

Fikri ALOGAIL

Arab Cultural Association, London

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THE HOUTHY MOVEMENT (ANSAR ALLAH) FACING THE COALITION FORCES

What is after the fall of the government in the hands of the Houthi movement? Where is Yemen possibly going? This article tries to answer questions related future of Yemen after the Houthi movement took over power. The article will shed light on what took place in Yemen during and after the *Youth Revolution* of February 11, 2011 that was against the former regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh; the article addresses the causes that led to the fall of the state in the hands of the Houthi movement (HM) followed by the coalition war that was called for by President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.¹ The coalition is formed by the *Gulf Corporation Council* (GCC) and is backed by other countries including the West. The war against the Houthis is named *Determination Storm*.

From the beginning of the *Determination Storm*, the Yemeni conflict is on two levels: political and military. The battles are still on the same pace from the time they started. No one of the fighting forces is able to control the battle. The coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia are unable to change the battle on the ground for the benefit of the forces supporting President Hadi. It has not been able so far to achieve a military balance that will allow Hadi to return to the capital Sana'a or Aden. The achievement is limited to destroying the military infrastructure of Yemen.

On the other hand, the Houthi militias and the forces of Saleh (Houthi-Saleh) continue their war against the Yemenis in different cities: Aden, Taiz, Al-Dhale, Shabwa, Marib. The battle in Mareb is still open between Houthi-Saleh forces the tribal forces that try to defend the city. In addition to all that, the city of Mukalla fell under the control of al-Qaida.² There is no victory in this war so far as the war supporters would like to see. It does not seem in the Yemeni scene that peace and safety are looming. This situation implies a reality that is full of chaos and threats of regional war where the battlefield is Yemen.

Observers of the Yemeni affair notice much of the political analyses focus on the result. They did not ask why it happened and how events accelerated so quickly to end in a war that may threaten a regional war. Why did this happen? The answer to this impor-

¹ The legitimate president of Yemen.

² Al-Qaida announced its existence in November 2014 and claimed responsibility for the attacks on March 20, 2015 that led to the deaths of more than 140 worshippers in Zaydi mosques in Sana'a. Al-Qaida expands, especially in the south, taking advantage of the collapse of the state and the sentiment against Houthis.

tant question would give a clear vision for the future and an answer to the most important question: what will happen after this war?

INTRODUCTION

Following coming to power in 1978, Saleh involves active actors in power after stripping them from their armed forces. He tries to find a balance between these powers and this led to the formulation of a common for umbrella for all. There was the establishment of (GPC) in 1982. He also worked on the formulation of a national charter; the texts of it reject affiliations to parties, religious sects, regions and calls for unity. The National Charter (*almithaq alwatani*) has been written in moderate Islamic language without many details. When the Iranian Islamic Revolution took place, the north of Yemen welcomed it. But this official welcoming of the revolution changed quickly when the war erupted between Iran and Iraq. Yemen stood with and supported Iraq. The support to Iraq against Iran includes military forces. The Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh is of the few Arab leaders who visited the battlefields at that time. Yemen not the only one among the Arab countries who has this position but all Arab countries supported Iraq. This is because Iraq was seen as the defender of Arab nationalism and the Gulf for the liberals. The eyes of Khomeini were then on the Gulf. The Yemeni supportive position to Iraq continued until the end of the war in the late eighties.

This position of Yemen is of course kept in the memory *Twelver Sect* leadership in Iran. This sect does not forget the wrongs that took place in history. Despite that position Yemen does not cut ties with Iran. It did not take any security measures against any practices by the Iranian embassy in Sana'a and the arrivals from Tehran. There was not anything on the surface; Yemen thought it was safe from what is going on between Iran and Iraq. But in fact there were underneath preaching Shiite activities during the eighties. This is confirmed by the Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Dr. Rashad al-Alimi. He said it in his speech before the parliament in June 2008.

The first thoughtful move according to some observers began in 1982 by Salah Ahmed Flutah who established in 1986 *Youth Union*. Part of what was taught a subject about the Iranian revolution and its principles. This is taught by Mohammed Badr Eddin al-Houthi. With the advent of the year 1990, a lot of events accelerated in the Middle East in favor of the Zaidis in Yemen, including:

- Iraqi-Iranian war stopped; then the negative Yemeni attitude toward Iran is removed since Yemen stood with Iraq during that war;
- the death of the hard-line Khomeini in 1989 and the advent of the new Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani who tried to lead Iran in his peaceful and friendly policy with the Muslim world necessitated the political change in the principle of exporting the Iranian revolution. The export of a violent revolution changed into soft export although the same effect if not worse;
- the reunification of Yemen in 1990 produced an important basis of the political and intellectual pluralism. This political shift allows the establishment of political parties that benefited Zaidi activists to build ties with Iran and took advantage to build their political agenda.

THE BEGINNING OF THE HOUTHİ MOVEMENT – ORGANIZING THE *YOUTH FEDERATION*

The group of *Believing Youth*, which was built on the remains of the group *Youth Federation* appeared with the Yemeni unity and the Declaration of political pluralism in 1990. It began its activities with many summer cultural centers that teach religious sciences of the Zaidi doctrine under the supervision of a number of Zaidi scholars in the province of Saada. This was chaired by Sheikh Mohammed Yahya Salem Azzan at that time. This was a religious and cultural forum that has nothing to do with military or political action. This is in accordance of the establishment statement. Mohammed Yahya Azzan – the former Secretary General of the *Believing Youth* – says “that the Youth Federation was a cultural, educational and intellectual institution concerned with the formation of personal religious scholars of the young people. The establishment was from 1990 to 1994. This was the stage of establishing so we were putting amendments to everything: recruiting new workers, thinking of studying new things, introducing new activities including new ideas and visions. Thus the establishment phase lasted all those years. Then the boom of the Youth Federation is from 1994 to 1996.”

Mohammed Azzan says, “that the idea of the *Believing Youth* was religious: a forum for the young people to teach them some religious and intellectual classes. It was intended to educate the young people and to get them out of narrow-mindedness and intolerance and the like but Brother Hussein Badr Eddin al-Houthi and adopted an error of a new approach” (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, 2007).

In 1996, a split originated within the *Believing Youth* and according to Mohammed Azzan:³ “the dispute was about the curriculum; this was in 1999. The difference increased among the *Believing Youth* and we kept that away from others, fearing others to make fun of us. We feared returning to the periods of bickering and exchanging of charges against doctrines. We want to cling to what is left of agreements. After a debate and negotiations lasted for a month in Sana’a, we had to accept the amendments in the *Believing Youth*. This includes the expansion of activities on the basis that the summer centers are to be part of the activities and each year is to be led by a team.”

Mohammad Azzan says in 2002 the slogans of Hussein Badr Eddin al-Houthi (*Death to America, Death to Israel*) appeared. Little by little, the followers of show a kind of exaggerated reverence to the handouts,⁴ which were written from audio tapes recordings. The ideas were strange for those who know the Zaidi thoughts. M. Azzan confirms that after knowing that the *Believing Youth* found a lot that they not agree with. They made clarification and attempts to stop or reduce this. They showed that these statements do not represent them. They explained they do not bear the consequences; that was not only their position but the position of other religious scientists. The trends began disputes over school districts in Saada. This lasted until the first war with the government in 2004 (Al-Arabia.net, 2007).

³ Mohammed Azzan shows himself more independent after his refusal to participate with the Houthis. He announced his independence from them though he is one of the leaders of the *Believing Youth*. He was removed by the Houthis because he is not from *al al-bayt* descents; the Houthi media attack him recently.

⁴ Lectures or handouts that are photographed and distributed to students.

Hussein al-Houthi was able to lead the *Believing Youth* since he is seen as a religious leader from the Prophets' descents. Under the pretext of working for the Zaidi sect that was kidnapped by the Wahhabism – a sect spreading in Saudi – according to Houthis. He managed to organize and sweep the Zaidi regions through the religious lessons that were cultural activities. Little by little, this group began to gain ground in the Zaidi areas: Saada, Al-Jawf, Amran, Sana'a, Dhamar and Hajjah. It was Hussein al-Houthi who led a rebellion in Saada⁵ later (Al-Shareaq Al-Awasat, 2007). He knows well he will not be able to overthrow the government in Yemen at this stage, especially the unified Yemen that is geographically big, knowing that the followers of the Zaidi sect represents less proportion than it was before unification and as a result of a lot of Zaidi areas that became Sunnis due to different reasons. Therefore, it seems the Houthis have a goal to build a strong intellectual movement on doctrinal and sectarian grounds that is loyal to the sect to achieve a degree of cohesion among its followers.

The Houthi was able to create some intellectual relationship with Iran, where he stayed with his father after the war of 1994. Some sources indicate that Hussein al-Houthi received high qualification in Iran and other Arab states that have Shiite presence for the sake of carrying out this role on the basis of the interests for both sides. The HM followed the same methods followed by the Shiite groups that are backed by Iran; where cultural work, military training, mobilization of sectarian extremism and creating a sectarian hatred that criticize the existing situation but withhold to the principle of injustice – this is to create a kind of an explosive device ready to be used. The Houthi began on this basis work from his locality in Saada that has the sectarian and tribal loyalty. Then he expanded the influence in the areas that have the sectarian belief: Al-Jawf, Hajja, Dhamar and Sana'a.

It seems there were from the government who sought to take care of this movement to operate and run its activities under a safe umbrella. Here it must be pointed out that the move of the Houthis towards authority has received broad support from the Hashemite families and from the Zaidi scholars and judges who are linked with the Zaidi doctrine both in terms of intellect, benefits, and social class. In spite of their denial of the support in the beginning because the state still retains some of its strength but the situation changed after 2011. It became usual to announce that they are in one line with the Houthis. This is seen in many of the interviews that were conducted by the Houthi channel (Al-Masirah) in the streets during the sit-in camps before the fall of Sana'a.

HOUTHİ MOVEMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN

For the reader to understand the HM deeper, one first has to know the social component of this movement which is the Yemeni social layer called the Hashemite family.

⁵ The Houthi logic is based on sect. Mohammed Azzan claimed in a dialogue with Al-Shareaq Al-Awasat newspaper, saying that Hussein Houthi was alien to Forum; he said that the Young Forum was established on a religious basis. The Forum is established in Saada and most of the people from the Zaidi background but we were – and according to our documents – providing an open vision to others. We meet with others or agree with them where there are shared concepts. There was a campaign in 1997 and 1998 against us from Zaidi people that we make Zaidi sect Sunni.

This family ruled parts of Yemen in different periods. The revolution of September 1962 was against its rules. Yemen was moved as a result from the Royal to the Republican system.

By looking at the kings and princes of this family over a thousand years, one can see to what extent this family (the Hashemite) has adopted force and violence in extending its influence. Because this social layer had lived in an atmosphere of power and authority for a long period before the establishment of the Republic, it has equipped itself during those periods – and later to a lesser extent – much of the social, political and economic privileges. This family felt after the September 1962 revolution that it has withdrawn them the privileges they had enjoyed before. The generations of this family inherited a sense of injustice and a sense of not being loyalty to the Republic. Through the recent events in Yemen and the support given to the HM from these families (the Hashemite) in Zaidi areas, we can say for sure that they were throughout the republican era looking back to the royal ruling. This is what already occurred with the emergence of the HM. It was not unusual for the majority of the Hashemite family in the Zaidi areas (Saada, Al-Jawf, Amran, Sana'a, Dhamar and Hajjah) to join this new movement. This support is either straightforward or through the logistic support from political institutional sites here and there.

These alone were not the elements of power in the HM. The movement has been able to recruit the remnants of the Hashemite loyalty among some families and tribes in the Zaidi areas; for this most fighters of this movement are from these areas who do not have qualifications except carrying guns. It is from this mixture the HM was formed.

One of the elements that helped the movement to achieve strong linkages with tribes is the characteristics that these tribes have. The majority of these areas belong to *Zaidi Doctrine*. Thus the sectarian interest meets the family loyalties to form the identity (Doctrine and Tribe) of these areas. The affiliation of the majority of these areas is either religious (being Hashemite) or supporters of the Hashemite. In these areas illiteracy and ignorance dominate and less Education in those areas. These areas are closed and they little mix with others due to difficult geography or cultural closeness. These make these areas till recently out of the authority of the country. These areas also lack modern constructions and basic services (electricity, water, phones, and educational or health institutions. Often people depend on agriculture, grazing or trade; those areas are almost remote places.

On the other hand, many of the Hashemite Zaidi families were able to be judges and they have access to high positions in the government; some ministries like Endowment and Justice were in their hands. This spread in the government institutions helped Houthis in their war against the government. These were like the hidden supporters for the Houthis and part of the political agenda for them.

In a letter by Badr Eddin al-Houthi to Jawad al-Shahristani, there is what refers to that. The letter says: “We have full knowledge of what goes on in the corridors of the ruling regime due to the presence of security agents in power; these agents are close to the members of the movement. We know our opponents of senior officials. They do not know that we have five ministers between supporters and advocates of our movement. We have four of the governors of the followers who harbor evil of

the unjust rules in broad daylight. They work to support *Believing Youth* without fear.”⁶

In addition to this the Houthis were able to gain the sympathy of people and win their love in areas suffering from poverty. They adopted charitable and humanitarian work in these areas that were ignored by the government. The charitable organizations usually do not reach these areas. They usually are limited with their activities to the outskirts of major cities. They presented a religious speech that touches the people’s needs and according to the sectarian vision. Therefore the lectures of Hussein al-Houthi came mostly in simple colloquial dialect free of any complexity.

Among the issues adopted by the HM is what was said by Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the current leader of the movement⁷ where he said: “HM is a kind of public groups that move peacefully to oppose the US-Israeli attack on the Islamic world through the famous slogan: Death to America. Death to Israel, Curse the Jews, Victory to Islam. They call to boycott American and Israeli goods and the dissemination of Quranic culture in the face of ideological invasion. The movement is not a political party.” (Al-Akhbar, 2008). The mobilization against Israel and America has its acceptance in Yemeni tribal circles that have emotion for the Arab and Islamic issues. The Houthi slogan is like a response to a sentiment in the hearts of the Yemenis in those areas who stood in many cases with the Muslim issues both east and west.

The presence of weapons under the influence of the Zaidi areas helped to acquire weapons. One of the main arms markets in the area is in Saada (Al-Talh area). This gives the movement the ability to supply and provide ammunition to its followers. It is known also that arms are available in many northern provinces; often tribes acquire different and varied weapons.

The increase of people’s dissatisfaction with the ruling regime and their complaints opened the way for the HM to put the idea of alternatives for the government: either to return to the Imamate – according to the letter of Badr Eddin al-Houthi to Jawad al-Shahristani or the coup against the regime. Abdul-Malik has pointed out that most Yemenis agree on “the tyranny of the regime and that it provided the people with only ignorance, disease, war and destruction,” and that most of them unanimously agree on the need to change this reality. This is an important step that could be followed by other steps (coordination of positions and efforts, including change of the tragic and dark reality experienced by the oppressed Yemeni people. “He also expressed that Ali Saleh regime has no legitimacy. One asks does mean religious legitimacy; there is no religious legitimate for any unjust rulers: whether under the name of imam, president, king or prince. If the intended legitimacy refers to democracy, there has to be some coordination between practice of democracy and governance. As for why not resort to constitutional institutions rather than take up arms? We did not carry arms in order to achieve certain ambitions; we are active culturally, socially, politically and through peaceful

⁶ Letter of Badr Aldin al-Houthi To Jawad al-Shahristani sent before years and was published by several Media, e.g. Site Marib Press in 10/25/2008. Though this was not documented but is these issues are closer to reality. The details of the documented were published in book (Al-Zahar wa al-Hajar, p. 353–355). It was Re-published in a book (Bawaeq Rafidaht al-Yaman).

⁷ He took over the leadership of the movement after the death of his brother Hussein in 2004.

means. The government is the one that took up arms against us and treated us with violence and without justification.” (Al-Akhbar, 2008).

Trying to set the imam is seen as a way to find religious authority. In this way, the Houthis are trying to come to this end and through stages. Here Houthis meet with the Iranian revolution in the goal of restoring the rule of (*al-albayt* or for the descents of the Prophet); this is according to the letter of Badr Eddin to al-Shahristani.

The strategy pursued by the Zaidi in their quest for power is to have faith in the period as a political necessity; they do not abandon this strategy: progress of pretexts: political and military action. Their history is full of examples of this; the first motto is to call the principal ruler to establish Al-Sharea or justice, being the main one responsible in front of God for applying justice. This is followed by calming injustice suffered as a result of his opposition to the darkness. This is followed by seeking to lift the injustice on the vulnerable: combating corruption and the corrupt. This is all under providing advice and fighting injustice and evil. This can be seen in the HM where the first slogan is to establish Sharea and get rid of American dominance and rejecting the ones who have ties with it; here it refers to Saleh (herein Saleh). After that the first war that was waged in 2004, which ended only with the death of the movement’s leader Hussein al-Houthi, the movement raised the slogan of political and intellectual injustice to the followers of the Zaidi sect. The Houthis were able to withstand five other wars fought by the Yemeni army against them with the support of members of the Islah Party and some tribes. This went on till 2011 where the political equation was changed. The friends of yesterday’s enemies became today’s friends. The rebellions who were living in the mountains and caves in Saada became partners in the revolution against the former regime. That was the umbrella for all parties in the country. The new slogan for all was to overthrow the corrupt regime, including the Houthis.

It has been estimated that the HM followers who were brought up under this doctrine in about fifteen thousand people. This is according to several interviews with Mohammed Yahya Azzan. Some figures increase the numbers into twenty-five thousand people. They do not doubt these followers as supporters of ideas, love and sympathy for the strategy pursued by the Zaidi⁸ in their quest for power is to have faith in the period as a political necessity; they do not abandon this strategy: progress of pretexts: political and military action. Their history is full of examples of this; the first motto is to call the principal ruler to establish al-Sharea or justice, being the main one responsible in front of God for applying justice. This is followed by calming injustice suffered as a result of his opposition to the darkness. This is followed by seeking to lift the injustice on the vulnerable: combating corruption and the corrupt. This is all under providing advice and fighting injustice and evil. This can be seen in the HM where the first slogan is to establish Al-Sharea and get rid of American dominance and rejecting the ones who

⁸ The political Zaidi experience produced three types of rulers. First: the Imam who has all the conditions. The second is the one who did not meet all conditions of leadership. The third type of rulers could be called the political incubator where the Imam grew up. The Imam leadership inherited by position of the Imamate without regard to that list of conditions set by the theorists of the doctrine. This appeared in the era of Qasmiyeh State or what some call the third Zaidi state (between the 16th–20th centuries).

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The political performance of the Houthis demonstrates intelligence and wisdom; they raise slogans that stand with the demands of the people. They claim their reluctance to power; they presented independent candidates for the presidency of the government. They selected competent and capable scientific and academic candidates, such as Professor Ayoub Al Hammadi. This may refer to the potential forces that stand behind their planning and internally and external support. However, on the ground they extend their authority though they declared their refusal to be part of the government. They became the force on the ground imposed their authority by force. They are after immediate and future gains and this is obvious to any observer.

The popularity of HM increased by the prominence of the Lebanese Hezbollah in the Arab media in recent years. Hezbollah appeared as a resistant Islamic party though it is a Shiite party. Ordinary citizens in Yemen accept the idea of Hezbollah's resistance and victory. This is in a time when the nation needs a glimmer of light to feel proud over its enemies. What happened in Iraq, where Shiites are enabled and became a dominant force that controls the reins of power under occupation is deemed for the Shiite region as the hope they would like to achieve in the countries in which they have a relative and an influential presence. Iran also presents itself as a strong state and as defender of Islam in the confrontation of the West and Israel. Iran stood with the Palestinians. This is when countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt abandon this role. They even appear as conspirators against jihadist movements in Palestine and Lebanon. This is in addition to the tendency of the Shiites to show towards Sunnis what they do not really think about them – this is part of belief called *Taqwa* – a kind of hypocrisy towards the Sunnis by calling for living with these communities but working to subdue them.

These events provided ground for the Shiite preaching in the region and marketing these ideologies in the Sunni countries; the aim is reviving the dream of the Shiite Crescent. Previous scientific and research efforts have warned against this. Iran stands fully behind this because of its impact on its national agenda and plan of expansion in the region, which has long been dreamed of since the revolution. Yemen was the target within reach since it has the Shiite presence that has chances of being able to have power.

The close relation between the Shiite in Iran and the Houthis does not represent a major threat to the intellectual Zaidis. The interests that meet do not necessarily entail abandoning old beliefs, especially among Shiite communities. They understand each other historical and ideological specificities. On the other hand, the *welayat-e faqih* itself is a breakthrough in the thought of the Imamate; it is a revolution in the theory of waiting for the expected Mahdi. At the same time, it represents a convergence with the

theory of the ruling system with the Zaidis. Both see the jurist or Islamic scholar as the one who has the right of the highest authority in the state. *Welayat-e faqih* has been likened with the *Twelver Faqih* or the guardian with the Zaidi thoughts. This is with a significant of time difference where the Zaidis have this idea in more than a thousand years. What's wrong then for the Houthis from trying a political experience that has its ancient roots in the Zaidi thought? Assuming it is a new experience, the innovative area of freedom with the Zaidis could accept this kind of religious government within the republican system. There is no doubt that Iran that has eighty million people and four million barrels of oil a day makes all Shiites sects in the world try to be allied with such a rich country even if they provide a bit of concessions to please Iran, being the only country in which the Islamic government is Shiite.

Yemen's interior minister has talked about Iran's support for the Houthis, saying: "Iran devoted its official media like Tehran radio, Al-Alam channel to support the rebels in Saada." He pointed out that the previous acting Iranian agent was keen to go to Mecca to perform Umrah – he performed Umrah dozens of times; he goes by land through Saada. This is to provide material support to the Houthis. The Iranian ambassador to Sana'a insisted repeatedly to go to Umrah through Hajjah where there is a group belonging to the Houthi; but the Saudi embassy in Sana'a refused to give him Umrah visa by land and give him an option to go by air to go to the holy land. He added that the Iranian officials say they are with the Yemeni unity and against sabotage; but reality is different. The interior minister urges the official position in Iran to be clear on what is happening in Saada, pointing out that, as a security person he knows that Iranian intelligence has a major role in mobilizing and recording demonstrations in the streets of Tehran in front of the Yemeni Embassy to show their sympathy and support for the Houthi rebels against the Yemeni government (Eylaph, 2007).

The same accusation repeated by the former Yemeni Foreign Minister, Abu Bakr al-Qirbi who said: "I have already announced the presence of some connection to Iran and Libya on what is happening in Saada. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Interior Minister explained that the Iranian support of embracing the Yemeni religious leaders in their institutions. This is in addition to the promotion of terrorist acts through the official media; this is incompatible with the Iranian official confirmation that Iran is with Yemen's unity and stability. This is to call upon brothers in Iran to translate this concern into practice. With regard to Libya⁹ (Al-Arabia, 2007), we welcome their clear position and its condemnation of the rebellion in Saada. We requested the funds provided for some Yemeni figures to be given for development in Yemen; this is the most effective and beneficial way for the two countries and their common interest."¹⁰ (General People's Congress, 2007; Okaz, 2007).

It is no secret that the HM is an Iranian arm in the region, like the Lebanese Hezbollah. The Iranian leaders have become outspoken about this fact where there is no

⁹ Al-Qirbi indicated in a statement dated on 15/5/2007 that the MP Yahya al-Houthi is in Libya. Hosting al-Houthi there gives sufficient evidence of the involvement of Libya and its support for the Houthis. Libya refused to hand him over to Yemen when demanded through the Interpol to cross-question him on security matters concerning his relationship with Saada rebellion.

¹⁰ General People's Congress Net (in 03/06/2007, quoted from Okaz (a Saudi Arabia newspaper)).

need for confirmation. The Movement also recently benefited from a wave of hostility announced by some neighboring countries of the *Muslim Brotherhood* and of the Arab Spring. A number of regimes and political parties found in Houthis a weapon to overthrow the powerful *Muslim Brotherhood*. Thus the HM has benefited from social, historical, sectarian factors as well as from the existing regional and international conditions. It also did not miss out to take advantage of the weaknesses in the government.

It is expected that the political future of the Houthis will not be much different from the Lebanese Hezbollah; Houthis have been prepared in advance for this role in Yemen. They took their weapons against the capital Sana'a and other cities and they will not accept to be disarmed in the future. They are likely not to abandon their weapons; they will maintain them and use them as a pressure for their political moves.

THE ROLE OF THE RULING REGIME IN MAKING THE HOUTHIMOVEMENT

Since the victory of Saleh's regime in 1994 war against the southern partner, the former president decided to think of passing power to his elder son Ahmed. Saleh is well aware of the size of the obstacles that stand in front of this ambition. He decided to remove the obstacles in a thoughtful way. He began with the internal obstacles: First: the leaders of the military regions are partners in power, wealth and regime. Second: the influential families, particularly al-Ahmar, Hashed tribe Sheikhs. Third: the strong opposition parties, particularly the Islah.

It is impossible for these three parties to accept the passing power from father to son and they are capable of preventing it. Once the war ended in 1994, Saleh began working on the implementation of this agenda in different ways. The beginning was with four leaders of the military areas who are considered the pillars of the regime. Two of them were eliminated in a helicopter accident, while the third was removed from his job. The fourth is the most intellectual – Major General Ali Mohsen – had an important role in the events of the revolution in 2011.¹¹ Ali Mohsen is the commander of the First Brigade. There were several attempts to remove from the scene but they all failed.

At the same time, the former president was actively engaged to arrange foreign files to solve the problems, which may constitute an inevitable obstacle before passing power to the son. On the top of these files is the border with Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Eritrea. He succeeded in settling these files and closed them in a manner deemed by

¹¹ Ali Mohsen the general commander of the first Armored Brigade rejected to be part of the regime after the massacre on Friday 18/03/2011 (than 70 of the youth revolution died). He announced his support for the Youth Revolution and that he would protect them. His army spread in the area and surrounds Youth Revolution, protecting them. Sana'a was divided into two parts: one with Saleh (controlled by the Republican Guard and Central Security forces and the other with the *Youth Revolution*, controlled by Ali Mohsen). Ali Mohsen, a pillar of Saleh system, was calculating in his position with the *Youth Revolution*. For this, the *Youth Revolution* is stolen from four forces: the joint parties, esp. Islah party, the military commander Ali Moshen, as well as religious and tribal leaders, esp. Hashed tribe and family of Al-Ahmar.

many Yemenis a form of national treason. Once the border files closed, his relationship with the Americans began cooperation against anti-terrorism. Then he returned to work on the rest of the internal barriers. He then works on clearing the national institutions, starting with the army and security institutions and ending with parties and other civil institutions. His policy is to weaken the national institutions that he does not guarantee their loyalty to him and his family. He created alternative institutions that are loyal to him and his family and provided them with full support.

Saleh established brigades of the Republican Guard on the ruins of the national army and handed it to his elder son (Ahmed). He established a central security on the ruins of public security and gave it to his nephew (Yahya). He established the national security on the ruins of the Political Security and gave it to another nephew (Ammar). He tore the rest of the old national army into different parts and kept some brigades with his partner Ali Mohsen, who has been a big stumbling stone to Saleh. For this it was necessary to find a way to remove him. For that Saleh worked on the establishment of an armed sectarian and political movement to get rid of the rest of his opponents as part of the internal barriers. This was the HM.

The HM for Saleh is a multi-purpose movement; it was a tool to exploit Saudi Arabia; he used when needed. It is also a contrary ideology of the *Muslim Brotherhood* – his most dangerous opponents. It is also the ideal way to destroy what is left of the old national army that he does not guarantee its loyalty to him. It is above all the trap that his opponent Ali Mohsen is falling in.

The opponents of Saleh are fully aware of his plans. It seems that there was a secret agreement of an alliance between the three big parties: Major General Ali Mohsen, the leaders/Sheikhs of Hashed tribe, the most powerful Yemeni tribes, and the Islah Party (the *Muslim Brotherhood*).

This was not the only manifestation of the destruction of the national institutions. The destruction and devastation caused by that regime reached even the cultural and ethical values. A number of groups and gangs (that are mercenary in nature) were encouraged under different forms and names. The social values that may stand in the way between him and his goal to pass power to his son were weakened. The weak and unqualified hold important positions as supporters. The educational process at all levels deteriorated and the quality is lowest. The HM benefited from this situation.

Saleh permits the Houthis to extend their control over the city of Saada and other regions. He facilitated the way for them to take over army camps that are loyal to his son, Ahmed. He also facilitated their access to heavy weapons and military equipment. He stops supporting the tribal forces that reject the Houthis and put them in a weak position, making them leave their areas fall into the hands of the Houthis without resistance.

Based on the foregoing analysis, it is possible to that there is alliance between the Houthis and Saleh (the previous enemies). It is a kind of secret understandings and common interests, which were imposed on the two parties to agree on identifying the real enemy of each at this stage: the Sunni Islamists of all factions for the Houthis but the Islah Party is the enemy of Saleh.

Many people know that the Sunni Islamists, particularly the Islah Party (Muslim Brotherhood), are the ones who able to stand in front of the Houthis since they have the political and intellectual agenda that is followed by the Sunni majority of Yemen even

in the areas controlled by the Houthis. Ali Mohsen was the leader who was to overcome the HM militarily but Saleh intervened each time and stops the war. Saleh appointed a governor who for Saada who is pro-Houthis and spent hundreds of millions to satisfy the Houthi leaders but they used the money to arm themselves before the launch of the second war.

The audio recording of Saleh is the concrete evidence against him, proving the existence of a close and tight coordination between the Houthis and Saleh. This could partly explain partially the recent events in the country and how the Houthis control the Yemeni state, including the capital Sana'a.

THE FALL OF SANA'A

The timing of the fall of Sana'a in September 21, 2014; this is five days before the date of the revolution against the Imamate in 1962 was carrying a clear indication of the intent against the Republic system and its leaders who captured the throne from the hands of the ruler of the Hashemite family. The Houthis in their channels show that the Revolution in 2011 is their own revolution. They show they are the ones who suffer major injustice of the former regime. They refused to lift their tents from the Change Square at Sana'a University after the political concession and the formation of a national unity government; suggesting that the goal for them in Sana'a has not ended yet.

After two years of the revolution in 2011, where Saleh's regime accepted the political solution, the Houthis begin their military movement towards Amran, citing various pretexts. Amran fell in their hands after they were able to besiege the military brigade there. With the help of some military forces in the government and some officials the Houthi took over the military camp. The camp was betrayed from the military forces loyal to Saleh. The commander of the military camp was killed by the Houthis. The next target is Sana'a the capital, which fell into their hands without any resistance except for some fighting with armed forces from the Fourth Division and some Islah militias. But there was no official resistance from the armies in Sana'a. During these events the UN envoy bin Omar¹² was in Saada having dialogue with Abdul-Malik al-Houthi and he was preparing the document of peace and partnership, which was signed by all political parties in the next day of the fall of Sana'a.

Then other cities fell in their hands without any military resistance but when al-Houthi militias reached the Shafi'i areas in the south, there was a rapid decline for the Houthis for they do not have community acceptance. The political game between the conflicting forces led to decrease in the Houthis popularity and fighting intensified and continued till the time of writing this article.

The political analysis shows that the Houthis are only a tool in the recent events; they are used by Saleh and his son. Although the rebels were supporters of the revolution of 2011 to force Saleh to give up power, but they allied with him since he still re-

¹² He stayed in Saada for 3 days and returned to Sana'a after it fall in the hands of Al-Houthi, the majority of Yemenis believe that the role played by the UN envoy was negative and works to legitimize what Al-Houthi movement is doing.

tains ties with tribes and military leaders. He also has some support the general public. As a result of this alliance, the Houthis managed to invade Sana'a and other provinces. There is an apparent triumph for the Houthis but in fact it is the return of the former regime but in a different way.

The HM has benefited from several external and internal factors: the Iranian support and from the Gulf who sought to weaken the *Muslim Brotherhood*. They benefited internally from the failure of the Government of Basendwah and its allies, who try to defend the decision to lift subsidies on oil.¹³ The HM presented themselves apparently as the power that stands by the demands of the majority of the Yemeni people. They were supported by Saleh and his supporters.

The Houthis capturing of Sana'a made an end for the turbulent transition period. The Houthis seem to overthrow the government and the *Islah Party* that supported it to replace this force and take its position.

EVENTS AFTER THE FALL OF SANA'A

The Houthis widen their expansion to several provinces under different pretexts: implementation of the national dialogue outputs, implementation of the contents of the document of peace and partnership, modification of the constitution draft, the fight against al-Qaeda. The Houthis came into conflict with the country's legitimate president Hadi and the Government that was newly formed. The armed confrontation with the presidential security guards around the President House on Monday 19/01/2015 was not to remove the president but to make him imprisoned in his house. They force him to make decisions and appoint a vice-president and important leaders in the state – they were mainly from the Houthis in order to increase their influence on the country. The confrontations resulted in the resignation of the President Hadi and the Government led by the Prime Minister Khaled Bahah on Thursday, January 22, 2015.

These resignations put Yemen in a political vacuum, where the Houthis did not expect. They want the continuation of the legitimate President Hadi because they will be able to transfer power in a legitimate manner, especially as they seek to impose appointments make them hold all government, including the appointment of a Vice-President who will be according to the Yemeni Constitution, the president the country if the president stepped down, i.e. they wanted to transfer power to themselves. They wanted not to withdraw the local or international to what they do.

The resignation taken by President Hadi and the government disturbs the Houthis' plans. The Yemeni Constitution states that the Parliament is to decide the resignation of the president within 30 days but there was disagreement between the political parties who were unable to hold a meeting to decide on the request of resignation.

On Friday, February 2, 2015, the Houthis issued a *Constitutional Declaration*¹⁴ that was faced with local and international rejection and concern. This includes termi-

¹³ The government has issued a decision to lift subsidies for petroleum products during that period.

¹⁴ The Houthis claim that "constitutional declaration" was in part a response to the pseudo-negotiation process which is designed to extend the crisis and not to resolve it. The Houthis think this nego-

nating the parliament existence and imposing a Presidential Council for a transitional period of two years. This council consists of five members where they appointed one of them as a leader. They formed a security committee and put the fate of Yemen in their hands. The reference they say is their revolutionary committees; they ignored the Yemeni constitution, which states that the speaker of parliament is the one who should be a temporary president. (The Parliament legitimacy was supposed to end before two years). They eliminated other political forces of their democratic right to be part of the government. This expanded the circle of rejection of this Declaration at different levels: local, regional and international. The rejection of this declaration from all political parties, including the *General People's Congress*, led by Saleh their ally. There were demonstrations against the *Constitutional Declaration* in Sana'a, Taiz and Ibb. A number of governorates in the south and middle of Yemen, including Aden and Taiz that they will not receive orders from the Houthi authority in Sana'a. There was quick response from the international supporters of the transitional phase. Because of what it called security concerns, the US embassy suspended operations and evacuated staff. On February 15, 2015 other countries evacuated staff: the European Union, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

On Friday, February 20, 2015, President Hadi managed to escape from his house arrest though his house in the capital Sana'a was besieged by the Houthis to Aden after weeks of house arrest. After hours from arriving to Aden (i.e. on Saturday, February 21, 2015), President Hadi issued a statement restoring the legitimate authority of the president and he accused the Houthi with a coup. He said in a speech that all the steps and appointments that had been taken from September 21, 2014 and after are invalid. He invited the National Dialogue Committee to meet in Aden or Taiz till the Houthi militias go out of Sana'a. He announced Aden a temporary capital of Yemen.

He began to form an alliance against the Houthis from different social layers including al Herak (Southern Movement)¹⁵ and the People's Committees from Abyan (his hometown), Shabwa, tribesmen and other political leaders. Most of these alliances are from the south and Shaafa or Sunni areas in the north of Yemen. Despite the conflicting accounts that describe the escape of President Hadi from his besieged home in Sana'a, the return of Hadi to power has changed the political equation as the Minister of Information in the resigned government Nadia al-Saqqaf said on her *Twitter* page. The resignation of President Hadi confounds the Houthis and their allies; his sudden escape caused confusion to the Houthis. The return of President Hadi to power from Aden has large implications for the Yemeni political scene.

Thus Yemen was divided between the north part of which is controlled by Houthis and the Alliance of Hadi who are anti-Houthis in Aden. Then the Houthis backed by the Republican Guard in Aden, Taiz, Lahj, Dalea, Shabwa moved under the pretext of

tiation prolongs the political, economic and security crises. They are the force on the ground will carry responsibility.

¹⁵ Al-Herak is a movement in the south which calls for greater autonomy for southern Yemen or independence from the north.

fighting al Qaeda. They threatened to capture Aden, after taking control of Al-Anad Military Base. They captured the Defense Minister Al-Subaihi; President Hadi escaped from Aden.

The dialogue was announced in Doha by the representative of the UN Bin Omar while war was going in Aden. But the Minister of Foreign Affairs appointed by Hadi announced that there would be no more dialogue in the light of the rush move of the Houthis to overcome the south. He called for military intervention by the GCC.

The Saudi Arabia-led military intervention under the *Determination Storm* was coordinated with the GCC, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, etc. The available space for negotiation between the Yemeni parties is limited, especially with the HM rejecting to go to dialogue and their insistence to continue was in the south. Oman may be one of the possible locations since it is the only country in the GCC that did not publicly support military action. It is a useful channel that can be used to stop the escalation and end the war to reach a political solution.

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ABSTRACT

The unrest prevailed in the Arab world during and after the Arab Spring and the escalation of the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia made all parties feel reluctant to make concessions to reach a settlement. The challenge for the Yemeni negotiators is to find a path to stop the escalation, despite the outbreak of fighting in several places. The local parties, which would be the biggest loser, should be supported to reach some agreement. This is because a proxy war which is sectarian in nature will not create victors. Thus a political settlement would be less costly to achieve reasonable goals.

Ideally, escalation could occur through a cease-fire mediated and watched by the Security Council. Then negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and with the support of the GCC could be resumed to reach a settlement on the most pivotal issue: the executive authority. A GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, could help settlement by encouraging Hadi to accept a minimum collective leadership. An even better solution is for Hadi to resign to reach an acceptable agreement on a large scale for the establishment of an executive authority. The Sultanate of Oman, being more neutral could to be a potential place for the negotiations; it would be even good to assist in managing the negotiation. If the parties were able to settle the issue of the presidency and stop the escalation, Yemenis can move then to negotiate details about power-sharing before the election and put a framework to address the state structure. The progress that has been made already in negotiations indicates there is a possibility for a reasonable solution.

RUCH HUTI A SIŁY KOALICYJNE**STRESZCZENIE**

Niepokoje, które rozlały się po świecie arabskim w czasie i po wydarzeniach określanych mianem Arabskiej wiosny, a także rywalizacja między Iranem i Arabią Saudyjską spowodowały, że wszystkie strony stały się niechętne porozumieniu. Wyzwanie dla jemeńskich negocjatorów stanowi znalezienie drogi pozwalającej na powstrzymanie eskalacji konfliktu. Dążąc do osiągnięcia porozumienia należy wspierać lokalne siły, a samo porozumienie uznać za najlepszy sposób osiągnięcia celów. Scenariusz zakłada zawieszenie ognia nadzorowane przez Radę Bezpieczeństwa ONZ, a następnie negocjacje przy jednoczesnej mediacji Narodów Zjednoczonych i Rady Współpracy Zatoki, ze szczególną rolą Arabii Saudyjskiej, której władze byłyby w stanie przekonać przedstawicieli Hadi do zawarcia porozumienia. Oman, jako państwo podkreślające swą neutralność w toczącym się konflikcie – mogłoby pełnić dobre usługi, udzielając miejsca pod rozmowy. Wszystko po to, aby uzgodnić kwestię prezydentury, a w dalszej kolejności podział władzy i nowe zasady funkcjonowania państwa.