

**The course of political settlement in Yemen: A
model for resolving internal disputes.**

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The political crisis that preceded the 2011 youth revolution, which was sparked by the Arab spring uprisings, was not the first one to be experienced by Yemen.

Reviewing the overall events and crises Yemen has seen since the 1990s, which were accompanied by bloody conflicts, we find out that the efforts made to address such crises were characterized by the spirit of tolerance for which the Yemeni people are known. Such efforts contributed immensely to solving all differences and their negative impacts.

Further, the Yemeni government alongside other actors had managed to defuse all standoffs and create common denominators amongst all social segments. Yemen was always able to overcome crises whenever possible. In fact, the experience of Yemenis in preventing the eruption of disputes indicates that conflicts were resolved in one way or another regardless of the circumstances that surrounded each crisis.

During the 1960s, the Republican system fought a seven-year war with the Royalist forces that laid a 70-day siege to Sana'a. The republican forces ultimately managed to end the blockade of Sana'a and drive away the forces loyal to Imam Badr. This was followed by agreements that all resulted in achieving national reconciliation.

Following the independence of the southern part of Yemen in 1967, and as the two political regimes in both northern and southern parts of the country were calling for unity, relations between the two regimes were fluctuating, which gave rise to two wars in 1972 and 1979.

Each round of fighting was followed by agreements to hold dialogue in order to reunite Yemen, as unity committees were established based on Cairo treaty as well as the declarations of Tripoli, Algeria and Kuwait. All such panels performed their functions, except for the committee on the unified political organization that was out of work due to the lack of any political organization in Sana'a matching the ruling Yemeni Socialist Party in Aden.

It was not until 1982 that the General People's Congress was created and subsequently the committee on the unified political organization was set up. Thus, the joint ministerial committee as well as the unity panels continued undertaking their own activities until the January 1986 events broke out between two factions from the Yemeni socialist party. One such faction vanquished the other, with Sana'a receiving the elements of the defeated side. The unity committees were ground to a halt as a result.

It was widely believed in the south that Sana'a was bracing for a war against Aden; however, wise and clairvoyant politicians prevented a war that was about to break out. Consequently, the two parts of Yemen resumed dialogue that eventually resulted in the reunification of Yemen on May 22, 1990.

Also, the unity agreement provided for a two year-and-a-half transitional period during which time all civil, military and security services of former regimes should be merged.

During this period, understanding between the two political leaderships that announced the unity was short-lived, as mistrust between the General People's Congress and the Yemeni Social Party was increasing. Besides, some items of the unity agreement were not enforced as political tension was running high.

In response, the political parties attempted to defuse the tension as the transitional period was extended by six months during which time the first parliamentary elections were carried out in 1993.

In the wake of the polls, political tension was on steep rise as election results showed that voters were divided along regional lines. This in turn caused frictions between the two stakeholders, as the country was about to fall into abyss. Therefore, the national political forces called for dialogue to defuse the political crisis.

Meanwhile, a committee on political dialogue took shape, which held a series of meetings in both Sana'a and Aden from 22/11/1993-18/1/1994. The panels exerted huge genuine efforts to break out of the crisis and to

boost democracy, national unity, and to establish the state of law, order and institutions.

Further, the Pledge and Accord agreement was clinched with an aim to tackle major issues, such as arresting those accused of disturbing the security of the country, pulling the armed forces out of the main cities, redeploying same based on a unified central plan in a bid to merge, reorganize and overhaul such forces.

The treaty also stated that the armed forces should be directly controlled by the government and that no agency or party may set up any military or paramilitary force. It further stipulated the adoption of local government based on financial administrative decentralization, the principle of broad-based grassroots participation in governance, democratization and new administrative division going beyond the existing administrative units in such a way that fully merges the country and defaces all secession landmarks.

The deal envisaged that Aden should be announced a free trade zone, and that amendments should be introduced into the constitution while the local and parliamentary electoral system, mainly the proportional list system, should be cross-examined.

The agreement, which was sponsored by the Jordanian monarch late Hussein Bin Talal, was co-signed in Amman-Jordan by political party leaders as well as the committee on political dialogue on February 20, 1994.

Just after the agreement was signed, the secessionist war broke out in the summer of 1994, and the situation was resolved militarily despite the tribal factors, foreign interventions and field problems and sometimes weak power balance.

The crises and/or wars Yemen has experienced before or after the reunification or even between the two former parts of the country are traced back to the 1990s. Such events were expected to be much worse

than what was really taking place on the ground. Thus, some lessons can be taken from each case.

Post- war Yemen :

After the 1994 war, Yemen faced a variety of problems, including a worsening economic situation due to war burdens. These also include the following:

- political and security disturbances in southern Yemen coupled with infiltrations by extremist groups, mainly Al-Qaeda.
- Growing activism within the southern separatist Movement that first started with political and legal demands and then evolved into a mainly southern question adopted by separatists some of whom are seeking a complete overhaul of unity while others opt for secession. However, all parties shall engage in the forthcoming national dialogue.
- Eruption of an insurgency in Sa'ada on the part of Houthi group that broke the law and order and revolted against the government that responded by using force against them and received support from all regional powers , except Iran. Though the government fought six rounds of war with Houthis, the latter has ultimately accepted to take part in the upcoming national dialogue.

Impacts of election results on the unified Yemen

The victory which the GPC scored during the three round of parliamentary elections as well as during the two rounds of presidential vote raised doubts amongst the opposition parties that accused the ruling party of vote-rigging. This also prompted those parties to announce the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) coalition in October 2001. Prior to the 2006 presidential elections, rounds of talks were held between the GPC and the JMP which resulted in the so-called agreement of principles on presidential and local polls.

The accord stipulated the expansion of the Supreme Commission of Elections and Referendum, the formation of ballot and vote count committees (45% for the GPC and 46% for the JMP), in addition to the setting up of a legal working group to cross-check voter registers and refer any relevant violation to courts.

The deal further stipulated the impartiality of media, public office, armed and security forces during election campaigns, in addition to delineating the functions of security committees working under the SCER, which were assigned with protecting polling stations.

It also envisioned the establishment of election monitoring committees to be made up of all political parties, transparency on the part of the SCER, and the engagement of women in the democratic process.

It was also agreed on the introduction of post-election legal amendments related to the reformation of the SCER, restructuring the SCER administrative and technical organs, provision of legal guarantees, and creation of civil status registers in all administrative units.

Under the deal signed by all political stakeholders on June 18, 2006, the presidential elections, which pitted the GPC candidate Ali Abdullah Saleh against the JMP challenger Faisal Bin Shamlan, were conducted. An EU team of observers took part in monitoring the vote and then made recommendations thereon.

The election victory scored by the GPC nominee infuriated the JMP that claimed the elections were not free and fair. Relations between the two sides further strained, prompting them to refer to the EU observers' election report as a reference for their protests. The two parties then resumed talks on the checks and balances of dialogue amongst all parties represented in Parliament with an aim to reach a national détente.

A document on the checks and balances of dialogue was approved on 16/6/2007. The write-up stated that the first phase of dialogue should focus on the following:

-What was agreed upon under the agreement of principles signed by the GPC and the JMP on 18/6/2006.

-The EU recommendations on the presidential and local elections set forth in the Commission's report.

-The constitutional reforms, including upgrading parliamentary work based on bicameralism and electoral system and dialogue results.

-development of local government system, chief councilors elections and administrative division.

-Laws on rights and freedoms (parties, the press and print publications, peaceful expressions, syndicates and civil society organizations).

-Economic policies and tools.

- Addressing political conflicts and social issues impeding development and economic growth.

-Tackling the effects of the 1994 war.

Following rounds of extensive dialogue, the political parties represented in parliament submitted to Parliament presidium an official request for taking the constitutional measures necessary for amending article 65 of the constitution on parliament tenure in such a way that allows for the extension of the term by two years as there was no ample time to conduct constitutional amendments to develop both the political system as well as the electoral setup and to enable the political parties involved to further consider the pending issues and re-establish the SCER based on the so-called Feb.23 agreement. Subsequently, the Parliament approved the amendment to the said article, thus extending its tenure by two years.

Talks were held sporadically between the GPC and the JMP, thereby giving the impression that each party was attempting to invest time for its own benefit.

On July 17 2010, the two sides signed a joint minutes to implement the February accord, which stipulated the setting up of a preparatory

committee for comprehensive national dialogue, provided that both parties should name their partners and allies who would equally represent them in the 200-member committee.

It also stated that those willing to engage in national dialogue must be included in the panel on equal footing, in addition to making consultations with all political parties and civil society organizations seeking to join the talks.

Furthermore, there also established a quartet committee that proposed to the president of the Republic the approval of the political reforms necessary for upgrading the political set up and the electoral system, including the proportional list, by the end of 2010 at most. The deal further stated that mechanisms for implementing national dialogue resolutions and Feb. accord shall be agreed later.

In response, the President tabled to the quartet committee a road map in which he urged the panel to speed up the creation of the SCER as well as the final approval of the electoral law by the deadline of Oct.27,2010 in order to conduct parliamentary elections on schedule. He also proposed the formation of a national unity government involving all parties represented in parliament with an aim to oversee the electoral process.

-The quartet committee blueprint was amended on 20/2/2010.

The sustained talks and mutual media war between the GPC and the JMP marked a new phase of crisis involving both the government and the opposition, a crisis that had socio-economic, political , cultural and security dimensions to it.

The stalemate was reminiscent of the political regime's inability to address citizen's concerns and absorb the democratic values, not to mention the lack of good models on the part of wealthy politicians taking up leading positions. The crisis can also be attributed to numerous factors, such as rampant corruption, low living standards , rising unemployment, rising poverty, low national income, dwindling development rates, and growing hate culture within the Yemeni society.

These were also synchronized with the eruption of the sixth round of war in Sa'ada governorate, as well as the growing discontent amongst southerners, which badly impacted the country's unity, security and stability.

They also coincided with the Arab spring uprisings, as Yemen was not spared the events experienced in Egypt and Tunisia though there had already been demands for change and political reforms in the country. The recourse to street protest was the card used by opposition parties to press the government into meeting their demands.

Thus, Yemenis' reaction to the Arab spring uprisings was normal and instant, given the political indoctrination various political forces had done in the past at the backdrop of the power struggle they were locked in with the government. Those parties include the southern separatist movement calling for either secession or unity overhaul, the Houthis who fought six rounds of war with the government and/or the opposition that believes it was politically excluded from both power and wealth.

Moreover, events outpaced political dialogue, prompting the President to propose an initiative during the joint meeting of the House of Representatives and the Shoora Council, which was held on Feb.2,2011. The move, which was in line with the new political developments that were going on in the Yemeni arena, urged the quartet committee to go ahead with considering the parliamentary elections and constitutional amendments, including the proportional list system.

It also urged the resumption of voter registration for adult voters-to-be and the formulation of a national unity government, in addition to blocking the president from re-election, power bequest, or life mandate. It further proposed the introduction of overriding reforms into local governance, rotation of public office, the expansion of social security network, the creation of a fund to support university graduates, and the setting up of Yemen Friends' development fund.

The JMP's Supreme Council issued a statement explaining its attitude to the initiative it viewed as an overall outline seeking to bring the ruling party and the entire political process out of the political deadlock.

The JMP's statement said that "any call for resuming dialogue is unrealistic, as talks haven't yet started. We reject bilateral dialogue,". It called for a comprehensive national dialogue involving all political and social forces and leading to a regime change.

It laid out a systematic approach to political change based on the following:

- Building a decentralized state championing equality and justice.
- Recognition of the southern question and providing a fair solution to it.
- putting an end to Sa'ada war.
- Fair wealth-sharing and resolving economic problems to achieve justice, equality and equal opportunity, besides solving social problems such as unemployment and corruption.
- Establishing national institutions based on national standards, including competence, rather than favoritism and political loyalty.

Fighting terrorism should be viewed as a national issue that must not be exploited for personal interests, because it poses a high risk to the country's security and stability. So, all national potentials should be used to encounter it in a way that is totally different from what is going on nowadays.

The manager of the American National Democratic Institute for Middle East Affairs Mr. Campbell also came up with an initiative stating that the freedom of expression is guaranteed peacefully away from violence. It also called for ending street protests, media campaigns and traded accusations in order to clear the way for dialogue.

It also urged the parties involved to seriously engage in national dialogue involving the quartet committee, the 30-member committee and the 200-

member committee. It proposed the formation of a national unity government to supervise the electoral process.

It further stated that the President won't seek re-election in 2013 and would give up power bequest or opting for life mandate. The president vowed to remain committed to preserving the country's unity, security and stability.

The clergy woke up late , coming up with an eight-item initiative on 22/2/2011. In return , other clerics came up with a five-item initiative. While some religious scholars demanded an end to demonstration and sit-in protests, another elite of clerics demanded an investigation into the killing of peaceful protestors across the major Yemeni cities.

They further demanded that the killers should be brought to justice and that the martyrs' families be compensated and the injured treated at the expense of the government.

In the same vein, former president Saleh announced in his initiative presented to the general national conference held on March 10, 2011, that security services should protect the pro and anti-regime peaceful protestors. He also ordered the government to meet the demands of the youths protesting in Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, and other cities, pledging that the demands of youth would be addressed without the government resorting to violence.

On March 23, 2011, a responsible source at the Presidency announced that the President has agreed to the five-item initiative presented by the JMP on the condition that the move would defuse the crisis that destabilizes the country. The sources stated that Yemen at this crucial moment needs wisdom and sanity that prevent the country from sliding into devastating violence .

GCC initiative harbingers:

All talks and initiatives at the time were in vain, as they failed to ease the crisis that evolved into violence and counter-violence during which

demonstrators came under fire and tear gas attacks while public and private facilities were sabotaged.

This is not to mention the vandalization of power pylons and gas and oil pipelines, highway robbery, kidnappings and resurgence of Al-Qaeda terror activities. In a sense, unrest reigned in a country with over than 60 million arms, bringing it closer to a civil war which, if broke out, would destroy everything. To add insult to injury, the Dignity Friday Massacre took place and the presidential palace bombing ensued on Rajab Friday.

Thus, the pro-active players in the crisis are mainly:

-The change-driven youth struggling for their own basic rights are the major social segment. However, the political parties, including the southern separatist movement and the Houthis, are trying to exploit them.

The general public :

This includes partisan forces driven by the JMP, and the Southern Mobility that believes it is high time to disengage from the unified country or at least carry out radical reforms. It also includes the Houthis who seek to pay off old score with the regime, in addition to tribal forces whose sheikhs are in disagreement with the regime's figurehead and are looking for a foothold in the upcoming government.

The regime includes:

-The regime's head that represents the constitutional legitimacy.

The government whose prowess has been weakened and its role in stemming bloody clashes paralyzed.

-The GPC being the ruling party.

-Influentials, including the former president's inner circle, relatives and special interests.

The crisis actors:

The international community:

It is noticed that the international community is supporting Yemen's unity, security and stability. It calls upon political rivals to exercise restraint and come to the negotiating table.

The clergy:

This is divided into two categories: one supporting the regime, the other backing the opposition. However, both groups are calling for mediation and reconciliation, warning against bloody clashes and infighting.

Tribes :

The tribes are also split along the political lines, though there are tribes that stand on either side of the divide.

The military and the security forces:

The army was also splintered in the aftermath of the Dignity Friday genocide in which many youths were either killed or injured.

The GCC deal:

Due to the escalation of protests across Yemen, albeit peacefully, army and security troops were deployed to quell rioters and arsonists. However, they somehow committed illegal acts when they brutally used the excessive force against the peaceful youth protestors during the Dignity Friday carnage, the last straw.

The massacre provoked huge multitudes of people from all walks of life into joining forces with the protestors across the country. They strongly condemned the bloodbath and demanded the immediate departure of the former president.

In reaction, massive crowds thronged the Saba'een square and other squares across Yemen, all thundering support for the so-called constitutional legitimacy. Yemen at the time was on the brink of abyss; it came closer to a civil war.

Following the worsening situation with grave concern, the GCC brothers alongside other international actors, including the EU, the UN and the US, were very pro-active in defusing an impending civil war. On April 3, 2011, the GCC put forward a primary initiative after the Yemeni foreign minister's visit to Riyadh.

On May 21, 2011, the regime was about to sign the draft initiative at the presidential palace; however, the opposition insisted that they would sign the deal in any Arab city –Riyadh, Jeddah, and/or Abu Dhabi.

Both parties remained intransigent till the presidential palace bombing occurred. As a result, the UN named Mr. Jammal Bin Omar envoy to Yemen in June 2011. Bin Omar has recently been appointed assistant to the UN Secretary General for Yemeni affairs. He has been shuttling Yemen since then, bringing the number of his trips to the country to 18.

On the strength of the UN, as well as the Security Council resolutions 2014 and 2051, Bin Omar played an effective role in pushing for the signing of the draft deal on the part of the regime and the opposition in Abu Dhabi on July 2011. However, the signed draft was unenforceable pending the approval thereof by the president.

In September, the President authorized his deputy to sign the draft deal and hold talks with the opposition on the implementation of the initiative. However, the JMP opposed the authorization, calling it a flawed one. Owing to the fact that the president was unable to sign the deal as he was suffering from critical health condition, it was incumbent upon him to devolve his powers to his deputy.

After regional and international pressures were building on the president, he headed to Riyadh where the deal was signed, under the sponsorship of the GCC countries, by the GPC and its allies and the JMP and its partners on November 23, 2011, following which time the initiative became effective.

The move secured a safe transition of power and gave the President and his family an immunity from prosecution. Though the president has stepped down, many youth opine that the deal was biased to the regime. Also, the

peaceful transition of power is still on track despite some snags on the road.

The GCC-mediated deal is composed of five fundamentals and two executive steps. It urged the Yemeni government and opposition parties to hold a meeting in Saudi Arabia under the sponsorship of the GCC, and based on the following guiding principles:

- The deal should aim at preserving the unity of Yemen, its security and stability.
- The accord should meet the aspirations of Yemenis for change and reforms.
- The transfer of power should take place smoothly and safely in such a way that prevent the country from slipping into chaos and violence.
- All parties should work towards defusing the political and security tension.
- All parties should stop all forms of violence , retaliation and manhunts based on guarantees to the effect.

The accord also included the following two steps:

- The president shall transfer all his power to the Vice President.
- A national unity government to be headed by the opposition shall be formed, and will have the right to set up competent committees and councils to run the affairs of the country, write the constitution and hold elections.

The amended version of the deal stipulated the following:

From the first day of the signing of the agreement, the president shall assign the opposition to form a national consensus government , with the ruling party and the JMP equally sharing the ministerial positions. The government should be formed within seven days from the date of the delegation given by the president.

- The newly-formed government shall create the conducive climate to national consensus and eliminate all reasons for security and political tension.
- On the 30th day of the signing of the deal, and after the approval by parliament members, including the JMP lawmakers, of the immunity law, the President shall tender his resignation to Parliament, with the Vice President becoming the legitimate acting president following the approval by parliament of the President's resignation.
- The acting president shall call for presidential elections within 60 days as per the constitution.
- The acting president shall form a constitutional committee to supervise the writing of the constitution.
- The draft constitution shall be put forward for a popular referendum.
- In case the constitution was approved through the referendum, a date for new parliamentary elections shall be set based on the new constitution.
- Following the elections, the President shall ask the chairman of the party that won the majority of votes to form a new government.
- The GCC countries, the EU and the US shall stand surety to the implementation of the agreement.
- The accord shall have four original Arabic versions , and shall go into force from the date of its signature.

It was also agreed upon the GCC deal implementation mechanism that details the way the accord will be enforced as follows:

Phase 1:

This phase shall start once the agreement goes effective and ends just after the newly-elected president is inaugurated.

Phase 2:

This would run for two years. It shall start after the early presidential election is held and ends after the general elections are conducted and the new president is inaugurated.

The deal dwelt upon the formation of the national consensus government, the powers of both the Vice President and the government, the formation of a military committee to achieve peace and security and the delineation of its functions, and the holding of early presidential elections within 90 days from the signing of the deal. It stated that all parties should not field any presidential candidate other than the national consensus nominee, Mr. Abd Rabo Masoor Hadi.

The pact also delineated the powers of the newly elected president as well as the functions of the national consensus government. These include the holding of national dialogue conference, and the formation of the committee on national dialogue as well as the committee on the interpretation of the GCC initiative. They also include carrying out constitutional reforms to the structure of the state and the political system, holding a referendum vote on the newly drafted constitution, reforming the electoral system and holding the presidential and parliamentary polls based on the new constitution.

Furthermore, the time-bound implementation mechanism enumerated the issues to be considered during the national dialogue conference, including the drafting of the constitution, the constitutional reforms, debating the southern question and the political tension in Sa'ada, establishing a democratic system and overhauling the civil service authority, the judiciary and local administration.

It also postulated the achievement of national reconciliation, the transitional justice, the prevention of human rights violations, the protection of vulnerable groups, including women and children and the prioritization of socio-economic sustainable development.

The roadmap considered the said interpretation committee a reference for resolving any disagreement over the GCC deal and its time-framed strategy that has not yet seen the light of the day.

It stipulated that the GCC deal and its implementation outline, which may not be challenged before the state institutions, shall supplant any existing constitutional or legal arrangements.

-The deal , in conclusion, stated that the signing ceremony shall be attended by the GPC and its allies and the JMP and its partners, in addition to the GCC Secretary General and the UN Secretary General or any of their representatives, and the envoys of the GCC countries, the EU, the Arab League and the permanent member states of the UN Security Council.

The GCC-backed initiative was warmly welcomed by the Yemeni people, as it expressed their willingness to attain peace and security , and their aspirations for a safer and brighter future that ensures improving their living conditions and providing them with job opportunities ,in addition to achieving equality justice and preserving rights and civil liberties.

Besides, the deal was indicative of the fact that the political rivals were all unanimous that the pact was a culmination of the talks they have been conducting since 2006, as it represents an extension of the experiences Yemen has seen since 1962. It also suggested that those rivals wisely prevented their country from going to civil war and descending into abyss.

Comparing the GCC deal with the minutes of the previous talks that have taking place since the signing of the Pledge and Accord Agreement, one can notice that the accord was drafted based on the conclusions from the agendas of such talks , which were set by the political rivals during and after the crisis, as well as the protestors' key demands for regime change.

Moreover, the youths' demands and the issues raised during the previous talks included the following:

Recognizing the principle of national partnership involving all national forces in order to build up the new Yemen based on competence and equal citizenship.

-Bringing about an overriding change in the structure of the regime in such a way that reduces poverty and corruption , tackles unemployment and improves the living conditions of citizens.

-There is a consensus among all political stakeholders that all political forces must be engaged in the comprehensive national dialogue conference, and that none can be excluded from it.

-Debating the pending issues such as the Southern question, the Sa'ada conflict, and Al-Qaeda terror group.

-Considering the establishment of a modern civil state, and carrying out the constitutional amendments that tackle the form of the political system, the local governance and the electoral system.

The political stakeholders agreed on the abovementioned five points stated above, including the formation of the national consensus government. They also emphasized the importance of preserving national unity.

The credit side to the GCC-brokered deal was that it encompassed the conclusions from past talks, which convinced the parties involved into embracing it, as it was not different from the previous agreements. Besides, the deal reflected the political parties' willingness to put the accord into force in order to thwart any evil attempts to destabilize the country.

The Pact could not have gone into effect were it not for the support of the GCC countries , the generous sponsorship of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, and the full backing of the international community, including the EU, the UN and the US.

Therefore, it can be said that the deal is regarded as a realistic and safe option and a precondition for the political settlement.

The political settlement proved effective as life has gradually returned to normalcy while the first phase of the deal has been implemented.

Also, the national consensus government was formed, and the military committee has been able to end the public display of arms, remove the military barriers and checkpoints, and bring security back to the Capital and other main cities. The government has managed to expel Al-Qaeda from Abyan province, which was under the control of the group during the course of the political crisis.

In addition, the military committee has started restructuring the military and security forces in a manner that ensures establishing a strong national army and maintaining peace and security.

The presidential elections were carried out on a consensual basis, and the President of the Republic was elected on 21/2/2012; the voter turnout was unmatched in any previous elections. The election of President Abd Raboo Mansoor Hadi was an embodiment of the smooth and peaceful transfer of power, and marked the beginning of the second stage of transitional period.

The newly elected president started exercising his powers by making civil and military resolutions in the framework of the GCC deal.

Currently, preparations for holding the national dialogue conference in the first quarter of 2013 are in full swing. The President has issued the presidential decree 30 for 2012 establishing the technical committee on the preparation for the national dialogue.

The committee brought together all political parties, and representatives of civil society organizations, youth and women, the Southern Mobility and the Houthi group. The panel has started performing its functions, and released a 20-point manifesto outlining the requirements of the national dialogue.

The manifesto stipulated the reinstatement of the military servicemen and civil servants who were arbitrarily sacked or referred to enforced

retirement , in addition to those who went into exile in the aftermath of the 1994 civil war.

Furthermore , the declaration covered other significant issues such as the restoration of looted public and private property, putting an end to land-grabbing, the empowerment of southerners, the reorganization of the military and police, and the release of youth protestors who were arrested in connection to the peaceful youth revolution, among others.

The committee also approved the creation of another panel to guide the national dialogue conference , which equally represents both northerners and southerners, with a 30% quota being allocated for women. Expert view the manifesto as an agenda for the national dialogue conference.

In a press release issued at the end of its meeting, the committee touched upon the obstacles to the national dialogue as well as the events that has recently taken place, including the attacks on the ministries of interior and defense , the TV station and intelligence headquarters in Aden. The committee urged that the military and security forces should not engage in political polarization, and that those responsible for the said assaults be brought to justice .

Though there have been many obstacles to national dialogue, the committee enthusiastically proceeded with performing its duties.

The panel has recently submitted its final report to the President, urging all political parties to name their candidates for the participation in the national dialogue conference based on the agreed standards, such as eligibility, high sense of responsibility, full knowledge of the issues topping the agenda of the national dialogue, respect for human rights and international laws, and intact past record.

It stressed the importance that youth representation rate in the dialogue conference should not be less than 20% and that a youth participant must not be more than 40 years. It further emphasized that a 30% quota should be earmarked for women, and 50% for southerners, and that an equal representation of all social segments should be taken into account.

Hopes are high that the conference will be a success due to the following reasons:

-The GCC-backed initiative is being supported by the UN Security Council and the GCC. The recent visits made to Yemen by the GCC secretary general, Abdul Latif Al-Zyani, and the UN chief Ban Ki Moon, and his assistant Jamal Bin Omar, set the deal on the right path and made it more effective.

Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh has handed over power to his successor Abdo Rabo Mansoor Hadi in an official inauguration ceremony held in the Presidential palace in the presence of the envoys of the GCC deal state sponsors, the Yemeni political stakeholders, and members of both the Shooraa Council and Parliament.

The smooth and peaceful transfer of power was the cornerstone of the transitional period, and received accolade from the international community that has been optimistic about the future of the political settlement.

-President Hadi was unanimously endorsed as the only presidential nominee by all political parties, which enables him to adopt a peaceful approach to any obstacles to the political settlements.

-The national consensus government is exerting genuine efforts to achieve a political rapprochement among all political rivals through its executive institutions.

-The legislatures have assumed legislative duties that enable them clear the way for holding national dialogue and achieving reconciliation.

All parties signatory to the GCC deal are keenly advocating dialogue as the only safe means to overcome challenges.

-The transitional period has allowed for a broader public participation, especially on the part of youth, thus giving a peaceful, distinctive character to the Arab spring events Yemen has seen, and generating a national sense of responsibility towards the building of a modern civil state.

There is a general consensus that the national détente that has so far achieved would only be strengthened by a comprehensive national dialogue. This would press the parties involved to work for the success of the conference, and enforce the UN Security Council's resolution 2014 and 2051 for 2011, given that the political settlement is in line with local and international obligations .

The genuine efforts, which are still being exerted by the Yemeni government , the parties signatory to the deal, and the brotherly countries to further deepen trust among all political actors and social segments proved very effective in pulling together all political rivals.

This should be accompanied by a balanced media trends to reinforce trust , avoid political rivalry and contribute to creating a public opinion championing dialogue and tolerance. All parties should stress the importance that media must be geared towards supporting national dialogue based on respect for other opinions, and putting national loyalty before the political affiliation.

There is a general keenness to make regime change all the more peaceful, thus considering it a model for the political settlement that is based on consensus and rationality, which ultimately leads to the achievement of justice and equality, and the establishment of a modern civil state.

The signing by the political rivals of the GCC deal and its implementation mechanism , which eased President Saleh out of power, marked the beginning of the political settlement. All stakeholders have come to realize that the deal is a precondition for stabilizing the country, and that no party can exclude other partners or monopolize the decision-making process without engaging other actors.

Besides, all political players have become fully convinced that violence would trigger chaos and counter-violence and further split the country.

God has always endowed Yemenis with wisdom that enables them overcome all crises and peacefully pass through tribulations.

Indeed, great successes have been made in terms of the enforcement of the political settlement. We are hopeful that the forthcoming national dialogue conference will be a successful one, and that the GCC deal will be implemented in full in order to prevent the country from falling into lawlessness.

In conclusion, it is self-evident that the political crisis and subsequent settlements can be attributed to the fact that there are problems in terms of building a modern civil state. These problems were actually inherited from the Imamate and colonial rule that reigned in the country for a long time, thus reflecting negatively on democratization as well as the structure of the Yemeni state .

Tracing the political settlements in Yemen, once can notice that national dialogue prevails during crises and provides solutions to internal disputes. It is also noticeable that the political rivals usually accept the engagement of third parties in political settlements. For example, the Arab league, Egypt and Saudi Arabia acted as the third party that mediated the political settlement between the republicans and the royalists back in the 1970s.

Also, the Arab League mediated a political settlement between the south and north of Yemen during the 1973 and 1979 wars which was fought for the sake of reunifying the country. During the 1994 civil war, the Arab League and the UN acted as mediators between the warring parties. And most recently, the EU, the GCC and the US mediated a peaceful solution to the political crisis.

It is also noticeable that national dialogue is usually adopted by rival parties in order to break out of political crises. This creates a public opinion advocating dialogue as the only panacea to all internal disputes. It is only through dialogue that the democratic awareness and political partnership can be enhanced in such a way that reduces the oligarchs' control over power and paves the way for the creation of a modern civilian state.

This political deal was regionally and internationally backed as evidenced in the most recent visit paid to the country by the members of the UN

Security Council as well as the GCC Secretary General, let alone the national détente and the popular support it has garnered.

And finally, can't the GCC deal and its implementation mechanism, which have spared the Yemeni blood and led to a smooth democratic transfer of power and the creation of the national consensus government, be debated here as a model for resolving the internal dispute in Syria?

“Our Lord, Let not our hearts deviate from the truth after you have guided us, and grant us mercy from you. Truly, you are the bestower.”