

How Saudi Attempts to Manipulate the Houthis and the Muslim Brotherhood Backfired in Yemen

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Yemen is being bombed into accepting a Saudi-mediated pseudo-dialogue that really aims to reinstate Al-Hadi and restore Yemen as an authoritarian state that follows Saudi Arabia and the US. In this context, a mixture of Arabian intrigues, petro-politics, and geopolitics are all at play.

Arabian Game of Thrones

It might be hard to imagine, especially since Riyadh and the Houthis fought a war in Saada earlier in 2009 and 2010, but the House of Saud has actually worked with the Houthis before the Kingdom launched Operation Decisive Storm on March 25, 2015. The Kingdom's engagement of the Houthi movement was part of the House of Saud's hoary and trite dirty game inside Yemen. In this regard, the House of Saud has been playing different Yemeni governments, the Houthis, the Muslims Brotherhood, and Al-Qaeda all against one another in a Saudi real life version of George R.R. Martin's best-selling book series *Game of Thrones*.

During the Cold War the US, the House of Saud, Britain, and Israel all supported the royalists in North Yemen and supported the idea of a Zaidi imamate against Yemeni republicans. Once the republicans won the war, the Saudis began funding Wahhabi programs and schools to convert the Zaidis and to create sectarian divisions in North Yemen.

After South Yemen fought Britain to become independent in 1967, the US, Saudi Arabia, and Britain began to support a Muslim Brotherhood insurrection with the aim of toppling the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. When North Yemen and South Yemen were unified in 1990 the Muslim Brotherhood insurgents founded Al-Islah as the Saudis continued funding the Wahhabi programs that would help produce Al-Qaeda and sympathies for it.

While Ali Abdullah Saleh was the president of Yemen, the Kingdom used Al-Islah to keep President Saleh and his General People's Congress in check. After the ousting of Saleh during the so-called Arab Spring and the ascendancy of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and North Africa, the Kingdom got nervous and opted to exploit the Houthis as a counterweight against Al-Islah as a means of preventing the Muslim Brotherhood from controlling Yemen.

To varying degrees the Saudi strategy to manipulate the Houthi movement against Al-Islah contributed to the ascendancy of the Houthis in Yemen.

Nothing less than suzerainty over Yemen is enough for the House of Saud. Despite the fact

that the Houthis were willing to reassure the Kingdom for months and approached the House of Saud to sue for peace days before the war, the Kingdom wants total obedience from the Houthi movement. The Houthis and most the other political factions in Yemen — including Al-Hadi's own General People's Congress — cannot accept this. So the Saudis opted to force Yemen into submission by means of a war.

Echoes of the Cold War in Arabia?

Echoes of the Cold War seem to be at play in Arabia as history is repeating itself.

The so-called pan-Arab military that the House of Saud is promoting is a reincarnation of US containment policies from the Cold War when NATO had a sister-alliance in the Middle East named the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO), which was colloquially called the Baghdad Pact. METO was interlocked with NATO and had common members and officially consisted of Britain, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. The US was officially an associate member, but it was really the force behind METO. This was another case of Washington "leading from behind."

The Baghdad Pact later morphed into the Central Treaty Organization (CETO) after Iraq ousted its Hashemite monarchy in a revolution and left the military alliance in 1959. CETO was officially disbanded in 1979 after the Pahlavi monarchy was toppled in a revolution in Iran.

While the US has clenched as nuclear deal with Iran, it has not given up its quest to control Tehran. The so-called pan-Arab military is a combined rehash of the Cold War's METO/CETO alliance(s) and Washington's "GCC+2" arrangement that in 2007 sought to create a military alliance against Syria and Iran composed of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE — plus Egypt and Jordan. What this scheme effectively does is reserve the military option for the US. Using a sectarian narrative the Saudis and Israelis are trying to portray this as a so-called Sunni axis against Iran and its regional allies.



The contours of the Cold War coalition that existed during the civil war in North Yemen against the republicans have re-emerged too. During the Cold War, Israel helped the House of Saud intervene in Yemen through military aid, advisors, operatives, and weapons during

the civil war in North Yemen. Both countries worked with the US, Britain, and Pakistan to help the royalists against the republicans.

The Israeli-Saudi alliance in Yemen is being relieved as the Kingdom and Israel have united with the US against the Houthis. Like the Cold War, mercenaries and foreign fighters will eventually enter the picture too.

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