrast to the authors’ suggestions, these policies and strategies will lead to more

12 Cavatorta and Vincent Durac, *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World*. (Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics, 2010).

autocratic systems in the Arab World rather than promoting liberalization and democratization. The function of civil society organizations is not only to defend and support human rights; it is to shift and transfer societies into more active, liberal and democratic life. Yemen, in particular, is in need for active and strong civil society because of the absence of strong institutions, rule of law, illiteracy, and the danger of terrorism.

Francis Fukuyama argued that the European and the American organizations' efforts to transfer Portuguese into democracy in the 1970s would be counterproductive. But Portuguese had amazingly powerful civil society, syndicates, political parties, and churches that mobilized and led a huge and vast public support for democracy.¹³

It is very risky idea to give up supporting civil society in Yemen because civil society is a guarantee of political and social stability in the country. It is also very important to pay special attention to the role of the civil society to prevent Al-Qaida and the terrorist groups from expanding their activities in the poor rural areas in Yemen.¹⁴

In her study "*Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?*"¹⁵, Amy Hawthorne evaluated the efforts that have been made to promote democracy and to create genuine democratic change, especially long-term ones. She argued that civil society with its variant aspects such as organizations, associations and movements is important for democratization and political change in the Middle East. The US administration and donors should support and back civil society associations as a component of the new efforts that aim for democratic change in the Arab World. For the author, civil society and effective components in political change under correct circumstances can take part in democratizing the authoritarian regimes, and also play crucial roles in maintaining and protecting

¹³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*. (Los Angeles. Avon Books,1992) , 69

¹⁴ Most of the members of Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups are mainly from the poorest rural areas and provinces in Yemen.

¹⁵ Amy Hawthorne. *Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 2004).

democracy after its emergence as well. However, civil society is not the only force of democratization, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere.

The author concluded that civil society organizations should be supported, but we should give up three points concerning civil society: first, transition into a democratic state from authoritarianism without conflict, any political change will not pass without destabilizing to some extent. Second, the activism of civil society cannot create political opening by itself, but there should be social, political and economic changes. Finally, most civil society movements are not pursuing the same pro-democratic performance.

Sarah Phillips, in her book “*Yemen’s Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective: Patronage and Pluralism Authoritarianism*,”¹⁶ discussed democracy, the political situation, and structure of power, institutions, and the political dynamics in Yemen after the unification¹⁷ in 1990. She also analyzed the mechanism and conditions that led to the continuation of authoritarianism in Yemen. The author argued that fragile, divided, and weak civil society contributes to the empowerment of the authoritarian regime. But political culture in Yemen has changed forever and the generation became more enthusiastic for democracy and a civil state.

The author discussed how non-regime actors participate and affect policy-making through opposition parties, civil society organizations, media, tribal groups, the parliament, and the political Islamists party (The Islah Party). She analyzed some factors argued by political scientists to hamper political liberalization such as Islamic culture, Arabic customs, tribalism, and the state that has economic resources. Arab leaders dominated national politics and made advantage of liberalization not to bring more rights and liberties to citizens but to

¹⁶ Sarah Phillips, *Yemen’s Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective: Patronage and Pluralism Authoritarianism*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁷ Before 1990, Yemen was two separate states, South Yemen and North Yemen. In 1990, the leaders of the two states decided to create a new pluralistic and democratic state that guarantee civilians’ social, economic and political rights.

divide civil society organizations and the opposition parties which, in general, had no relations to people's demands or interests.

The author lamented that the ability of the Yemeni people to affect government policy-making was fruitless and made no progress in leading the state to democracy. The regime has been restrictive, harassing the opposition in many ways such as attacking them in the public media and threatening them by the state apparatus including the military. The parliament is toothless and does not express public opinion. The state also limited liberties such as freedom of speech. To manipulate pro-democratic key players, state performance provided a counterfeit, only a semblance of democracy to both citizens and donors.

The author argued that civil society is crucial to counteract the oppressive state but the civil society that emerged was not sufficient to perform and struggle to counterbalance the state effectively. The author discussed the effect of media on civil society and reasons behind immaturity and weakness of civil society organizations. NGOs are under great pressure in Yemen to accept a semi-official role. The author argued that the liberal Islah party in Yemen became more pragmatic and modified its agenda to play more democratic role.

To understand civil society in Yemen more closely, it is important to depict and analyze civil society in the country. In her valuable book "*Civil Society in Yemen: the political economy of activism in modern Arabia*,"¹⁸ Sheila Carapico analyzed in depth the activism and the civic participation of civil society in Yemen. She wrote about how civil society reacted to the "brief democratic experiment" that happened after unification in May, 1990. The author discussed civil society in Yemen and its political civic improvement from its early emergence.

The author described how civil society in Yemen emerged during hard times. People

¹⁸ Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen: the political economy of activism in modern Arabia*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

engaged in several civic activities with enthusiasm to influence and develop the new policies of the state in a democratic way. However, the state was intolerant and started to manipulate both the constitution and the unity accord¹⁹ using many justifications. Civil society developed its agenda and started to demand and struggle for liberties, freedom of expression, freedom of press, and equality. The dilemma of transiting the primordial civic realm are because of two controlling ideologies; Islamic traditions and tribalism, which are working as an alternatives for civil society in Arabia and how such a situation can be modernized.

The author discussed how new civil associations emerged and their types such as voluntary associations, student unions, professional syndicates, women's unions and the like. However, there were many factors that influenced and limited the performance of civil society in Yemen such as illiteracy, political loyalty, limited political participation, urban and rural traditions and authoritarian regimes. The ruling party tried to limit and discourage NGOs and their agendas and activities; however, civil society moved forward, seeking more political liberty. Civil activists cooperated with the non-ruling political elite to struggle against the authoritarian regime for limited executive power and decentralization. The author argued that it is possible to shift the attitudes of the tribes to be more supportive to civil society.

In brief, the books and studies we discussed argued that civil society plays an important role in democratization and increases the understanding and mobilization of citizens for the idea of political change, political reforms, rule of law and democracy in the Third World countries. Civil society is the best alternative to transforming societies into democratic systems without generating social unrest and it is a crucial element to maintain liberalization and democratization.

¹⁹ The Constitution of Republic of Yemen and the Unity Accord are the two documents contained the conditions that affirmed and guaranteed the democratic system of the state, liberties and freedoms of all citizens and groups. More details of the two documents are in chapter two 2.1.

Civil society is a crucial component in mitigating extremism, weakening extremists and neutralizing any extreme ideas about state-society relations. It provides alternatives for negotiation and creates a diverse and pluralistic society. Civil society organizations take part in training and recruiting prospective members for the political and economic class to promote equality in participation in governing; in other words, it is recruiting for management.²⁰

In Yemen, civil society was not strong enough to mobilize the public opinion, demand the state to provide a more liberal system, defend human rights, demand for political change, affect authoritarianism, and influence policy-making because of many reasons such as lack of experience, the powerful oppressive regime and other factors.

²⁰ Offiong Offiong, and Felix Oriakhi. *Civil society under democracy in Nigeria (1999-2006)*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2008),169.

Chapter Two

2.1. An Overview to the Political Situation in Yemen since 1990

Before 1990, there were two entirely separate Yemens, North Yemen and South Yemen. Yemen was unified in May 1990. The two ruling parties in the formally separated states – General People’s Conference, GPC, and Yemeni Social Party, YSP, – before the unification formed an agreement called “The Unity Accord”. The Unity Accord was a kind of political document, agenda and system to be interpreted during the period after the unification until the new government issues the constitution and organizes the first elections.

The Unity Accord and the Constitution

The Unity Accord is the document that led to real unification between South Yemen and North Yemen in 1990. It contained the terms, conditions, and characteristics of the new unified state specifying a democratic system. The document guaranteed public participation in decision-making of the state. It also affirmed that the new state will have a parliamentary system and a constitution that forms and maintains the democratic state and that guarantees and protects liberties and freedoms of all citizens including all kind of political liberties.

The Constitution of Yemen was affirmed by a referendum after the unification of South and North of Yemen. The constitution affirmed that Yemen is a civic and democratic state. The system of the state shall be parliamentary with public participation in decision-making by the polity. Also, it affirmed and guaranteed every right and liberty of the citizens including political liberties, participation in political life, their individual rights, rights of expression, and equality of all citizens under the law. Citizens have the right to organize themselves professionally, socially and politically. They have the right to establish and run political parties, syndicates, unions and organizations.²¹

²¹ Constitution of The Republic of Yemen.,1990.

The constitution obligates the state to be a cooperative and peaceful state among the international community as Article Five affirmed: “The state shall abide by the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the League of Arab States and the generally accepted norms of international law.”²²

After the unification, the government promulgated the constitution through a public referendum. The new constitution guaranteed a democratic pluralistic system and liberties of all kinds such as liberty of expression, liberty to establish civil society organizations and associations and liberty to form political parties.²³

A parliamentary election was held in 1993 which was the first such election in Yemen’s history. In 1994, the leaderships of the ruling parties, General People Conference GPC and Yemeni Socialists Party YSP, went through political conflicts that led to the civil war of 1994. Before the civil war, civil society organizations and civil activists made great efforts to mediate between the two ruling parties, aiming to prevent civil war and to solve their differences peacefully. They struggled for public safety, to limit and eliminate corruption, and to build institutions that take responsibilities for the country. The big goal was to create democratic state and stable society. Even tribal leaders tried to participate in the efforts to prevent civil war and formed a resolution to end the conflict between the ruling parties.

The 1994 civil war was a setback to democracy and civil society in Yemen. The winner, the ruling party, GPC, became the ruling party without other effective parties to create political balance. The state crushed civil society and shifted to a totalitarian military regime gradually. Constitutional amendments made by the state after 1994 retracted liberties, human rights, and civic participation. Human rights and rights defenders in general faced formidable challenges and hazards.

²² Ibid., Article 5.

²³ Ibid.

Opposition parties were weak and lacked strong popular base to enable them to demand political changes. The ruling party used the state apparatus, institutions, military, security forces, finance and public media to function for its own interests. Citizens' interests were not involved in their agenda.

Sarah Phillips argued that the political system in Yemen entered a “the gray zone”, i.e. it did not become a consolidated equilibrium.²⁴ Two years later after her study, the state in Yemen became an autocratic state. Liberties and freedoms were smashed by Saleh's regime. Democratic institutions became totally crippled and corruption became a characteristic of Yemen's politics. The regime dominated political life and controlled decision-making and economic resources in the country without supervision. Powerless parliament, restricted freedoms of press, and weak opposition parties were allowed by the regime only to enhance its legitimacy.²⁵

After the 1994 war, when Yemeni Socialists Party was defeated, General People Conference formed a coalition with the Islamists party, Islah Party, and amended the constitution without referendum. Yemeni Socialists Party YSP boycotted the parliamentary election in 1997 and Islah Party abandoned the coalition. In the parliamentary elections of 2003, General People Conference GPC won 229 of 301 seats which enabled the regime to dominate totally policy-making in the country. General People Conference did not dare to criticize or evaluate the government's policies because of the oppressive response of the authorities. Opposition parties, civil society organizations and citizens' power to create and support peaceful political change became very weak and limited. The regime manipulated any reform program or project by domestic and international institutions such as WB or IMF.

Yemeni people lost their power to affect decision-making or initiate political or

²⁴ Sarah Phillips, *Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective: Patronage and Pluralism Authoritarianism*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008),17.

²⁵ Ibid., 17

economic reforms. Elections did not represent a real democratic situation or democratic practice, political change or constitutional governance. President Saleh²⁶ won two presidential elections, the first one was in 1999 and the second was in 2006. The regime used the state apparatus like media, finance, and military to influence and affect public opinion. Some observers of the elections said that there was some forgery and manipulations. The opposition parties were not convinced with the results but they said that they did not want to drive the country into political chaos.²⁷

The Islah Party (the moderate Islamists party)²⁸ and neo-liberals parties became new partially effective political and social players as the opposition parties. The regime supported the Islah party to confront civil society activists especially those led by the western-educated liberals²⁹. The regime waged a war against civil society organizations and civic activists who began to demand political reforms and an end to corruption. However, civil society did not leave the regime completely free-handed. The authoritarian regime within the one-party state led the country to formidable deterioration, into corruption, economic difficulties and human rights abuse. Yemen ranked very low and very corrupted year by year according to the Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International.³⁰

2.2. How civil society plays democratic role?

The function and duty of civil society is to create and maintain social life that is

²⁶ President Saleh was the president of Yemen since 1979. In 2011, he left power upon the youth revolution.

²⁷ Sheikh Abdullah Bin Husain Al-Ahmar.

²⁸ The Islah Party is the moderate Islamist party in Yemen that has a political and social agenda. It was founded in 1990 upon the unification of Yemen. It is the only moderate Islamist movement that engaged in political democratic process, peaceful participation and in public life. More details about its nature and activism are in chapter three.

²⁹ There was a great hostility between the Islamists and the liberals until the Islamists party (Islah Party) decided to make a change in its agenda to be more democratic.

³⁰ http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results.

organized, voluntary, self-generated, self-supported, and autonomous from the state. It has its own legal limits and systems, including citizens who act collectively and publicly to express and represent their interests, passions, and ideas. They share information, achieve their goals, and set their demands for the state as well as monitoring government officials. It is an entity that serves as intermediary between state and citizens, private sphere and public sector.

Civil society plays a democratic role by preparing the ground for political changes. Civil society organizations build a civil society that fosters human rights, a free market, democracy and democratization. It creates a new civic culture of trust and tolerance. Effective civil society organizations create social capital which keeps the society in order and away from chaos. “Civil society helps check authoritarian rulers’ abuses, increase the accountability and create a common framework of disparate interests.”³¹ Civil society can create a social and political order by playing roles such as a socialization function in building citizenship skills and attitudes. Civil society organizations enlighten the people and produce civic engagement and public spiritedness.³²

Bob Edwards argued that civil society might serve as a virtual alternative to the economic and political order instead of struggling against the state.³³ Democracy is more than mere participation in elections or civic engagements. It creates a new paradigm of civic culture comprehended with tolerance and trust among society fragments and citizens. Civil society, when growing effectively, builds a civic society that is a pro-democratic, pro-human rights, and pro-free market, that make democracy flourish.

In a seminar about ‘*Civil Society in the Arab Spring*’, Hibah Rwaif, a Human Rights

³¹ Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen: the political economy of activism in modern Arabia*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³² Foley, Michael W. & Bob Edwards, “*Beyond Tocqueville: civil society and social capital in comparative perspective*”, (American Behavioral Scientists, Vol. 42, 1998).

³³ Ibid.

Watch representative, concluded that civil society organizations contributed to the revolutions in the Middle East in 2011 many years early because CSOs played a key role in variant activities such as volunteering, seminars about liberties, and labor rights. People learned about many political issues from being involved in civic engagement. In Tunisia, which enjoys a large number of CSOs and NGOs, labor unions mobilized labor forces to defend their rights. *Labor Union for Work* organized many protests and demonstrations. In Egypt, the syndicates exposed how the regime forged and manipulated the last elections. CSOs reported many cases of the abuse and torture of citizens in the Egyptian Ministry of Interior and any human abuse by the police. These cases were some of the reasons for the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. People decided to make a revolution for change because they knew that they have rights and they must defend their rights by choosing a government that respects and considers their rights. People became angry because they know the state is misgoverning and abusing the citizens.³⁴

Mukhtar Al-Tarifi, head of Tunisian Human Rights Association, argued that civil society organizations contributed effectively to the Tunisian revolution especially human rights organizations. Civil society organizations and professional syndicates destroyed the autocracy by exposing and uncover how the government was abusing, terrifying and threatening citizens and civic activists. After the revolution, civil society organizations supported and mobilized citizens for the general release for political and opinion prisoners. They also demanded the new government to be committed to all international agreements about human rights. Al-Tarifi asserted that civil society organizations succeeded in their mission of political liberalization and democracy promotion, whereas political parties failed

³⁴ A seminar held by human rights and civil society representatives to discuss the influence of civil society on the revolutions in the Arab Middle East <http://otvlive.org>.

especially with regard to the last political change in a deep-rooted dictatorship.³⁵

Civil society has the ability to transform the tribes in Yemen into a modern, organized and productive community. It transforms grassroots politics from tribal and radical Islamist groups into civil community in many ways such as enlightening the people how to take collective actions to defend their political rights as well as launching economic services. Civil society organizations cooperate with non-regime actors like non-governmental organizations, civic activists, opposition parties, tribes, religious groups in a peaceful activism to create social capital and civic sphere.³⁶ The mechanism of civil society leads to make officials more responsive rather than oppressive and aggressive against the public demands and desires.

It became obvious that; *“Arab leaders look to liberalization as a way to divide the opposition even while letting it blow off steam. The proliferation of civil society groups, a somewhat open press, and access to the Internet and satellite television can create a feeling of virtual democracy without opening the doors to dramatic reforms.”*³⁷

After 2004, president Saleh and his regime started to think of a new strategy. It was to prepare his son, Ahmad, to be the new next president of the country. When opposition parties and the press discussed and argued about this matter, Saleh resorted to the army leaders to guarantee their standing behind his decision. Saleh attacked the opposition and the press and portrait them as enemies of the nation. The regime used public media, T.V, and journals to wage a war against the opposition parties, press, independent media, and civil society organizations which opposed the matter of introducing Saleh's son, Ahmad, as the

³⁵ Ibid <http://ontvlive.org>.

³⁶ Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen: the political economy of activism in modern Arabia*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998),19.

³⁷ Dalia Dassa Kaye, Frederic Wehrey, Audra K. Grant, and Dale Stahl. *More freedom, less terror? : liberalization and political violence in the Arab world*. (Published by the RAND Corporation.1776 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138, 2008), 37.

man of the new stage like Bashar Al-Asad in Syria.

The regime in Yemen was not an exception. Elections were there, but democracy was absent. *"Liberalization without popular sovereignty or political accountability is thus the essence of liberalized autocracy—a form of hybrid regime that produces 'elections without democracy.'"*³⁸

Non-political actors became more aware of the game of the regime that was attempting to prevent any initiatives by any power from political change. So, they created social networks and connected civil society organization and active public citizens. Civil society in Yemen became able to activate the feedback mechanism between the state and the grassroots public, held to account the officials, supervised the government and fostered social capital.

2.3. Civil Society and Rule of Law

Strong civil society plays a key role in empowering the rule of law and rule of law helps societies and poor groups and minorities in defending their rights. Applying the rule of law is a cornerstone for civil society to grow and boom. It provides greater opportunities for civil society to become much stronger because, simply, its key concept indicates that the regime in question deals and treats with the law. Rule of law is a substantive preliminary stage for democracy and human rights. It is one of the main goals of democracy and the UN ascertains the rule of law protects weak groups and small minorities from been abused or disadvantaged of their fundamental rights and freedoms when applying the rule of law. International institutes and organizations like the U.N, World Bank, International Bar Association, and World Justice Project are paying more attention to the importance of rule of law as a basic element of protecting fundamental rights of societies, communities, minorities,

³⁸ Ibid.

groups, and individuals in countries where rule of law is not fully or effectively applied.

2.4. Rule of Law: Definition

The UN secretary-General defines the rule of law as:

*A principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.*³⁹

However, the International Bar Association asserted or expanded the definition of the rule of law in its resolution as:

An independent, impartial judiciary; the presumption of innocence; the right to a fair and public trial without undue delay; a rational and proportionate approach to punishment; a strong and independent legal profession; strict protection of confidential communications between lawyer and client; equality of all before the law; these are all fundamental principles of the Rule of Law. Accordingly, arbitrary arrests; secret trials; indefinite detention without trial; cruel or degrading treatment or punishment; intimidation or corruption in the electoral process; are all unacceptable.

³⁹ United Nations Rule of Law, <http://www.unrol.org/doc.aspx?n=2004%20report.pdf>.

The Rule of Law is the foundation of a civilized society. It establishes a transparent process accessible and equal to all. It ensures adherence to principles that both liberate and protect..⁴⁰

The organization World Justice Project which is specialized and committed globally to support the rule of law detailed some principles related to rule of law including the accountability of the government and the officials of the state under the law, laws must have some characteristics such as clarity, fairness, stability, and protection of fundamental rights of individuals.⁴¹

In Yemen, where the state failed in achieving any acceptable level of rule of law, civil society organizations and associations struggled to defend and seize legal and human rights when abused by the state or some powerful individuals in the community. About 80 % of the major disputes in Yemen are solved informally outside the official courts.⁴² The Women Journalists without Chains organization started its battle by defending the rights of the poor citizens of “Al-Ja’ashen⁴³” whose properties and assets were seized by their Sheikh in a rural area in Ibb governorate for they must pay him taxes. The Women Journalists without Chains organization developed its agenda to become a peaceful political challenge. The organization targeted the grassroots to support and mobilize by teaching them their rights and how to defend their rights in the courts. Kerman started to call for monitoring and holding accountable the legal system, and judges to support rule of law in Yemen.

⁴⁰ International Bar Association, <http://www.ibanet.org/Search/Default.aspx?q=resolution>.

⁴¹ World Justice Project, WJP, <http://www.worldjusticeproject.org>.

⁴² <http://www.hiil.org/insight/?itemID=353>

⁴³ Al-Ja’ashen is a rural territory in Ibb governorate. Its people are generally farmers. Al-Ja’ashen’s sheikh had a good relationship with some members of president Saleh family. So, the sheikh took advantage of this relationship to capitalize and abuse the farmers. He acclaimed that he was owning the land the farmers were just workers for him and ordered them to pay him taxes other than the state. When the farmers refused his request, the sheikh ordered his armed followers to force them to leave their farms, cattle, and houses for any other land. The government did not response to this case but Women Journalists without Chains Organization made this case a national and regional one.

2.5. Liberalization and Democratization

After the unification, Yemen demonstrated some openness to democracy and limited civil society activism. The state granted some rights such as freedom of the press and other media, collective activities and freedom of speech. However, the state did not relax its military control of the country genuinely. The regime did not try to solve the political crisis between the General People's Congress and the Yemeni Socialist Party and chose an oppressive way to defeat the last one that participated in the unification of the country.

Liberalization is defined as *“the expansion of public space through the recognition and protection of civil and political liberties, particularly those bearing upon the ability of citizens to engage in free political discourse and to freely organize in pursuit of common interests.”*⁴⁴

Fukuyama argued that liberalization and democratization are two different concepts. Political liberalization is simply a legitimate regime which recognizes the individual rights and liberties that are independent from state observation. Some of these rights are; civil rights, religious rights, political rights such as the basic rights of press freedom.⁴⁵

Liberalization focuses on the liberties of the individuals, minorities, and groups, and protects political rights for all citizens equally. Issues like social welfare and decentralization are part of a liberal government agenda. Economic liberalization is also desired because it leads to a free market and fewer restrictions by the state on the market. The results are more economic development, political, and social stability. Tunisia is a good example in the Arab World. The state initiated many social, economic and political reforms that enables the middle class and civil society organizations to flourish and influence social and political life.

⁴⁴ Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany and Paul Noble, *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World: Theoretical Perspectives*, (Publishers.Inc. Colarado,USA: LynneRienner,1995).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 69.

Democratization is defined as: “*an expansion of political participation in such a way as to provide citizens with a degree of real and meaningful collective control over public policy.*”⁴⁶ General People Conference Fukuyama argued that democracy is the right to participate in the political authority and decision-making. In other words, the right that all citizens have in elections and participation in the political life which makes democratization connected with liberalization.⁴⁷ However, democracy does not always guarantee public participation and political rights. Democratic process could be manipulated by the political elite. So, it does not always reflex people’s real will or interests. There are countries that have democratic systems but they are not liberalized like Iran. Liberalization protects rights of the individuals and the minorities. Democracy that does not protect the individuals’ rights is not consider a democracy.⁴⁸

If we want to achieve political liberalization in Yemen, we should create political relaxation and protection of liberties. Political parties failed to lead the state to this stage. So, civil society organizations are the last resort to create and strive for maintaining political democratization by promoting collective actions and defending liberties of the citizens such as freedom of expression through peaceful ways such as collective demonstrations and protests. This is one of the main goals of establishing and developing civil society organizations in Yemen.

In 1990, the new state encouraged citizens’ political participation but that was not the genuine goal. Political change was what citizens desired for the new state. The regime did not allow more liberties and perpetrated electoral fraud to win the elections. Citizens, opposition political parties, and non-ruling political elites did not have access to policy-making, corruption fighting, or state monitoring. This is exactly the gap between the process of

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

liberalization and democratization in Yemen where political freedom and liberties are the cornerstone case for which about two thousands of citizens died and more than 22,000 wounded in 2011 revolution.⁴⁹

2.6. Why civil society is necessary in Yemen?

Civil society is necessary in Yemen for many reasons such as to initiate economic services, to create social and political stability, and to prevent terrorism. Civil society organizations and associations create pressure on the state for public goods such as good governance and accountability. It will serve the society in Yemen as preventing sharp ideological conflicts⁵⁰ and consolidating democracy. The Yemeni regime became more authoritarian and oppressive because of the absence of effective and strong civil society. Some local community leaders tend to serve the regime's non-democratic activities like giving some citizens money for electing candidates of the regime during the elections.

The political elites dominated both politics and socioeconomic activities which threatened long-term stability in Yemen.

Secular and intellectual associations are important to foster the cultural diversity that ensures tolerance and confronts extremism and terrorism in Yemen. There are many radical Islamists associations growing and influencing the young generation, especially in rural areas where young people are illiterate, jobless and hopeless. They targeted them and used them for terrorist activities. Civil society organizations which contribute to social and economic services help those illiterate, jobless young people by training and education which enables them to find jobs and start hopeful lives.

Civil society organizations demanded more decentralization and a limited executive.

⁴⁹ A report about 2011 protests in Yemen by Hooriya Mashhoor, Minister of Human Rights, presented to Human Rights Committee in the United Nations, March 2012. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/hrct741.doc.htm>

⁵⁰ Yemen is not a homogenous society. There are many religious minorities like Jews, marginalized groups like poor farmers, workers, and other groups who have no jobs nor education.

It helped citizens to depend on themselves and to decrease their dependency on the state and shift their attitudes to be effective groups to serve themselves and their communities. Their next step is to supervise the state and affect the policy-making process. Civil society organizations struggled to prevent the civil war in Yemen in 1994. Before that they tried to bridge the gap between the parties that ended their dispute with civil war. After the civil war of 1994, civil society organizations struggled to defend human rights and constitutional rights for the institutions and associations and to fight against the government's corruption and political extremism.

Civil society is the only way to mediate between the society and the state and create a state which is able to answer citizens' needs and desires. Yemeni civil society teaches citizens that legal rights are not a grant from the state, so they should defend them and fight for them to weaken totalitarian control by the regime. For Jang Jip Choi, (2005), *"the conceptual boundaries of civil society are much broader than those of social movements. In addition to social movements, interest groups and non-governmental organizations and their networks constitute civil society."*⁵¹

Some studies mentioned that the former Egyptian regime had fostered many civil society organizations for reasons other than promoting democracy such as gaining legitimacy and longevity. In Yemen, the events of the uprising that started in February 2011 made it clear that civil society has the *'invisible hand'* which drove the country in the direction of democratization. Without civil society, the alternatives will be a totalitarian military regime, Islamists extremists or tribal groups who will have a great chance to control the state.

Civil society creates pressure groups that demand accountability and openness in developing countries and can trace the path of developed countries in its stance against the

⁵¹ Jang Jip Choi, *Democracy after Democratization: The Korean Experience*, (Seoul: Humanitas ,2005).

state even though there are vast economic and political differences.⁵² The absence of civil society in the Arab Middle East will lead to civil chaos rather than military coups. The fears about Yemen are even worse because of the threats radical Islamist extremists like those of Al-Qaeda and the terrorists who are taking advantage of the unstable situation of the country and the weak and corrupted state.

Amy Hawthorne argued that “Under the right conditions, civil society can contribute to the democratization of authoritarian regimes and can help to sustain a democratic system once it is established.”⁵³ This observation is correct and sound if we consider the political situation in Yemen where the regime became a target of the human rights organizations and professional syndicates. The government did not allow any public institution to establish its own syndicate or union for many unfair reasons. When some public employees try to establish their own syndicate or union, the regime does not recognize them and prepare its own followers to establish a similar one just to hamper the origin one as what happened in Central Bank of Yemen and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁴

Elections did not mean democracy during the last two decades in Yemen neither in the Arab Middle East and will not lead to grassroots democracy. Marwan Muasher stated that

Elections equal democracy. No one is fooled by this claim anymore. In order to maintain their dominance, Arab governments have relied on flawed laws and elections that don't produce strong parliaments or lead to real change.... Throughout the region, elections have been used to create a façade of democracy aimed at impressing citizens and the outside world while insulating the regimes from pressure for genuine reform....

⁵² Mushtaq Khan, 'The Role of Civil Society and Patron-Client Networks in the Analysis of Corruption.' In: *Corruption and Integrity Improvement Initiatives in Developing Countries*, (New York: UNDP, Management Develop and Governance Division, 1998), 111-128.

⁵³ Amy Hawthorne. *Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 2004), 5.

⁵⁴ An interview with some public officials in Central Bank of Yemen and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

People will not be satisfied with economic handouts or cosmetic changes in governance; they are demanding real change that puts their country on a clear path toward democracy.⁵⁵

Non-governmental organizations are a new method to stop the Islamists extremists who are using charity to gain grassroots support.⁵⁶ In Sa'da governorate, in the north of Yemen, sectarian groups have been creating trouble with the state for several years. They are capitalizing on the economic hardship of young people to use them by giving them salaries to fight for their masters' extremist ideological agenda.

Economically, Yemen is running out of oil and gas and the consequences will be the increase of non-governmental organizations' services. Yemen is in need of social stability by insuring social, economic services because of the economic difficulties.

In the case of a civil war, this will enhance the chance for al-Qaeda to increase its activities and the country might be destroyed. The state is failing and the country is running out of order.⁵⁷ Al-Qaeda is a real threat to Yemen's social and political stability. Al-Qaeda is nowadays occupying many areas in south Yemen because of the absence of a powerful state.⁵⁸ The people in Middle East realized that lack of collective actions led to authoritarian regimes and social chaos as well. So, collective demonstrations were their last resort to demand for democracy.

⁵⁵ Marwan Muasher, Arab Myths and Realities, <http://carnegie.ru/publications/?fa=42925>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,7.

⁵⁷ A seminar held by CNN. <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/index.html>.

⁵⁸ In March 2012, Al-Qaeda controlled two governorates in south Yemen as a result of the weakness of the state.

Chapter Three

3.1. An Overview of Civil Society in Yemen

According to Don Eberly (1998), civil society “denotes that realm of society in which non-political institutions operate – families, houses of worship, neighborhoods, civic groups, and just about every form of voluntary association imaginable.”⁵⁹

Civil society organizations and associations did not exist officially in Yemen before 1990. Just few local self-help, religiously oriented associations were established before the unification. Their activities were charitable and educational. In Aden before the unification, there were some associations and unions which pursued some activities such as strikes to demand some rights but they did not involve political activities. There were no associations that built social capital, social autonomy, or struggled for political rights to create civil space. After the unification in 1990, the constitution and the unity accord guaranteed liberty of associational life and building NGOs. Many associations were established and civic activities were launched nationwide. The government did not prevent activities of civil society according to the constitution and unity accord.

After the 1994 civil war, the government tried to subordinate the organizations of civil society, especially politically active ones that wanted to create political change. The regime started to control liberties and hinder liberalization to maintain the power in the hands of the president. The regime amended the constitution many times and changed the rules that led to civil society’s booming growth. Every governmental law or constitutional amendment aimed to target and weaken civil society organizations, NGOs’ role and all politically activists’ influence.

⁵⁹ Don Eberly, *America's Promise: Civil Society and the Renewal of American Culture*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998),20.

Many demonstrations were crushed by the police and the security forces. Before the country was involved in the civil war, civil society organizations struggled to bring the political actors to dialogue. They aimed to solve the political crisis by negotiations rather than by war. Many civic organizations mobilized the public to mass protest to demand for peaceful resolutions. They framed a dialogue committee and demanded policy-makers and political leaders to be committed to the unity accord and negotiations. They demanded also for social justice, equality and fairness in distribution of power and resources.

Several civil society associations competed and contested over public space such as Islahs' institutions (moderate scholarly institutes), western-educated intellectuals such as Forum of Political Development, the ruling party and the liberals. That was the beginning of the civic activities that were engaged by political movements.

The regime controlled civil society and civic activities after their short period of openness between 1990 and 1994. It created bureaucratic obstacles aiming to hamper civic activists. Civic activists who practiced political activities were threatened and jailed for months. The regime weakened civil society organizations' ability to bargain and demand political rights or political reform. For example, Abdulaziz Al-Saqaf, the social and political activist who established *Yemen Times* journal, was killed in a car accident and the authorities did not investigate or found the killer. Amal Al-Basha, a female activist and journalist, has become a target of the state during the last 15 years. Al-Basha was jailed many times and harassed for her local and international civic activities. Bashraheel, a social and political activist and a journalist who is editor-in-chief of *Al-Ayyam* journal became another target to the regime. He was jailed many times for months for his activities that mobilized the public against the regime.

However, civil society organizations and activists were hindered and became less effective but they did not totally stop or shift from their course of defending human rights,

teaching or mobilizing people for their public affairs and interests. In an interview with Tawakul Kerman, she said that she and many of civic activists in Yemen never thought to stop defending journalists' rights or human rights even when she was threatened and jailed by the regime many times.⁶⁰

3.2. Shortcomings of Civil Society in Yemen

In the authoritarian states, the authorities of the regime are the major obstacle that encounter civil society organizations and prevent them from creating genuine political change. Civil society organizations in Yemen were not an effective counterbalance to the state. The reasons including the patronage system that made the organizations heavily dependent on its leadership and personal connections among civil society groups and other institutions. The absence of enforcement of the rule of law prevented civil society from bargaining with the state for rights, liberties and political reforms. Civil society had no protection from punishment by the authorities of the regime. The regime power is still hegemonic and civil society is prevented from gaining too much power. For example, civil society organizations are not big enough in membership or in numbers. That was a consequence of many factors such as the historical, traditional, social, and political culture in Yemen. Civil society organizations did not develop their programs, projects and agenda to create a new paradigm of thinking to help the society and influence the political and economic life greatly in Yemen.

Many civil society organizations that have been established by the regime were corrupt, lack of experience such as; Yemen Labor Union, MOONAH for Human Rights and Immigration, Arab Institution for Human Rights, Educational Syndicate, Yemeni Women Union, Women's Forum for Research and Training, Civil Society Meeting, Human Rights

⁶⁰ TV interview on <http://www.youtube.com/user/democracynow>.

Information and Training Center, and Civic Democratic Initiatives Support Foundation.⁶¹

Also, many of CSOs did not initiate many activities other than fund raising. So, it was impossible for them to be counter-hegemonic against the state. Daniel Brumberg explained that

Liberal Islam, moreover, constitutes a limited intellectual trend that has thus far not sunk organizational roots in Arab societies. Nor have civil society organizations been able to pierce the armor of liberalized autocracy. On the contrary, in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan the sheer proliferation of small NGOs—riven by fierce ideological divisions and hamstrung by official regulations—has made "divide and rule" easier.⁶²

Interference of the regime limited and prevented civil society from achieving much political promotion or social progress. Some civil society leaders accepted money from the state and then became more loyal to the regime and hence incompetent regarding the demand for political change or adopting a counter-regime agenda.

The authoritarian regime used the state apparatus and institutions to prevent and obscure the emergence of effective civil society. State repression was the most obvious obstacle in the way of civil society in Yemen. The state badly tried to limit civil society organizations' activities in social welfare and cultural issues without interference in political matters of any kind.

In an interview with Ali Saleh Abdullallah, deputy minister of Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, he argued that the government was supporting NGOs and CSOs in many

⁶¹ Those civil society organizations are part of the CSOs that established by the regime for political agenda rather than for civic and social activities.

⁶² Daniel Brumberg, "Democratization in the Arab World? The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy" http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v013/13.4brumberg.html.

ways, such as tax exemption. When he was asked about the new law issued by the government called “association’s law” in 2001 which created many problems and obstacles for civil society organizations and associations and was debated in the parliament too, he replied that the goal of that law was to organize those associations, especially the issue of foreign funding. When he was asked about the new law project by the government to establish higher arrangement committee’ to supervise civil society organizations and associations, he replied that it was also to organize those NGOs and CSOs and associations to serve the public good well. He added that the state tried to prevent the political parties from controlling CSOs and NGOs to make the latter more socially and politically influential, especially in social welfare.⁶³

In fact, the government aimed to create obstacles to prevent CSOs and NGOs from being politically active and affective. The state wanted to limit them as social welfare actors with no political agenda or influence. If those NGOs and CSOs communicate or cooperate with the ruling party, the state does not mind. If they cooperate with the opposition parties, here comes the problem of power and counterbalance which the state struggled to prevent any party from achieving this goal.

Civil society organizations’ connection and communication mechanisms with the grassroots community and public were not intensive. Instead, they are used to focus on the political, social, and intellectual elite. Personalization was one key factor behind the weakness of civil society so that the regime used to target the leaders of civil society personally too. Abdu Al-Aziz Al-Saqaf was killed by car accident. Al-Saqaf, (1952-1999), was a human right supporter, activist and journalist who established *Yemen Times* newspaper in 1991. Al-Saqaf had his doctoral degree from Medford, Massachusetts in 1979 and then worked as an economist at Sana'a University. He strived for freedom of the press and won

⁶³ www.Sabanews.net 24.Mar.2010.

many international prizes for defending human rights, freedom of the press and supporting civil society organizations and democracy.⁶⁴ Many other civic activists were killed by anonymous individuals. The government did not investigate in many cases.

The political and civil culture in Yemen, like most Third World countries, is still backward. Civic participation and civic democratic culture are not traditions yet. In Yemen, the loyalty of individuals to their family or tribe is still more than to the nation. Secular CSOs and liberal activists are still living in their ivory towers. They did not initiate many civic activities or cooperate with other small groups to start collective actions. Intellectuals theoretically analyze and discuss how the country is undemocratic and how liberties are smashed by the regime without thinking about ideas to defend human rights and political and social changes.⁶⁵

The weak and limited middle class is another factor behind weak civil society in Yemen. The middle class is important to civil society. Ibrahim Saif argued that: *“In light of the current political transformation affecting the region, the middle class has become an important topic of conversation, as hopes have been raised that it might play a role in bringing about new balances.”*⁶⁶

The mechanism of collective actions is still weak for many reasons such as geographic problems, lack of funding and a high rate of illiteracy. People live in fragmented villages and small towns far from each other. Citizens of Yemen have no great experience in collective actions before the year 2011 especially for political reasons.

3.3. Civil Society and the State in Yemen

⁶⁴ www.yementimes.com

⁶⁵ There are many studies, periodicals and seminars that discuss democracy political change in Yemen issued by many academia's and political activists without active action plans.

⁶⁶ Ibrahim Saif Titled, 'The Middle Class and Transformations in the Arab World' <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=45895&lang=ru>.

The new government in Yemen after unification in 1990 allowed civil society organizations and political parties to foster some of the NGOs such as the National Democratic Institute. YSP fostered some intellectual associations and the Islah party created many organizations and associations such as Islah Charity Association, and the Yemeni Teachers' Syndicate.

Civil society took advantage of this opportunity in that period to achieve some organizational skills. Between 1990 and 1994, the state allowed some democratic practices and it was less oppressive with civil society. Civil society contacted the public to teach them their political rights and their duties as citizens. That was the bright period for civil society. Many activities were initiated and created a shift of the political paradigm during that era of democratic experimentation. Civil society organizations started to defend civil rights, political rights, and legal rights as well as their primary charity, social and welfare activities.

The state realized that the space given to civil society was wide enough to affect the regime's authoritarian agenda. For example, the government issued many laws that restrict and limit the liberties of expression and established a special court for journalists in May 2009 named "court of journalists" which specializes in punishing journalists who discuss critical political issues.

Abdul-Kareem Al-Iryani, the political counselor of president Saleh, praised the state's efforts to democratize and how Yemen became a hope for democracy in Arabia. He said that a civic state is the goal of the political leadership of Yemen because it will contribute to solve many of the country's crises. He added that a civic state encourages all citizens participate in policy-making.⁶⁷ However, he did not explain why the state was waging a war against civil society organizations and NGOs and accusing them of having destructive agenda against the nation.

⁶⁷ Interviewed by France 24, at www.France24.com.

Professor Adel Al-Sharjabi, a professor at Sana'a University thinks that the state in Yemen dominated the mosques and religious groups and used them for its own authoritarian purposes.⁶⁸ The regime manipulated well all fragments of the society and socially effective groups to guarantee that every party will fight against other under the principle of 'divide and rule'.

The government did not respond to civil society organizations' demands for political reforms and did not cooperate with them whenever they opposed the mainstream policy in cases like environment, violence and economic corruption. The state became more oppressive against civil society openness and issued more laws to create more obstacles before civil society organizations' activities. The Constitution was amended to force all political players, political parties, civil society organizations, and independent civic activists to accept the rules of the regime's game.

Many political activists and members of parliament admitted that the absence of any public monitoring mechanism led to the corruption of the state. Citizens' belief that the house of representatives will observe the government automatically without popular or organizational monitoring was mistaken. Abdul -Razaq Al-Hijri, a member of the Yemeni parliament and oppositional political activist, said that the institutional role of the Yemeni parliament was lost because of the hegemony of the ruling party and because of the oppression of the state against the members of the opposition in the parliament. He added, "We need alternatives (meaning to create political change) such as civil society organizations to promote role of the public monitoring There is a gap between the parliament member and the ordinary citizens as well as the public organizations."⁶⁹

3.4. How Did the State Respond to Civil Society?

⁶⁸ A seminar held by a group of Sana'a University Professors, <http://babalyemen.com>.

⁶⁹ Interviewed by Women Journalists without Chains Org. at www.women.press.org.

Civil society in Yemen was answered by the regime violently after the passage of many constitutional amendments that restricted and limited civic associations and activities. That was the main reason behind civil society's retreat. At the beginning, the state started to control civil society softly. Then, the state discouraged civic activism in many new ways such as co-optation. CSOs and many national actors initiated 'the National Conference.'⁷⁰ The aim of this conference was to form some resolutions to help in solving the political problems that led to the 1994 civil war. The government scheduled an alternative conference and formed similar and parallel resolutions instead of accepting the genuine ones.

The government became more violent using many oppressive means such as penetrating, threatening and jailing civic activists.⁷¹ Police harassed civic activists and did not protect them. The state created and fostered parallel civic movements to encounter, contradict, compete against and destroy the genuine ones. Weakening mass organizations became the regime's number-one target in many ways.

The regime realized the serious role of the independent media and press in enlightening and mobilizing the public for many political issues, so, the government used the public media and press to attack all media and press that opposed the regime's propaganda. Many journalists were arrested, threatened, and jailed. International journalists were prevented from entering the country unless they got a former permission and approval from the government. Independent publications, journals, and newspapers were shut down many times such as *Al-Ayam* newspaper, *Al-Masdar* journal and the *Yemen Times*.

The government became the biggest problem and obstacle suppressing civil society in Yemen in its efforts to pursue liberalization and democracy. The government was practicing pluralism and electoral democracy as a façade to secure funds from international

⁷⁰ The National Conference was held in 1994 by many non-state powers including civil society activists, tribal leaders and NGOs aimed to prevent the civil war by bringing the main parties to dialogue.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*,193.

institutions and donors while, at the same time it was moving the country backward to a military authoritarian state because president Saleh was aiming to prepare his son to become the next president of Yemen, just as Hafiz Al-Assad had done in Syria.

3.5. Civil Society and Political Parties

According to most theorists, political parties are not part of civil society because their objectives are to win in the elections to achieve political power. This is different from the usual civil society voluntary activities. However, civil society organizations usually cooperate with political parties, especially opposition parties to achieve one mutual goal to create more collective actions to place more pressure on the state.

The main political parties in Yemen are:

- Ruling party, General People Conference GPC.
- Islah Party, Islamists Party
- Yemeni Socialist Party, Socialist party YSP
- Nasserist Party, liberal party
- Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party
- Other small parties with fewer than five representatives in the parliament.

Political parties had limited ability to create and foster civil society except the three main parties, General People Conference GPC, Islah Party, and Yemeni Socialist Party YSP. The Islah party is fostering a big association called Islah Charity Association. Islah is an Islamists party with a moderate political perspective and agenda. It follows the Muslim Brotherhood's paradigm which rejects violent political changes and it has good grassroots support.

Political parties, both ruling party and opposition ones, had no great interaction and cooperation with the civil society organizations except for The Islah Party. Like the ruling party, opposition parties focused on community leaders to gain their political loyalty and

support but did not do much for the society to enhance the democratic process. For example, political parties, especially opposition parties, did not initiate much pro-democratic activities. When opposition parties realized the importance of creating and fostering civil society organizations, they started to form some civic associations aiming to have more grassroots support and new power to use in their political struggle.

Political parties realized that they were weak and divided because they did not contact and interacted with the community and thus lack necessary influence for the popular base to have grassroots support. They were demanding democracy from the state while they are internally undemocratic.

After the elections of 1999, political parties realized that their real power should come from grassroots support. So they started to expand their agenda to include civic activities and associations and to cooperate with NGOs and civic activists. When political parties cooperated with civil society organizations, they began to close the gap between them and the grassroots base. They applied more powerful pressure against the state to demand liberties, liberalization, and political rights. An example of that, the Yemeni Socialist Party, could not protect its main and nationwide journal, *Al-Ayyam* Newspaper, when the state attacked and closed the journal. Only human rights organizations and Woman Journalists without Chains defended the case and protested to demand the state to release the editor-in-chief, Bashraheel from jail and to allow the journal to be published again.

Ali Hassan Saif, a political activist and executive director of Political Development Forum, criticized political parties' performance in Yemen because their activities became less effective and he argued that they should involve themselves in civic activities and create and support civic associations to transform political change into democracy. He gave an example of the young generation in the Islah party who established associations that created social capital in some rural areas. Youth and university students should be helped to initiate many

collective activities to increase political movements such as fighting corruption, creating accountability, and hence democratic change. He encouraged young people to create new ideas to help their communities because the political powers that defend democracy and liberties in Yemen are weak.⁷²

3.6. Civil society and the Islamists Party (The Islah Party)

The Islah Party is a political and social movement that founded in 1990 upon the unification of Yemen. It is the only moderate Islamist movement that engaged in the political process, peaceful participation and in public life. It has strong ties with the community because of young and dynamic leaders who look forward to political and social change and a civil state. Even though the party's legislative and ideological such is Islamic law and role of religion, it is adopting plural politics, peaceful social and political change, pluralistic and peaceful participation mechanisms, and democratic elections because the leaders do not see contrast between Shari's Law (Islamic Law and legislatives) and the new global and liberal ideologies and systems like pluralism and democracy.

Civil society as a concept is debatable among the Muslim scholars, theorists and clerics. However, in practice, fundamentalists have no great effect against forming associations or initiating civic activities. Some of the hard-liner fundamentalists have their own religious-oriented associations, generally, for religious and social services. Salafists, (puritan Islamists group), and Salafi clerics in particular think that any ideology which is not from Islamic doctrine is not acceptable. So, they rejected the idea of secular associations or secular parties. Political Islamists party members who were involved in politics had more influence in the public. They formed a kind of religious groups with a neo-fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic instructions. Political Islam is a paradigm used to

⁷² Interviewed by Studio Democracy, www.womenpress.org.

create a new entity with a new identity. Al-Rashed argued that the Islamists, especially the neo-fundamentalists, are interpreting the instructions of the peaceful Islam to serve their political agenda. He discussed that the new political leaders of the Arab states pro- Arab Spring should direct their policies into crucial issues such as social justice, economic development plans and education which will lead to more liberalization, democratization, political and social stabilization in their countries. Al-Rashed assumed that the Islamists parties that won the last elections in Tunisia and Egypt will fail the next elections because they lack important policies such as economic and social policies.⁷³

The Islah party was formed of mixed liberal, moderate Islamists conservatives, tribesmen personalities and forces, social and political activists like Tawakul Kerman, and businessmen. It has a good grassroots support. Its main ideology is adopted from the Muslim Brotherhood who believe in pluralistic participation in politics and its perspectives are open and tolerant. For example, it cooperates with secularist parties and other non-Muslim groups and it has a liberal political system that gradually separated between the religious and political elements.

The Islah party cooperates and enhances civil society and professional syndicates, encourages social and political activists to demand the state to establish more liberties and freedoms and for human rights protections and political and social reforms. The Islah became a leading opposition party in Yemen since 1996 after an ally with the ruling party General People Congress (GPC) since 1994. It has developed its political culture and improved a bottom-up sociological approach that helped in mobilizing the public for more political participation and made a contribution in public life in Yemen. The Islah joined the coalition Joint Members Parties (JMP) that lead the main and effective opposition in Yemen.

The Islah Party had modified its ideas about civil society and democracy. The Islah

⁷³ Interview with Prof. Salah Al-Rashed on <http://www.alrashed.net>.

party is engaging in the political process and its members are practicing many civic activities. The Islah party has made a shift toward more democratic participation and tolerance when it started to negotiate and then to join the coalition of Joint Member Parties (JMP) with its ideological and secular opponent, the Yemeni Socialist Party and the other secularist parties. The Islah party also encouraged civil society associations and incorporated with some big and influential ones of its own. Islah openness and the shift in its political mentality has proved that by its negotiating and cooperating with the secular and non-religious parties. The party has made a coalition with the secular opposition parties. Its political agenda become more pragmatic than religious instructions and ideologies.

In Yemen, where about 70% of the population lives in rural areas, fundamentalists found acceptable illiterate young people to manipulate their minds with a wrong concept of the Islamic system and its relationship with non-Islamic systems.⁷⁴ Most extremists and terrorists in Yemen are from rural areas with a large population of uneducated young people. However, this view does not present the whole scenario of the political, social and civic activism in Yemen.

3.7. Civil Society and the Tribe

Tribes in Yemen have a key role in the political, social and economic life of the country. They have played key roles in policy-making in Yemen over the decades. Tribal leaders, called Sheikhs, have enough power, funds and connections to affect the state and policy-makers too. Tribes have orders, arms, and traditional codes of ethics. About three-quarters of the population in the country are tribesmen.

Tribes represent themselves as alternatives to the state system, its authority and its

⁷⁴ There are some radical Islamist groups that have some followers who have radical ideas about the relationship between Islam and the Western capitalist systems and governments.

protection. They also have their own arms⁷⁵. The Hashid federation is the biggest and the most influential tribe in Yemen. The Al-ahmar family members are the leaders, Sheikhs, of the tribe. It is this tribe that led president Saleh to power in 1979 and supported him until the 2011 revolution. However, Saleh gradually began to marginalize the role of the tribe, using the army as a support. Tribesmen learned not to trust the state and to resist its authority.

Because of the absence of rule of law, people in Yemen used to rejoin their tribes to find protection and support as an alternative tactic. Many times, the tribes' Sheikhs tried to cooperate with the state, but the state rejected and manipulated them. The tribes wanted to mediate between the conflicting parties before the civil war of 1994.

In the beginning, civil society did not contact the tribes and maintained their activities in urban areas. Then, civil society organizations realized the power and influence of the tribe and that it might be used as a counterbalance to state hegemony, especially after the war of 1994. Some civil activists were protected by the tribes' leaders from state oppression. Tribes realized the benefits of civil society. Some liberals in Yemen and political researchers argued that the tribe has a counterproductive role in civil society.⁷⁶ On the contrary, I think that tribe in Yemen has a great potentiality to serve civil society because the idea of civil society does not oppose the tribe's traditions and civil society associations have often proved productive and helpful.

However, the tribes stood many times against the state and beside the citizens and even with civil society organizations. Sheikh Sadiq Al-ahmar⁷⁷ said that he and his tribesmen are standing with the youth peaceful revolution to change the regime because the state is becoming more and more hegemonic and the president and his family are controlling the country undemocratically. When he was asked, "Are you and your tribesmen ready to

⁷⁵ Having arms in Yemen is legal.

⁷⁶ Fuad Salahi, *The Trilogy of the State, the civil society, and the Tribe*, (Yemeni Information Centre. Sana'a, 2001).

⁷⁷ Al-Ahmar is the head of Hashid federation. He supported the 2011 youth revolution with his tribe.

abandon your arms and join a civil state?,” he replied, “Yes, we are if the state will encourage a civic regime and civil society.” He added, “We are fed up with the military state. People want liberty, civil life, education, rule of law and equality...”⁷⁸ The regime, the people and the young protestors were all surprised that the largest and most politically influential tribe in Yemen is supporting a civil state and a new democratic government. But Sheikh Sadiq made it clear many times that he and his people want a safe and equal state where citizens are treated fairly.

There are some obstacles that hamper civil society organizations to work and influence the tribe in Yemen. High rate of illiteracy made it difficult for the society to comprehend the idea of civil society and civic engagement, especially in rural areas including tribes, but Yemeni people, in general, became aware of the new strategies that make democracy works.

3.8 The positive Side of the Yemeni Tribe

There are many factors that make tribes in Yemen a potential support for civil society:

First, tribes in Yemen tend to be independent and they do not prefer to subordinate themselves to state hegemony. Second, all tribes in Yemen have a code of ethics and conduct, individual rights, and values like mediations and agreements, to help powerless individuals, and respect of deals. They have also a kind of social contract among them; they punish criminals and encourage public good deeds. This system can be adopted to serve civil society activism and goals.⁷⁹ Third, tribes in Yemen are powerful because they have their arms and resources. The tribes used to wage war against the state army many times and can make pressure on the state to make political reform.

⁷⁸ Interview with Sheikh Sadiq Al-ahmar at <http://www.alarabiya.net/>.

⁷⁹ Hussain Al-ahmar used the mediation between the Al-Houthi group and the Salafis group in Damage, Sa’ada Governorate to cease fire between the two parties in December, 2011.

The Hashid federation stood with the peaceful revolution and faced the violent attack of Saleh's regime. This factor was one of the main reasons behind Saleh's resignation and leaving power because he realized that the tribes will defeat him in his war against the people. Fourth, about 70% of the Yemeni population are tribesmen and most the cadre of the official army of the state are tribesmen. Fifth, there is a huge number of military generals, ministers, political and social activists, political parties leaders, academics, and businessmen who are tribesmen and backed by their tribes. Sixth, the young generations of the tribesmen are more liberals, globally oriented, and enthusiastic for civic and pro-democratic activities and the state.

During the last decade, Yemen witnessed a wave of pro-democratic activities from the young generations of the tribesmen which opened the space for greater opportunity for civil society organizations to create political and social changes. Seventh, historically, tribes used to protect opposing figures of the regime, social and political activists and negotiate with the government about many cases when the state abused human rights or rights of the citizens.

Bassam Tibi argued that the tribes and tribal system obstruct the formation of the state because their loyalty to the tribe is stronger than their loyalty to the nation.⁸⁰ But the tribe in Yemen does not ban loyalty to the state or the nation. You can be a tribesman and a good citizen at the same time. Citizens and Sheikhs, who serve the state, for the people as in the military, do not have any difficulties with their tribes.

The state in Yemen did not participate effectively in developing the tribes with new projects or even solving tribes' problems and disputes with each other. Instead, the last regime used to manipulate them against each other aiming to 'divide and rule'. The result was

⁸⁰ Bassam Tibi, *"The Cultural Underpinning of Civil Society in Islamic Civilization: Islam and Democracy- Bridges Between the Civilizations."* (University of Gottingen and Harvard University. Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 2 the Johns Hopkins University Press,1994), 277-299.

that the state failed in generating genuine participation in national politics and development. However, tribes served democracy by their autonomy and semi-independence from the central authority of the state.

Hashid tribes are nowadays supporting the opposition parties. Even that the Sheikhs who are not with the opposition side are not in alignment with the state, but rather with the people. Hussain Al-ahmar, one of Hashid's Sheikhs, and leaders, who has an effective personality and ability to mobilize massive numbers of tribesmen, is opposing the regime. The government offered him a high position to shift his attitude and guarantee his loyalty to the regime, but he stood with the people and did not serve the regime's agenda. Hussain was one of the political and tribal elites who benefited from the regime, as he admitted. He said that the state failed in replying to the demands and desires of the citizens and to govern the country well. He said that collective action is the most effective strategy to build a new country and to establish a state free of autocracy.⁸¹

The United States and the European Union ambassadors used to meet Al-ahmar Sheikhs and discussed with them the political issues of Yemen as effective political players in Yemen.⁸² Sheikh Sadiq said that he will not participate in the new government and he and his brothers decided to join the people who are observing the state and the behavior of the rulers with the citizens but he has no intentions to hold any power. He added that he wants a state that practices equality and the rule of law. He said, "We have been enough of military regime. We are in need of change."⁸³ The tribe in Yemen is an essential component of Yemeni society. If civil society organizations manage to use its potential power and traditions, the results will be very productive and Yemen will be a unique democratic society.

It is not easy to claim that the tribes in Yemen will defend, protect and support civil

⁸¹ Interview with Sheikh Hussain Al-Ahmar at <http://suhailtv.afkarvas.com>.

⁸² www.alsahwa-yemen.net.

⁸³ Ibid.

society organizations without investing in civilizing tribesmen and tribes' leaders. However, it became clear-cut that the tribe in Yemen has great potentiality and proven historically and practically that it is a great power to support civil society and pro-democratic activists.

Tribesmen left their arms at houses and joined the peaceful revolution for months demanding a civil and democratic state. This new demonstration is a new path in Yemen history and a great opportunity for social and political change in the country's future.

3.9. Civil Society and the Role of the Woman

Prof. Fuad Abu-aljaleel concluded that the participation of women in the civic organizations and associations is not efficient enough. Females were 32.4% of the participants. In 2001, a report of the members of labor unions showed that the membership of those unions was about 350,000 and the women's share was about 105,000, or 30%. But the female participants in the local council of unions are not more than 10%. The reports also noticed that foreign funding helped in creating a new association that defends human rights and women's rights. The role of the political parties was not effective and they used these participations in limited issues such as voting only. The main field of participation was social, cultural and humane. The main supporters of those women NGOs and CSOs⁸⁴ are politically actives figures. There are some social and tribal obstacles that prevented women from being efficiently active in civil society organizations.⁸⁵

However, there are many examples of Yemeni women who have led many civil society organizations. Tawakul Kerman is one of the leading figures who participates in the Yemeni political and social life. Kerman is the head of Yemeni Women Journalists without

⁸⁴ Because there are still tradition of separation between women and men in rural areas in Yemen, women established their own organizations with women population only.

⁸⁵ Professor Fuad Abdu aljalees Al-salahi, Sana'a University. His research was conducted in 2004 in Taiz city on the participation of women in civil society organizations and associations. <http://www.wfrrt.org/dtfs.php?PageID=491>.

Chains organization (YWJC). Nadia Al-Saqaf is another salient civic activist who is the editor-in-chief of *Yemen Times*. Al-Saqaf is a feminist, a human rights activist and a journalist too. Amal Al-Basha is another example of the activists who defends and supports civic activism in Yemen. Al-Basha is a head of a human right organization and a member in many human rights, women's rights, and civil rights organizations.

In an interview with Tawakul Kerman, she said that the women played a crucial role in her organization in mobilizing citizens to demand their rights and to end autocracy in Yemen.⁸⁶ Kerman was one of the famous active Yemeni human rights and journalists' rights defenders. She led scores of demonstrations and protests with hundreds of citizens for many causes. She led more than 30 strikes for press and journalists' freedom. Kerman argued that the only way to gain political liberty is by peaceful methods like demonstrations and protests. She believes that the state is targeting civil society organizations because CSOs proved that they are the main keepers of democracy, liberalization and pluralism. She also suggested that the key measure of democracy and political liberalization is the freedom of the press and then the freedom of demonstrations and protests, because the first one is the way to enlighten the people and the second is the way to let them express their attitudes and protest.

3.10. Civil Society and the Press

An independent press, for example *Yemen Times*, started to become more popular and reported human, legal, social, political and public issues. The journal discussed and enlightened English readers and students about new liberal ideas as well as the daily news.

Yemen Times is an example of free pro-democratic press in Yemen. It published and issued many pro-democratic articles and reports and joined civil society activists. It reported civil society activities and projects. The journal was closed down three times by the last

⁸⁶ www.womenpress.net.

regime and its staff were threatened, jailed and attacked by the government troops many times. The journal participated in the peace campaign of 1994 to prevent the civil war and to discuss resolutions and solutions to lead the country into a safe zone. Protecting democracy, public liberties and fighting corruption were part of the journal's missions.

The independent press shifted to report and discuss human rights, environment issues, elections, tolerance, and criticized the state's performance. Political liberties were discussed and reported increasingly. The press demanded the government to grant more liberties as 'citizens' rights' rather than charity. They also criticized the state about public safety and separation of powers. They expanded their objectives to demand the state for pluralism, neutrality of public media, military and other official institutions. A free press is essential for civil society grow. Citizens became more aware that they have the right to be provided with information from neutral resources.

The press flourished after the unification in 1990. Competitive parties established their own newspapers and periodicals. They started to discuss domestic and international affairs. At the beginning, the ruling parties controlled and directed the press. GPC and YSP had access to state media and competed to influence local public opinion. The Islah party issued its own newspaper, *Al-Sahwa*. Yemeni Socialists Party has its journal, *Al-Eshtraki*. Other minor political parties issued their own journals. However, these newspapers and journals served the political parties' leaders and their agendas and ideologies. They discussed public good or welfare matters in a very limited way only. They just expressed their points of view or attacked their political competitors.

The state issued a law in 1993 called the 'press law' to restrict and limit the freedom of the press. In 1994, the government smashed Yemeni Socialists Party (YSP) press and media. Many opposition journalists and reporters were detained by the regime.

Right after the 1994 civil war, the state started to attack and harass journalists

including the *Yemen Times* and *Al-Ayyam* journals' staff. Journalists were oppressed, physically attacked and jailed for several weeks.⁸⁷ President Saleh began to attack the opposition parties and the journalists in his speeches and conferences. Some journalists and activists attacked him personally and he responded fiercely and described them as enemies and mentally crippled.

Free press and independent media played a key role in the political liberalization process in Yemen. The independent press enlightened public opinion and attracted citizens' attention and non-state elites to different kinds of mechanisms for transforming Yemen into a democratic country. They mobilized the public for civic justice, decentralization, and civic and democratic government. They dug authoritarianism's grave in Yemen simply because they acknowledged and convinced the citizens that political natural rights and liberties are their rights and must be struggled for.

Yemeni Women Journalists without Chains struggled to make the press in Yemen free and make their case universal by contacting many international journalists' protection organizations. By the end of 2010, Antti Kuusi, IMS Country Coordinator for Yemen, reported that: *"The media in Yemen is currently undergoing a period of great change and the international community should urgently assist the country in creating a free and diversified media."*⁸⁸

Nadia Al-Saqaf, editor-in-chief of *Yemen Times*, said that, "We have a problem with access to information. It is very difficult to report on something from all parties..." when she was asked about the problem that *Yemen Times* faced. When she was asked about the

⁸⁷ Human Rights in Yemen – Sheila and Rone <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/YEMEN940.PDF>.

⁸⁸A report about press situation in Yemen, <http://facthai.wordpress.com/2010/12/04/yemen%E2%80%99s-critical-state-of-press-freedom-article-19/>.

problem of the press in Yemen, she replied that state harassment is the main obstacle that hobbles the press. Journalists are attacked, arrested, jailed, and disappeared for weeks by the regime's troops as what happened to *Al-Ayyam* journal and its staff. She added that even so, journalists will keep fighting ahead for liberties, equality, justice, and rule of law.⁸⁹

Society in Yemen, like other Arabic speaking countries, obtained access to neutral information from *Al-Jazeera* channels group in Qatar. *Al-Jazeera* made a great shift in the Arabic and Middle East press history. *Al-Jazeera* is becoming a very effective medium regarding human rights, political liberties and social promotion.

3.11. An Overview of the 2011 Uprising in Yemen: a New Democratic System or a New Authoritarian Regime?

After the successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt against two of the most dominant dictators in the world, Yemeni young people realized that this is an effective way to throw out the authoritarian system and to make a political change in the country. It is to “shake the streets” by peaceful demonstrations demanding the president to step down, leave power, and establish a new democratic government.

Thousands of young people demonstrated in the streets of the main cities of the country for one goal, to demand the president to step down and to form a new democratic regime. The people of Yemen, especially the younger generation, discovered that they have mighty power they did not use, i.e., collective action.

Young people who used to be affiliated with political parties joined the protesters in the demonstrations to achieve the same goal. Tribal leaders soon announced that they supported the revolution and demanded the president to step down too. The Hashid Federation, the biggest and the most politically influential tribe in Yemen, announced that it

⁸⁹ Interview with Nadia Al-Saqaf by International Press Institute.

supports the youth revolution for political change into democracy. Opposition parties' leaders announced that they support the youth revolution and the Joint Members Partners, JMP, the main opposition coalition claimed officially that they supported and backed the youth revolution and demanded the president to step down and called for elections. Most of independent civil society organizations, civic activists, unions, syndicates, sectors of the army, university professors and intellectual elites joined and announced that they supported youth revolution for a civic state and started their activities, especially the press and independent media.

Dr. Lisa Anderson, head of the American University in Cairo, said that the uprisings in the Arab World were initiated by people who had no ideological, national, or communist agenda. It was just a public uprising by citizens who wanted a government that respects, represents and is responsible to them. She added that these uprisings were result of dynamic society.⁹⁰

President Saleh refused to step down for ten months. When he realized that he was almost defeated, he agreed in November, 2011 to sign a power-transfer initiation and the Yemeni people ended 33 years of authoritarian regime with a peaceful revolution. The regime attacked the protestors violently and killed about two thousand and injured more than twenty-one thousand protestors.⁹¹ The protestors' slogans were 'democracy', 'liberties', 'civic state' and 'rule of law'. It was clear that Yemeni society and Yemeni civil society wanted to create a political change into democracy at any cost.

3.12. The Role of Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations had a key role in the revolution of the Arab World in 2011. The first activity of the civil society organizations CSOs was to attract citizens' attentions to

⁹⁰ A lecture by Lisa Anderson and Marwan Mawsher about the Arab Uprisings. Wednesday, March 23, 2011 – Washington, D.C. <http://carnegie.ru/events/?fa=3192>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

their rights. Political rights were not an exception to their agenda. This new paradigm in the Middle East shifted the mentality of the young generations. They started to be keen to practice democracy and to live in a civic state. Political culture of the new generations has been changed forever. The idea of peaceful revolution is the fruitful outcome of civil society activities during the last two decades.

Arab former dictators in general and the Yemeni authoritarian regime in particular allowed CSOs to practice some controlled activities, associations and pluralism for legitimacy and longevity rather than to establish a new period of a fair and democratic state. But they were against any radical political changes or democratic transitions. They wanted to create a situation of 'endless transition'. They did not realize that those activities were fostering grassroots democracy that will end authoritarianism. Women Journalists without Chains organization created a new road in driving Yemen into liberalization without fear and hesitation.

Civil society organizations played a key role in the youth revolution. They satisfied their hunger and desire to understand how politics work. Young people gathered in the major squares in the major cities and towns of the country for political change because they knew that the other ways were not working under very brutal military dictatorships.

3.13. Is it guaranteed that Yemeni society will become a civic democratic system?

Unless we have strong civil society, we cannot claim that 2011 youth revolution is a guarantee for Yemeni people that they will have a democratic state and liberalization. Civil society should be and supported because it is a guarantee of democracy. It is an essential component in creation of democratic system. The 2011 uprising in Yemen led to the fall of the military dictatorship and the authoritarian regime⁹² but it will not lead to a genuine democratic system unless we support civil society. There is no guarantee that democracy will

⁹² In Feb. 2012, president Hadi was elected as the new president of Yemen after Saleh 's step down.

boom in Yemen in overnight because civil society is not strong enough to protect and maintain democracy.

The US ambassador in Sana'a conversed with the young protestors' representatives and the opposition parties. He asked them a crucial question: "What are you going to do after the fall of the regime? What are your alternatives?"⁹³ It is becoming clear that Yemen is in a semi-chaos because of the absence of strong state and strong civil society. Yemen lacks a dynamic polity, dynamic society and strong civil society.

Yemeni activists who strived for change encountered many problems in dealing with the last regime because civil society is still unable to promote political and social stability. They faced difficulties and obstacles. The Tunisian and Egyptian revolution were effective in expelling the old autocratic regimes because civil society organizations there were strong, and the level of activism was mature enough. The consequences were easier and the casualties were fewer than Yemen's situation.

Even though the Yemeni people and civil society organizations are not mature yet and are not able to challenge the regime, the new young generations in Yemen decided to create a new future whatever the costs. The demonstrators are still standing to demand change even after the fall of Saleh's regime. After Saleh's resignation and transfer of power to the vice, they are still in the squares demanding for bringing Saleh and his assistants before the international court or the national court.

⁹³ Interview with Gerald Feierstein-US Ambassador to Yemen, <http://www.yemeniamerican.com/>.

Chapter Four

4.1. Civic Activism and Engagement in Yemen

Civic engagement is the participation and communication of civil society organizations between the grassroots public and the state, institutions, and establishments to take a share in decision-making and public affairs. Civic engagement is a feature of genuine democracy because it shows citizens' involvement in civic activities such as organizing social and community life, volunteering, defending democracy, struggling for liberties and supervising officials. To explore such issues, we will study and analyze the activism of Women Journalists without Chains organization in its struggle against the former regime since its establishment in 2005.

Civic activities of civil society organizations contain key agendas such as supporting civic knowledge, teaching civic skills, defending expression of opinion, evaluating civic behavior, participating in service activities and associations, evaluating civic attitude, extending citizens' trust, and looking for civic opportunities. Civil society organizations have effective mechanisms such as encouraging people to discuss politics at any place, analyzing the chances to have access to the public, mobilizing the public to defend democracy and democratization, and participating in social and political stability.

In 1990, civil society organizations, NGOs and associations numbered about 500. In 2003, there were about 5203. In an interview with the Yemeni Deputy Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, he said that there are about 7047 NGOs, professional, religious, social, voluntary, associations, charities, community foundations, non-profit organizations, trade and women unions, medical and pharmaceutical syndicates. He added that the active contingent

of this huge number is only about 30% and many of CSOs did not initiate their assumed activities for many reasons such as lack of fund or membership.⁹⁴

For many different reasons, CSOs had many limitations such as low membership, low commitment, and limitation in building blocks of civic pro-democratic activities and organizational failure. They did not improve strategies to communicate with people in rural areas. The level of activism and autonomy is low. Some civil society organizations are just struggling to survive. The state used to hinder them from interacting with the public or cooperating with opposition parties. CSOs' massive numbers did not mean by necessity that Yemen will be soon transited into a democratic system or the consequences will be radical political change, but the most important thing is that those organizations are skilled and cooperative enough to lead the change and strive for liberalization and democracy. Weak links between CSOs and opposition parties or other democratic promotion groups made them all easy targets to be manipulate, harassed and penetrated by the state.

The point here is to discuss CSOs' political participation to influence policy-making of the state. Many civil society organizations pushed for free press against the government and for more transparency and accountability. However, density of face-to-face association in Yemen was not strong enough because of many reasons including lack of experience of civic activism. So the level of pro-citizens and against the state activities was low.

Many studies and statistics about civil society organizations in Yemen were done.⁹⁵

They reported that:

- There are about 7047 officially registered civil society organizations.

⁹⁴ <http://www.26sep.net/8/2010>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

- The main workplace of CSOs concentrated in five main governorates: Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Hadramout and Hodeida where population density is relatively high.
- Only 30% of the civil society organizations are considered active and influential.
- 19% of the civil society organizations are not active or have very limited activities.
- 44% working for social welfare.
- 33% working for developmental programs.
- 15% working for human rights.
- 10% are funded by the government.
- There are 44 international NGOs.⁹⁶

In another report by *Al-gumhariah* journal about the activities of civil society organizations in Yemen and it was as follows:⁹⁷

- 2068 charity Associations
- 89 charity foundations
- 504 social Associations
- 779 agricultural associations
- 221 clubs
- 50 cultural associations
- 59 professional associations
- 31 professional syndicates
- 94 consumer associations
- 38 craft hand associations
- 198 human rights
- 35 childhood associations
- 60 environment associations
- 74 handicaps associations

⁹⁶ <http://www.26sep.net>.

⁹⁷ www.algomhariah.net.

- 20 friendship associations
- 46 scientific associations
- 43 unions
- 5 brotherhood associations
- 9 forums
- 140 fisheries associations
- 206 health associations
- 3503 is the total sum of organizations, syndicates, unions, developmental associations, and local unions and human rights organizations.

There are some associations with Islamic orientation such as

- Islah Social Welfare Association, it is the biggest association and linked to the Islah political party. Its activities are social services, religious, educational and health.
- Al-Hikmah Social Welfare Society, the next biggest religious association with Salafi , purer, Islamic fundamentalist agenda.
- Hayel Said Anaam Group Society do performing social services.
- Hadramout Welfare Society; it is a cultural and intellectual secular association established by Hadramout University.
- National Org. for Defending Rights and Freedoms, HOOD
- Women Journalists without Chains, an active organization that takes charge of defending human rights especially journalists who are defending human rights and liberties. It is led by the journalist and activist Tawakul Kerman, the first Yemeni lady who won Noble prize for peace in 2011.

Civil society proved its ability to make a change. It created social, economic, political and cultural development. It made citizens able to have access to the information and hence

become able to make informed decisions. The press for example has been struggling to have access to government information and publish and inform the public. Organizations which participate in political enlightenment are increasing in number, membership and capacity. Many civil and political activists and theorists argued that civil society had a key role and good impact on the youth revolution of 2011 in Yemen.⁹⁸

Prof. Adel Al-sharjabi debated that civil society organizations had a great advantage of the awareness of the citizens during the last decades. They mobilized the citizens to demonstrate and protest but political parties in Yemen did not encourage such activities to press the government for political and social change.⁹⁹ Civil society became able to build a political grassroots support with the ability to counter the hegemony of the state. The HOOD organization specialized in defending human rights, liberties, civic activists and the journalists. The question is: why defending journalists? Journalists are the front line of the war against the authoritarian regime.

To disturb and obscure CSOs' function, the state created parallel civil society organizations, especially the organizations that have doubled their program to contain a political agenda like human rights defenders such as:

- Yemen Labor Union
- MOONAH for Human Rights and Immigration
- Arab Institution for Human Rights
- Educational Syndicate
- Yemeni Women Union
- Women's Forum for Research and Training

⁹⁸ A seminar held by a group of Sana'a University Professors, <http://babalyemen.com>.

⁹⁹ Ibid, Al-Sharjabi argued with Prof. Mohammed Al-mikhlafi who said that political parties also participated in the Youth Revolution.

- Civil Society Meeting
- Human Rights Information and Training Center
- Civic Democratic Initiatives Support Foundation

However, they were not active enough regarding competing with the genuine ones to serve the public welfare. Their goals are to confuse local public and citizens about civil society activism. The activists who supported Saleh's regime focused on some social, and cultural activities.

Ramziah Al-Iryani, head of Yemeni Women's Union said that those CSOs and associations work mainly with welfare activities and they help in forming developmental policies and programs.¹⁰⁰ She did not say much or complain of the weak role of women's participation in politics because she thinks that the state was doing well. Al-Iryani used to be one of the pro-state activists who supported the former regime.

In the case of the Yemeni Institute for Democracy Development (YIDD) which was founded as a non-governmental organization, the government then co-opted the staff and controlled its activities for its propaganda. YIDD founders' goal was to strengthen political pluralism and defending liberties.¹⁰¹ By 2003, YIDD became a state institution working with the ruling party. The state used to support and recognize those organizations and other similar associations and made them politically oriented to prevent and marginalize genuine civil society organizations from demanding the state for political reforms or changes. The state used to make civil society serve the state agenda instead of being a mediator between the regime and the people. Having failed to control or dominate civil society organizations, the state resorted to establish such mirror organizations to make the public unable to differentiate

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.26sep.net>.

¹⁰¹ Foreign donors started to fund and support its competitor, Arab Democratic Institute ADI.

between them and the genuine ones. The consequences will be that their ability to mobilize the public for political change, political reform and constitutional order will become weak.

The former regime aimed to create weak and distorted CSOs and opposition parties with limited, and controlled power to be unable to demand political change. The creation of a mimic network CSOs aimed to play the competition off against each other. The regime did not realize that life is full of surprises: Tunisian and Egyptian peaceful revolutions inspired young people and citizens to follow the same path to throw out authoritarianism, hopefully, forever.

4.2. Professional Syndicates

Professional syndicates and unions are the backbone of civil society in Yemen. Many intellectuals, doctors, physicians, pharmacists, teachers, lawyers, engineers, attorneys, journalists, judges, press syndicates, are joined and active in their own syndicates. Example of those syndicates include

- Physicians and Pharmacists Syndicate
- Lawyers Syndicate
- Yemeni Teachers Syndicate
- Engineers Syndicate
- Journalists Syndicate

The reason is that they have a strong social capital. Their members are educated – majority of them are western-educated, well-organized, well-established. The state could not penetrate them and they agitated public for political change. They initiated many civic activities such as organizing political conscious and suing officials in front of the court. They caused out many demonstration and strikes.

Dr. Abdulqawi Al-Shameeri, the representative of the Physicians and Pharmacists

Syndicate, stood in the 'Change Square'¹⁰² where young people demonstrators were gathering and said, “ We want to remove away this government and this regime and establish a new civic and democratic government. We cannot guarantee our children’s future if we do not change our present with this failure of the regime... this authoritarian regime is out of date.”¹⁰³

4.3. Women Journalists without Chains Organization (WJWC)

Women Journalists without Chains is a non-governmental organization which stands for human rights, freedom of speech, democratic rights, and women’s rights. Women Journalists without Chains was established in 2005 by the Journalist and civic and political activist, Tawakul Kerman, who got Noble Prize for Peace in 2011. Women Journalists without Chains used media and press to discuss and mobilize issues of liberties, justice, women’s issues, culture, childhood, and comprehensive development. The organization also handled issues of political and economic corruption in Yemen, accountability, transparency, good governance, and promoting principles of good governance in Yemen.¹⁰⁴ Women Journalists without Chains is struggling for citizenship state where every citizen must have his political right to participate in the decision-making for his country.

Women Journalists without Chains is led by the activist Kerman and has many networks of specialized organizations such as Yemen Journalists against Corruption and the Program of Accountability and Promoting Good Governance in Yemen.

4.4. Tawakul Kerman, Mother of the Yemeni Revolution

Tawakul Kerman is a writer, poet and journalist. She is the manager and head of Women Journalists without Chains Organization, WJWC. Kerman is an opposing activist and a defender of journalism rights, human rights, and women’s rights in Yemen. Kerman is an

¹⁰² The place in the capital, Sana'a, where 2011 youth revolution started from.

¹⁰³ Al-Jazeera report from ‘change square’ Sana’a , <http://english.aljazeera.net>.

¹⁰⁴ www.womenpress.com

Islamist as a member of the Islah Party Council, the Islamist liberal party in Yemen. She earned her master degree in political sciences and has a diploma of journalism from the United States. Kerman is an example of courage, pro-human rights and women's rights activist in Yemen and the Middle East who demands political, social and religious reforms. Kerman struggles for a state of citizenship and believes that the woman should play the leader role instead of the victim role. She had written many articles early in 2007 to mobilize political parties, NGOs and CSOs and the public to initiate a peaceful demonstrations to demand the president to step down and to change the regime in Yemen for genuine, democratic and liberal regime.

Kerman participated in many global conferences about global tolerance, political reforms in the Arab World, liberty of speech, anti-corruption programs and other pro-rights seminars. She is an active member in many human rights, women rights and journalists organizations in Yemen and the Middle East. Kerman was chosen as one of the most revolutionary women in history, one of the most powerful individual characters in the world, and the 11th of the most 100 influential individuals in the world in 2011 by the US *Time* magazine. She got the courage prize from the US embassy in Yemen and chosen as one of seven women who created a genuine change in the world by *Reporters without Borders* Organization, RWB.

Kerman has written hundreds of article in scores of Yemeni, Arabic and International journals about rights and liberties and other related cases. Kerman also produced and directed many documentary films and TV reports about human rights and good governing in Yemen such as "*political participation of woman in Yemen.*" She participated in preparing many reports for anti-corruption organizations in Yemen, liberty of journalism and speech. She participated also in the national strategy for human rights in Yemen and the national strategy for anti-corruption in Yemen.

Kerman led more than 120 demonstrations and pro-rights protests with many Yemeni politicians and civic activists to demand rights, condemn state corruption, woman's rights, the right of access to information resources, promoting good governance, and journalists' rights. Kerman was the first character who mobilized Yemeni youth to follow the Tunisian and Egyptian model of peaceful revolution against autocracy in Yemen. Kerman was attacked, harassed, arrested, jailed and threatened to be assassinated many times. Her brother was kidnapped by the police and jailed for weeks to force her to stop her activities against the regime. She was accused by the Yemeni intelligence that she is cooperating with the U.S intelligence against the Yemeni regime. In January 23, 2011, she was arrested by the police with a claim that she organized demonstrations without official license.

4.5. Civic and Political Activism of Women Journalists without Chains

Women Journalists without Chains issues and cooperate with many press and journals such as (*Almasdar, Aldyar, Alayam, Alnedaa, Alwatani, Alsharea, Alahali, Al-Nas, Al-Asimah*)¹⁰⁵ and others. Women Journalists without Chains unified and created a new awareness and perspective of democracy by connecting both the liberal Islamists and the secular activists in a new moderate school. Kerman was fiercely attacked by the extremist Islamists for her secular new perspectives. Women Journalists without Chains concentrated its activities on educated, intellectuals, graduates, post-graduates, university students, and the youth in general to train and acknowledge them their rights and duties as citizens of liberal democratic state.

Women Journalists without Chains initiated a protest every Thursday in a square in front of the Cabinet building – because it is the day that the cabinet holds their meetings--to demand liberties and freedom of journalists and civic activists who were jailed by the police

¹⁰⁵ Independent journals and newspapers that cooperated with WJWC and other human rights organizations against the regime.

or intelligence. The square became famous for its regular Thursday protest for at least one case of liberties or rights, and the square was named “Square of Liberty.” Kerman staged many protests in front of the parliament building and the republican palace to demand more liberties and to free prisoned journalists and civic activists.

The early beginnings were that the organization and the activist Kerman were defending rights of a group of poor families in a rural area called '*Al-Ja'ashen*' who had been abused by their oppressive Sheikh. The Sheikh used to take tax from those families but they decided to stop giving him such tax, so he attacked their houses and farms and expelled them from his territory. Kerman decided to demand the government to take responsibility for those citizens. Kerman wrote many reports and did many TV interviews and reports about the '*Al-Ja'ashen's*' tragedy until their problem was solved.¹⁰⁶

Kerman started to do researches and reports about how to transit Yemen from the tribal system into a civil and democratic state. The organization started to establish and build social capital by teaching and acknowledging the citizens about their rights and duties as citizens in a civic and democratic state.

4.6. Creating Network of Organizations and Building Social Capital

Women Journalists without Chains is cooperating with many local, national, regional, and international organizations. It is cooperating with *Naseej Organization*, specialized in social and youth development organization. For example, they initiated (*Youth Studio*) which is a program that trains young people and cooperates with them to enhance social and political development. Youth are trained in many skills that enable them to discuss and analyze young people cases and social problems. They produced many television programs, documentary films, seminars, conferences and reports that discuss and analyze social, economic, political problems and public cases in Yemen.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Tawakul Kerman. www.Al-Jazeera.net.

Women Journalists without Chains is cooperating with *Al-Jazeera* Documentary Channel and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to train staff for producing and directing television reports and documentary films. Women Journalists without Chains and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) are running a program called (*Democracy Studio*) which is specialized in political and liberties issues like defending liberties and rights, fighting corruption and supporting good governance in Yemen.

In 2009, Women Journalists without Chains started its cooperation with the Yemeni Teachers Syndicate to train and develop the syndicate leadership staff. They were introduced to many political cases in Yemen like citizenship and rule of law and constitution, equal citizenship and how to be protected. They studied also some experiences about Middle Eastern and international organizations, syndicates, syndicate liberties and rights protection. They have been introduced to human rights in Yemen and how to mobilize the public opinion against human rights abuses in Yemen.

Women Journalists without Chains is also focusing on the major universities in Yemen like Sana'a University and Aden University. The organization is training and contacting students for many activities related to youth cases, social and political problems.

Women Journalists without Chains cooperates with *SAJEEN* Organization, headed by the lawyer Abdurrahman Barman, and which helps prisoners especially women. They introduce the prisoners to their rights, demand the government to better their conditions, close illegal prisons, and demand for updating legal punishment in Yemen according to the international human accords and conventions.

Women Journalists without Chains strives to activate other organizations, journalists, and political activists to play more influential role to adopt, protect and support human rights. The organization has been struggling to defend liberalization and stand against the state that abuse civic liberalization and to create a pressure on the state to be committed to the national

constitution and the international conventions about human and press rights. The organization's goal is to establish and protect democratic and fair society and good governance in Yemen. For example, the organization and other several organizations--like *HOOD* Organization, Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights, Democratic School, Yemeni Organization to Defend Democratic Rights and Liberties, and Danish Institute for Human Rights--established *'The Yemeni Network for Human Rights' (YHRN)*. The goal was to increase the collective action and cooperate to enhance human rights, defend democracy, fight corruption, create cultural and political development and promote good governing principles in Yemen.

Women Journalists without Chains cooperates with international organizations like Friedrich Ebert, the German organization to study and analyze the political, public situation, democracy, and pluralism in Yemen. They held many seminars to give opportunity to the youth to participate in public and political activism. The goal of that cooperation also was to create a change in the political perspective and awareness in Yemen to have the ability to organize the political life in the country. To help women to enhance their skills, Women Journalists without Chains cooperates with the Canadian Program for Supporting Self-help Efforts. Lately, the organization started a new cooperative program with (IREX) organization, an American international non-profit organization that specialized in training, education, technical assistance and researches. They produced and directed a documentary film titled *"Call for Life"* about the issue of suicide in Yemen.

4.7. Protests and Demonstrations

Kerman organized regular protests and demonstrations for many issues in front of Prime Minister's Office where the cabinet holds weekly meetings, in front of the parliament, and in front of Ministry of Information. More than 120 protest and demonstration were organized during three years to defend human rights, liberties, journalists' freedom, and to

demand the government to release journalists from jails, and to release journals that had been prevented from publishing by the ministry of information.¹⁰⁷ Many students, journalists, political activists, university professors, members of the parliament, leaders of opposition parties and human rights activists participated in these demonstrations. The police and the republican guards attacked the protestors many times and then the ministry of information and ministry of justice established a new specialized court for journalists called "*Journalists Court.*"

Women Journalists without Chains started to strive to stop and abolish this unconstitutional court that aimed to punish and threaten journalists who release reports about corruption, liberties, rights and political change. The demonstrators condemned the abuse of human rights, the officials' corruption, the militarization of the state, the oppression of the police to the peaceful demonstrations in the southern governorates, and the interference of the executive authorities in the legislative authority affairs. They demanded the state to release nine journals¹⁰⁸ which were prevented from publishing under the claim of discussing and publishing national secrets and critical political issues.

4.8. Studio of Democracy

Studio of Democracy is a program that initiated by Women Journalists without Chains to discuss and introduce political and democratic issues to the public and activists in general. It was established by both Women Journalists without Chains and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to discuss and study the political situation in Yemen like democracy, liberalization, women's participation in the political and social life, fighting corruption, civil society freedom, and good governance in Yemen. The program included also many seminars with participation of politicians, university professors, parliamentary

¹⁰⁷ www.womenpress.com.

¹⁰⁸ Independent journals used to cooperate with human rights organizations against Saleh's regime.

members and activists, who discussed how to promote local governance, democratic margins, decentralization, and how to create political change. They discussed also the women's situation in Yemen and how to adopt and protect women's rights to create a state of equality and rule of law.

4.9. Youth Studio

Youth Studio is a program that enables the young people to gain many skills to serve in social and public activities especially in press and media. Women Journalists without Chains trains and supports post-graduates and young to contact and report events and activities of their communities in media and press. They produced and directed a documentary film titled "*The She-Citizen*" which discussed the political participation of the women in Yemen and the obstacles that face the Yemeni women from playing a bigger role in the political life in Yemen.

4.10. Yemen Journalists Arisen Corruption (*Yemen JAC*)

Yemen Journalists Arisen Corruption (*Yemen JAC*) is an organization that established in 2007 by Women Journalists without Chains to report and release periodicals about corruption in Yemen. This organization is cooperating with many journalists nationwide to report and release cases of corruption in the state institutions and the solutions. It also cooperates with international institutions such as Transparency International to evaluate the situation in Yemen considering the international standards.

4.11. A program of '*Accountability and Promoting Good Governance in Yemen*'

'Accountability and Promoting Good Governance in Yemen' is a program established and run by Women Journalists without Chains. The members are activists, lawyers, members and executives of rights organizations, law professors, politicians, former ministers, legal experts from Germany, journalists interested in good governance and fighting corruption and international experts specialized in good governance and fighting corruption. The goal of that

program is to release and raise the awareness and principles of democratic rights among the citizens' especially young people.

In Yemen, where democracy and political maturity are relatively new and controversial, the organization realized that people should know more about democracy and their political rights. The program discussed the constitution which contained almost most of the political rights and liberties of the citizens. The program also discusses the laws that order and organize most of the decision making in the state like the law of judicial authority, the law of punishments, law of high official staffs, law of corruption fighting and others. The program held many workshops to activate and monitor the conclusions and recommendations of the conference. The program demanded the government to change the policies of the state, amend the constitution, update the old-fashioned laws and conventions that limited citizens' life. The participants also formed many updated suggestions to be applied. They also suggested that the government should amend some of the constitution's articles that banned citizens from access to information and articles that limit freedom of press and media.

The participants discussed the importance of the societal accountability to decision-makers and how it limits corruption and promotes good governance in Yemen. They evaluated the standards of the Yemeni laws and regulations with the international standards for good governance like rule of law, equality, participation of the public in decision-making, representativeness, competitiveness issued by international institutions such as World Bank. They held many seminars about democracy, peaceful transition of power, the political reform, the terrorism, press in Yemen, civilizations dialogue, and others.

Kerman demanded reforms from Islah Party itself-- as a member of the Islah Council-- which bothered the conservative Islamists, so she started to cooperate with the liberal-wing of the party which --with other reasons- led to the cleavage among the party itself. Liberals became more powerful and influential. This change became another victory for civil

society organizations because it made the hard-line Islamists in the Islah party weaker and the moderate and the liberals became more effective.

Kerman and Women Journalists without Chains organization aimed to create internal and strong power that mobilizes the public to defend its rights and liberties. The members were activists, political and social figures, graduates, university students and citizens. The organization realized that elections in a country like Yemen will not lead to real and genuine democratization and liberalization of the state institutions, so she initiated civic activities, created advocacy groups for human rights, and educated people to defend their rights and liberties peacefully. The outcomes were the destruction of the patronage system that ran the country for decades. President Saleh created and protected a powerful patronage system and decorated it with democratic appearances.

Women Journalists without Chains confused and confronted the regime in many ways, with reports about political, official and judiciary corruption, conferences, seminars that discuss political change, documentary films, protests, demonstration, and mobilizing the citizens to demand their rights, liberties and bigger role in making the political decisions. The regime became less and less powerful against real pressure with facts proven with evidences that Saleh's regime was decaying.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

A close look to the political situation in Yemen reveals the changes of the political and social culture during the last two decades. Civil society organizations and movements played a great role of this positive and fruitful change. The 2011 revolution made it clear how young generations are desperately in need of political and social liberties.

After the revolution and the new established government, Yemen, as most of the countries of the Third World, is not immune against new and more horrible autocratic system. It might be an individual, a party, or a group because the society is not aware enough with the political and social liberties and rights of the people. The game will be in the hands of the new ruling party or group again unless there are strong civil society organizations, civic movements and advocacy groups to impose, maintain, and defend such liberties and rights.

Women Journalists without Chains organization and Tawakul Kerman started to defend and demand '*Al-Ja'ashen*' rights and properties in 2005. Those citizens used to think that the government is the ultimate power that people must not question or negotiate but obey. Kerman proved them and the young students that citizens' rights and liberties must be taken seriously and that people are the ones who have the ultimate power to change their realities. Kerman successfully created a new social and political culture. People realized that peaceful revolution is an effective struggle against autocratic and police regimes.

Kerman and other members of Women Journalists without Chains organization were under a great pressure and danger also from the police, the ruling elites and the intelligence. Many times, Kerman was jailed and her brother was kidnapped by the police for weeks. The regime offered her money and a political position but she refused bribery to stop her own project. She knew that human rights, liberties of citizens, freedoms of journalists, political

liberties and the political development of the Yemeni society must not be negotiated with the oppressive regime. Instead, she challenged the regime peacefully for change and won the battle.

The unification of Yemen and the events that followed like the creation of pro-democratic constitution, the marginal democracy, the law of liberties and rights and the political participation of the citizens were not consequences of public or civil society organizations struggle for democratization and liberalization but were results of the ruling elites contracts and deals as terms and conditions of the new unified state. The global political, social, technical changes and waves of democracy also had their own influences.

Civil society organizations will not have the power to confront and fight the autocratic and authoritarian regimes but they have crucial role in creating and maintaining a new political culture and political awareness for the citizens, especially in a country like Yemen with an emerging democracy. This new political and social culture will lead to a genuine democracy, democratization, participatory governance and more political opening and freedom. Civil society organizations initiated the process of civilizing of the society, the social and political elites, and the civic and political activists who drive the country into more liberalization and democratization. Women Journalists without Chains organization contacted and communicated the grassroots for more awareness and knowledge of their rights. The organization taught, trained, and educated young people and graduates with social, political, civic, and technical skills and knowledge.

Before 1990, collective actions and activities culture were not common especially for public and political goals. In December, 2011, more than 10,000 people moved from Taiz city to the capital city of Sana'a – about 270 kilometers – by foot only for one reason, to prevent the parliament from granting president Saleh the judiciary immunity after he left power.

Yemen did not ever witness such collective action for a political reason.

Civil society is the guarantee of Yemen for moving to the ‘civility stage’ from tribalism and extremism into a liberal and democratic state with social and political tolerance. Civility is the social and political tolerance, moderation, modernization, plurality and that space of freedom which releases the social and political tension in the country. Women Journalists without Chains organizations and the other civil society organizations networks in Yemen have proven that civil society has the ability to defend liberties and rights, prevent political and social violence, enhance political opening, promote political tolerance, support popular participation in political life, create competitive politics, and marginalize the role of the hard-liners Islamists in Yemen.

The last regime and ruling party failed to create a state of citizenship for all Yemeni people and failed to lead the country to a satisfied social justice and democracy; instead, they created a failed state. The regime built more oppressive institutions like the intelligence, the national security, and the investigation bureau as tools of political oppression instead of establishing and maintaining democratic institutions. Political parties could not drive the regime and the state into more open-up or better political and social changes that base for democratic transition and effective participation of the people.

This study concludes that civil society is a major key element to achieve and maintain political liberalization and stabilization in Yemen. Strong civil society has the ability to initiate collective actions to monitor and affect decision-making by the state and therefore prevents tyranny. Hence, the consequences of the late uprising in Yemen will not result in much hope of transforming the country from authoritarianism to democracy as many Yemenis hope. Civil society is the only guarantee that the country will be moved into ‘ liberal democracy’ and enjoy liberalization and then political stability. To achieve democracy and political liberties and stability in Yemen, promoting civil society organizations and movements is the best mechanism and the efficient approach. Yemeni civil society

organizations did well in general in mobilizing people to demonstrate against the state to demand for political change. However, Yemeni CSOs and NGOs are still not strong enough yet to maintain and defend political liberalization. The uprising in Yemen end up with the defeat of the authoritarian regime and the step down of president Saleh but there is no guarantee that Yemeni people will enjoy democracy after that. Civil society is a threat to autocratic systems.

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