

Parallel State Entities..

The illusion of Sectarian Emirates in Yemen

Mujeeb al-Humaidi

Geopolitics

Strategy Analysis Unit

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This study confirms that any future political settlement that ensures the remaining of a Houthi parallel military and administrative entity within the future Yemeni state will bear the seeds of failure and provoke war again in any crunch. It concludes that the restoration of lasting peace in Yemen requires the compelling of the Houthi group to integrate into the political community, to abandon its ideological fervor and the imposing sectarian militarism on the Yemeni society by force, and to give up its illusion of establishing sectarian Emirates and entities parallel to the state. The study asserts that the remaining of any sectarian entity parallel to the state in any part of Yemen will stimulate the forming of other sectarian entities in other parts of the country, and will threaten internal peace and the regional and international security.

The study reviews the historical background of the Zaidi-Salafi conflict in the Saada region, and concludes that there is no fundamental relationship between the imams and the Wahhabis in the new conflict.

Historical background

The emergence of the Wahhabiya movement in the middle of the 18th century coincided with the beginning of the collapse of the Zaidi Qasimiah state in northern Yemen. ^{[[1]]} The Turks were the common enemy of the Wahhabiya movement and its political patronage based on tribalism - the Saud family and Arab tribes - Yemen and its allied tribes, which extended to Lahj and Aden. The Turks withdrew from Sana'a in 1630 after long battles and bitter fighting under the Imam al-Moayyid before returning to it in 1849. ^{[[2]]} The Zaidi and Wahhabi states were engaged in fierce wars against the Turks.

In the early 19th century, the Wahhabis seized Mecca and Al-Madinah before they were kicked out by Mohammed Ali Basha who re-took control of the Hijaz. Then Mohammed Ali Basha asked the Imam of Sanaa to cooperate in confronting the Wahhabiya in exchange for the recognition of the Ottomans and the return of Asir to Yemen, but the Imam rejected this offer. The refusal was developed into a conflict ended with the Ottoman control of In the Middle East before their withdrawal in 1911. During this conflict, the colonial countries represented by Britain and Italy provide financial support to the Arab tribes fighting the Ottomans. ^{[[3]]} After the Turks left Yemen, no political conflict between the Imam of Sana'a and the Wahhabi took place. The only conflict was between the Imam and Emir of areas around Saada, the Emir "al-Idrissi". The Emir al-Idrissi was a common enemy of Wahhabism and Zaidi.

The relationship between the imam and Britain during the World War worsened in line with the improved relations with the Ottomans at the time. Al-Idrissi was supported by Britain and Italy and managed to occupy Hodeidah, yet the Imam did not prefer to engage in war with the British.

After the fall of al-Idrissi, the first political conflict between the Yemeni Mutawakliya and Saudi Wahhabism on the extension of control and influence on the areas used to be under the control of al-Idrissi. During the conflict, the Wahhabiya exploited superstitions, sorcery, glorifying tombs and graves that were popular in Tihama and Asir to spread the call for unification and the extension of the political influence, and the call for the revival and renewal of religion and the fight against superstition and worship of idolatry and the imposition of advocacy by the power of arms and tribal and nomadic tribalism ([⁴]). With the beginning of the Cold War between the eastern and western camps, the relationship between the Yemeni Mutawakiliya and Saudi Wahhabiya improved.

After the Imam's rejection of the alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood in the face of the British alliance with Al-Ashraf and Al Saud, the Brotherhood continued with the Liberal Movement opposed to the Imam, and the constitutional revolution came in 1948 to contribute to deepening the relationship between the Yemeni Mutawakliya and Saudi Wahhabism. This relationship continued after the outbreak of the October and September revolutions, and the withdrawal of the Imamate regime from Sana'a to the areas of Sa'ada, Al-Jawf and Hajjah, to wage an exhaustive war with the republican regime, supported by the American-Saudi camp [⁵] against the republic, which was supported by the Egyptian-Soviet camp. The conflict ended with the surrender of the Imami camp, the signing of the reconciliation agreement at the end of the sixties, and the liberation of Saada from the control of the Imami regime in 1969. After the reconciliation agreement was signed, Badr al-Din al-Houthi and Majd al-Din al-Mu'ayidi and returned to Saada after their escape to Saudi Arabia [⁶]. Some Imamate families were still trying to extract some of sectarian authority in Saada, such as taking the Khums (one fifth).

Developments of the theory of Imamate

It was assumed that after the war between the monarchs and the republicans ended with the stability of the republican system, Zaidi developed its political theory and studied the causes behind the collapse of the imamate system and its inability to absorb the latest developments of modern systems and to make a scientific effort in bringing the theory of the imamate closer to the theory of Shura and the democratic republican concept in order to change the Zaidi doctrine into a juristic one that can reconcile with the modern political legitimacy of the modern state, but the traditional control over the doctrine prevented this development.

The stage of critical reviewing and reading of the theory of the Imamism was delayed until after the unification, when the first studies referred the causes behind the failure of the Zaidi political theory to the deviation of the theory of imamate from the rule of Shura to the rule of al-Batnain and to the unannounced inheritance of the rule. This inheritance became public when Imam Yahya named his son Ahmed to be the crown prince failing to put restricts to prevent the multiplicity of preachers to the Imamate, who control the principle of power, oppression and predomination.

In the beginning of the nineties, a statement was issued for the first time demanding the abandonment of the terms of the Imamate by a number of senior Zaidi scholars representing the Preparatory Committee of the Al-Haq Party. The statement emphasized to abandon the idea of the Imamate and the recognition of the republican system. But those who signed the statement are the scholars in Sana'a only while the Zaidi scholars of Saada were absent, on top of them Majd al-Din al-Mu'ayidi and Badr al-Din al-Houthi. The researchers believe that the absence of Badr al-Din al-Houthi and al-Mu'ayidi from the signing of the statement means their adherence to the right of Al al-Bayt to rule. The statement was considered as a significant retreat from the ideological framework of Zaidiyah ^{[[7]]}

This insistence on the importance of the traditional theory of Imamism in the Zaidi doctrine leads some researchers to call for an ideological and jurisprudential crystallization of Zaidi doctrine away from the political theory.

Ideological Transformations and Polarization Game

With the stabilization of the republican regime in Sana'a in the 1970s, and the emergence of the eastern camp in Aden and the outbreak of the central front, with support from the south and the eastern camp, the Saudi regime felt that it needs to improve its relations with the Republican ranks in its two sides, military and tribal. This transformation coincided with the victory of the Iranian Khomeini revolution in 1979. The project of exporting the revolution, and the embracing of the revolution by the eastern camp helped to revive the dreams of the remnants of the Imamate regime to re-establish their state, taking advantage of the intensification of the conflict between North and South and the crystallizing of a new supportive scheme that can be a foundation to re-establish the imamate.

During this period, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi traveled to Tehran, and one of the requirements of cooperation between the two parties was the building of convergence between the Zaidiya and the Twelver (Ithna'ashariya).

Dr. Ahmad al-Daghshi asserts that this rapprochement was crystallized in the extremist (Zaidi sect of Jarudiya), which was implicated in accusing As-Sahaba (companions of prophet Mohamed) of apostasy, while he stressed the importance of distinguishing between the two sects and denying the claim of similarity. ^{[[8]]}

The first nucleus of Houthi thought was formed in 1982 ^{[[9]]}. In the same period, Salafi cleric Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadei returned from Saudi Arabia to Saada after being expelled from Saudi Arabia after he was accused of participating in the promotion of the ideas of Juhayman al-Otaibi three months before the Juhayman group occupied the Holy Mosque. Al-Wadei established Dammaj Center, Madrasat Dar al-Hadith, in Saada.

Cleric al-Wadei from Zaidi to Salafi

Cleric Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadei said that the term “transformed from Zaidi” is not right and that cannot be applied to those who lived in the geography that was under the control of the political Zaidiya, stressing that the word "Zaidi" can be applied only to those who studied the Zaidi doctrine and satisfied with it, but the public, he said, follow the person who they trust^{[[10]]}. Al-Wadei asserted that he was not eager to join the Zaidi doctrine and that he tried to learn from Zaidi clerics at Al-Hadi Mosque, but they did not help him, and they maybe have tried to exclude him from learning on racial grounds that is based on the culture of social hierarchy that was enhanced by the frequent Imamate regimes for one thousand years.

This is what the author of "The Political Islam at the Time of Al-Qaeda" pointed out to a part about al-Wadei in his article entitled "Secrets of the Ideological Path: Yemeni Salafist between the Religious Radicalism and Social Strategy." The author considered al-Wadei to be the main theoretician of the most salient trends of the Yemeni and world Salafism.

The researcher pointed out that al-Wadei “was not a member of the religious aristocracy of the Prophet's dynasty (the only gentlemen who can aspire to the position of the high imamate), nor of the aristocracy of the “judges” or their chief advisers, nor even of the aristocracy of the “sword,” that is formed until today by chiefs of large tribes, the main armed force of the Imamate for a long time”^{[[11]]}. The author notes that al-Wadei had to emigrate to Saudi Arabia under the pressure of the economic situation and after a brainwashing attempt was imposed on him at the al-Hadi Mosque. "The isolation and exile that he began to suffer are not only two ideologies, but they have an explicit social dimension and an expression of disregard by the Prophet's descendants against the man (al-Wadei)," said the author.

The author narrates how the members of the religious aristocracy used to call him a shabby tribal man when he tried to be adherent to his social class and would not dream of leaving his class. They said mocking at him: "Whatever we do to clean "the floor cloth" it will never be white."

The author emphasizes that this religious and social alert was very humiliating because it was issued by those who used to protect their skins with large umbrellas so as not to look like peasants. "Muqbil has noted in his biography: I will remember it all my life ", said the author^{[[12]]}.

Dammaj and the Houthi phenomenon

The previous review of the biography of Al-Wadei refers to the nature of the challenge imposed by the ideology of Zaidi fanaticism in Al-Hadi Mosque on the psychology of Sheikh Al-Wadei. Al-Wadei had to return to Saada to prove to his opponents that it is not the floor cloth and tribal who cannot comprehend the teachings, but he can compete them and exceed them. So al-Wadei returned in the mid-1970s, and tried to promote his ideas in the same al-Hadi Mosque where the first public confrontation with Zaidi scholars took place and developed into a clash of hands. Al-Wadei asserted that they tried to kill him, but members of his tribe protected him. The security authorities intervened and arrested al-Wadei with a number of those who clashed with them and imprisoned them.

According to some researchers, the establishment of Sheikh Muqbil al-Wadei's Dammaj Center, was one of the most important factors of the establishment of the Houthi centers of "Youth Believers." The author of the book "The Phenomenon of Houthi" confirms that the establishment of those centers was a practical response "to the challenge posed by the Salafi center of Dammaj in Wadiah, near the city of Saada, under the administration of the late Sheikh Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadei (1422AH-2001): the head of Salafiya in Yemen, with the historical knowledge of the fact that Saada represents the seat of the Hadawiya Zaidiya in Yemen^{[[13]]}." The writer confirms that Sheikh al-Wadei "raised the banner of campaign against the sectarian Zaidiya and Shia in general, which led his Zaidi opponents there to have violent reactions to face him including the establishment of what was known as the forums of 'Young Believers.' Such confrontations were not recorded before, for almost two decades, since the announcement of the Yemeni Revolution in 1962, shortly after al-Wadei returned from Saudi Arabia late in 1980s."^{[[14]]}

This Salafi threat contributed to the crystallization of the so-called the Revival Zaidiya, based on the perception of the danger of the loss of Zaidiya identity in the face of Wahhabiya. ^{[[15]]}

A report by the Global Crisis cited the Houthi leader Yahya al-Houthi as saying, "Our main motivation for action is to combat Wahhabism," pointing to the existence of intellectual and cultural conflict from the beginning of the revolution, and that the government seeks economic aid from Saudi Arabia and supports the spread of Wahhabism for this purpose." ^{[[16]]}

This may justify the support of Saleh's regime to the Dammaj Center. Some believe that the government's support for the Dammaj Center was not against the Zaidiya, but it was targeting the Muslim Brotherhood, the main political opponent of Saleh's regime. The author of the Book 'The Political Islam' said that "the Salafist radicalism against the Muslim Brotherhood, the opponent of Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime, is partly the product of the leniency of the tolerant government. As Salafists are clearly less involved in the dynamic political modernization than the Muslim Brotherhood, this support, which is the same in many countries of the region, is realistic and scornful." ^{[[17]]} On the other hand, the support for the Young Believers - the nucleus of the Houthi movement - has been for the same purpose, and this relationship explains the lack of conflict between the two parties during the six wars between the Houthis and the Saleh regime, and the conflict erupted after the collapse of Saleh's regime since the beginning of the popular revolution in 2011.

Six Wars and Revolution

All indications indicate that the Salafis in general and the Salafis in Dammaj in particular were careful not to be involved in the six wars, although they were careful to encapsulate their positions in supporting the regime by obedience to the ruler and the legitimacy of fighting that who is disobedient.

The Houthis did not accuse them of actively participating in the conflict during these wars, but accused them of providing the religious cover for these wars. This was confirmed by their press office, which responded to the Salafis' conference on 30 November 2011 that condemned sectarian calls and exercises and anything that can provoke sedition and division among the people of Yemen. The statement from the Press Office of Houthis, expressed appreciation of this position and asserted at the same time: "Who is engaged in sectarian activity and calls for and incites the sectarian sedition and publishes fatwas of takfir against all those who disagree with their opinion or thought are the owners of Dammaj Center, and those who stand behind them, and justify the killing of people under claims that they Rawafidh (Shia) who should be killed." ^{[[18]]}

The escalation of the conflict in Dammaj cannot be isolated from the political and security implications following the peaceful revolution, which has encouraged the ambitions of the sectarian project to take control of the society by force of arms. While the Houthis' opponents have confirmed secret agreements between Saleh regime and the Houthis to enable them to take control of the northern north areas to obstruct the change move, sources close to the Houthi group denied these accusations, and asserted that they deal with the ruling party as the legacy of the sick man that they (Houthis) should receive the largest share.

Saada and the Agency's wars

The socio-economic and geographical nature of Sa'ada and the neighboring region have transformed it into an international arena of proxy wars with local hands. If we have briefly reviewed the history of these wars in our history before the beginning of the twentieth century, the facts indicate that this region witnessed bitter proxy wars, and direct intervention by Turks, Britons and Italians at the beginning of the last century. We can clearly see this willingness to become tools of proxy wars in the pages of "The Kings of the Arabian Peninsula," written by the British colonel in Southern Yemen, Colonel Harold, in 1923 in English, and it was translated by the late ambassador Ahmed al-Medwahi. The book explains how British role in inciting Arab tribes of the Arabian Peninsula to demand independence from the Ottomans, and to fight them.

The book refers to the British support for Ashraaf in Jordan, Al Saud in Najd and Adarisa and Al Hamid al-Din in Yemen, and the south of Mecca, and other tribes in northern Yemen and sultans in the south.

The British official explains how the tribal leaders were wasting their time behind "gold". He pointed to a document sent by Sultan Yafei to the Imam asserting that the Britons are buying the Arabs with gold, and that the Arabs cannot resist bribery. The British official referred to a letter from one of the sheikhs asking for his name to be included in the list of sheikhs who receive salaries from Britain to stand with Britain in the face of the Zaidi Imam.

The writer explains how the tribes of Yemen and the Arabia Peninsula used to get money from both Turks and the imam, and how they were received money from both sides. They believed in that the danger of reconciliation.⁽¹⁹⁾

This sign confirms the existence of a fundamental problem in the social and economic structure, which results in the readiness of many social components to enter into any war based on the ability of the conflicting parties to pay, and the investment of any conflict between two fronts as an opportunity to benefit from the parties.

In light of this rule we can read the ability of the tribal Republican row and the tribal monarchy row after the September Revolution to make disputes between the eastern and western camps to engage in a proxy war, with the participation of the Soviet Union, Syrian and Algerian planes, and the US-Saudi camp supporting the monarchy.

After the transformation of the conflict, mentioned above at the beginning of this study, and the transfer of the Imamate trend from the American camp to the Iranian-Russian camp, groups that adopt the slogan (Death to America) appeared in a clear attempt to drag the parties to the international conflict into Yemen and to attract support, in addition to defending their sectarian identity in the face of Salafism, which was associated with Wahhabism.

During the six years of wars, there were mutual accusations between Saleh regime and the Houthis. Saleh accused the Huthis of receiving support from Iran, while the Houthis accused Saleh of receiving support from Saudi Arabia to fight them. Both sides were trying to exaggerate the regional role by seeking support and extorting the regional environment in the context of sectarian polarization that was growing at the expense of security and stability of the country, and in the interest of narrow projects.

Because both the regime and the Houthis continued to turn themselves into tools in the sectarian regional polarization game, the Popular Uprising against the regime in 2011 raised the fears of the Houthis that the success of the revolution may result in enhancing the political identity of Yemen on real democratic foundations and the feeling of the movement that it lacks for the scarecrow that it used to use in the game of sectarian polarization- presenting themselves as an oppressed minority- which made them believe that building a state on sound foundations would make them lose justifications for survival and contribute to besieging the environment that was fertile for their polarization.

Conclusion:

The clogging of prospects of the peaceful change, the emergence of the power heritage project and the decline of the democratic margin in Yemen in the latest years of Saleh's regime have contributed significantly to turning religious violence options into attractive options, as well as the role of this decline in enhancing the ability of Al-Qaeda and the Houthi group to convince religious youth in a community of arms,

illiteracy and poverty. The three elements, weapons, poverty and illiteracy will continue to be dangerous factors in recruiting many members of the Yemeni society as cheap tools in the hands of conflicting groups over sectarian violence schemes.

In view of previous facts and in light of the reality that Yemen lives in today as a result of the repercussions of the Houthis coup and their control of the capital, and with the approach of the National Army of the legitimate government from Sanaa, any talk about any political settlement that ensures the existence of a parallel military and administrative Houthi state within the future Yemeni state will bear the seeds of failure and incite future conflicts in any future crunch. Therefore, the restoration of lasting peace in Yemen requires the compelling of the Houthi movement to integrate into the political society, to abandon its ideological fascination and the project of imposing sectarian militarism on society by force of arms and to give up its illusion of building sectarian emirates and parallel entities. The survival of any sectarian entity, parallel to the state, in any part of Yemen, will stimulate the building of other emirates and doctrinal entities in other regions threatening again the internal peace and regional and international security.

- [1] Abdul-Bari Taher, from a lecture on the first roots of the Yemeni-Saudi conflict .. Religion and tribe between Zaidiya and Wahhabiya, in the al-Jawi Cultural Forum, republished in the website of Al-Tagammu newspaper on this link: <http://www.attagammua.net/index.php?action=showDetails&id=1677>
- [2] Harold Yacoub, The Kings of the Arabian Peninsula, translated by Ahmad al-Mudhwahi, p. 16, Dar al-Awda Beirut, 1988
- [3] previous source
- [4] Abdul-Bari Taher from a lecture on the first roots of the Yemeni-Saudi conflict .. Religion and tribe between Zaidi and Wahhabism, at the Jawi Cultural Forum, republished on the website of the Tagammu newspaper at this link: <http://www.attagammua.net/index.php?action=showDetails&id=1677>
- [5] The Egyptian analyst Mohamed Hasanein Haikal pointed out that Israel had given arms shipments and had contacted hundreds of European mercenaries who are fighting alongside the Yemeni monarchs in Yemen.
- [30] Israel has established a secret air bridge between Djibouti and northern Yemen. The war provided an opportunity for Israelis to monitor and evaluate the Egyptian military tactics and their ability to adapt to combat conditions. [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8%D9%85%D9%86%](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8%D9%85%D9%86%)
- [6] Adel Al-Ahmadi, Rose and Stone, p. 129.
- [7] Ashwaq Ahmed Gholeis, "Revival in the Thought of Imamate in the Zaidiya in Yemen" a scientific letter
- [8] Ahmed al-Daghshi, “Houthi phenomenon,” a comprehensive systematic study, Sana'a, 2009
- [9] Adel Al-Ahmadi, al-Zahrah and al-Jabal, p. 129.
- [10] The Salafi Sciences Network website:
<http://alooloom.net/vb/showthread.php?t=7346>
- [11] Franço Berga, Political Islam at the Time of Al-Qaeda: Re-Islamization, Modernization, Radicalism, Sahar Saeed's translation, p. 42, 2006.
- [12] Franco Berga, Political Islam at the Time of Al-Qaeda: Re-Islamization, Defiance, Radicalism, Sahar Saeed’s translation, p. 42, 2006
- [13] Ahmed al-Daghshi, previous source, P. 11.
- [14] Previous reference, P. 11, 12
- [15] Global Crisis Group, N. 89, Middle East Report, May 2009, p. 7
- [16] Previous reference, p. 10
- [17] Franco Berga, Political Islam at the Time of Al-Qaeda: Re-Islamization, Modernization, Radicalism, Sahar Saeed's translation, pp. 47-48
- [18] The statement is published on the Office’s website on "Facebook"
<https://www.facebook.com/AlhothiOffice>
- [19] Harold Jacob, The Kings of the Arabian Peninsula, translated by Ahmad al-Mudhwahi, p. 82, Dar al-Awda, Beirut, 1988



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مركز أبعاد للدراسات والبحوث



abaadstudies@gmail.com
info@abaadstudies.org

www.abaadstudies.org

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