

Yemen: The Covert Apparatus of the American Empire

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In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered one of his least known and ultimately one of his most important speeches ever, "Beyond Vietnam," in which he spoke out against the American war in Vietnam and against American empire in all its political, military and economic forms. In his speech, King endorsed the notion that America "was on the wrong side of a world revolution." Dr. King explained:

During the past ten years we have seen emerge a pattern of suppression which now has justified the presence of U.S. military "advisors" in Venezuela. This need to maintain social stability for our investments accounts for the counter-revolutionary action of American forces in Guatemala. It tells why American helicopters are being used against guerrillas in Colombia and why American napalm and green beret forces have already been active against rebels in Peru. It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." [1]

This is the nature of war of today: during King's time, the pretext for war was to stop the spread of Communism; today, it's done in the name of stopping the spread of terrorism. Terror has since time immemorial been a tactic used by states and governments to control populations. Al-Qaeda is no exception, as it was created and continues to largely function as a geopolitical extension of the covert apparatus of American empire. In short, al-Qaeda is an arm of the covert world of American intelligence agencies. In particular, the CIA, DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency], US Special Forces, and multinational mercenary companies such as Blackwater [now Xe Services]. Where they go, al-Qaeda goes; where al-Qaeda goes, they accumulate; where they lay the groundwork, the American empire stands behind. [2]

Yemen is perhaps an excellent example of America being on the "wrong side of a world revolution," as the secret war in Yemen being exacerbated in the name of "fighting al-Qaeda" is in actuality, about the expansion and supremacy of American power in the region. It is about the suppression of natural democratic, local, revolutionary elements throughout the country seeking self-autonomy in changing the nation from its current despotic, authoritarian rule sympathetic to American interests, into a nation of their own choosing. It is about repressing struggles for liberation.

This brings in the involvement of Saudi Arabia, itself interested in ensuring Yemen is a loyal neighbour; so they too must suppress indigenous movements within Yemen seeking autonomy, especially those that are Shi'a Muslims, as the Saudi state is a strict Wahhabist Sunni Muslim regime. Shi'as are primarily represented in the region through the state of Iran, Saudi Arabia's "natural" enemy; both vying for influence in Iraq and both vying for

influence in Yemen. Through this we see another key American imperial aim in this war, that of seeking to stir up a conflict with Iran, perhaps through a proxy-war within Yemen, or perhaps in hopes that the proxy war would expand into a regional war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, naturally drawing in Israel, Egypt and the United States. Finally, we have the strategic location of Yemen to consider, bridging one of the largest oil transport routes in the world, parallel to Somalia and the Horn of Africa (where America is waging another war, again on the “wrong side of a world revolution”).

Just as American geopolitical strategists had chosen to favour Tutsis over Hutus in Central Africa in an effort to expand the American presence and business interests in the region; so too have American strategists chosen to favour a brand of radical Sunni Islam over the Shi’a or moderate Sunnis, and thus they support oppressive Sunni governments (such as Saudi Arabia), and denounce Shi’a governments as oppressive (such as Iran). Not to say that there is no oppression within Iran (there is oppression within all states everywhere in the world, Iran is no exception), but compared to Saudi Arabia, Iran is a bastion of freedom. Al-Qaeda is manifestly a significant facet of the pro-Wahhabist fundamentalist Sunni strategy of American imperialists. If they finance, train and arm the Sunni rebels or send in already-trained, armed and well-funded terrorists (commonly known as ‘al-Qaeda’ – the “database”), then they create a counter to any other domestic opposition or regional Shi’a dominance.

This essay examines the American war in Yemen as a war of empire, as a war against the rising tide of people’s movements and the “global political awakening” that is taking place around the world.

Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Art of Empire

To understand the current conflict in Yemen, as with all conflicts, we must go to history. To simply cast the conflict aside in the light of “fighting al-Qaeda” is a gross misrepresentation. Yemen’s history is deeply entwined with that of Arab nationalist politics in the Middle East, adding to that a balance of imperial power in the region.

The location of modern Yemen is vital in the notion of Yemen’s significance to imperial powers. Millennia ago, a settled civilization was established in the fertile south-west region of Arabia, and was “comprised by the kingdoms of Ma’in, Saba, and Himyar.” These kingdoms “were significant in the broader history of the Middle East, in part because of the long-distance trade links to India and the states at the top of the Red Sea.”[3] When Islam arose:

Yemen became part of the Arab and Islamic worlds and contributed both militarily to the Islamic conquests and culturally to the mediaeval Islamic period. From the tenth century onward, Yemen ... ceased to be part of the broader Islamic empires ... [and] it was ruled by a succession of dynasties, controlling more or less of to-day’s Yemeni territory. The last of these to control most of to-day’s North and South were the Qasimis, who ruled in the mid-seventeenth century. In the early modern period, Yemen fell under various degrees of external influence and control – in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Dutch and the Portuguese yielding to the Ottomans, and in the nineteenth century the Ottomans and the British dividing the country between them.[4]

When the Ottomans left in 1918, following their defeat in World War I, Zeidi Imam took over North Yemen, which was run by the Imams, while South Yemen was controlled by the British.[5] From the late eighteenth century, the British being the dominant power in the

Arabian Peninsula, “sought to protect its imperial communications by entering into a series of treaties with the ruling shaykhs of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman and by bringing the strategic southern tip of the peninsula under direct British control as the Aden Protectorate [South Yemen].”[6]

Various families competed for power in Arabia, with Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa’ud emerging victorious when in 1924 he exiled the previously imposed leader (supported by the British, but highly unpopular), Sharif Husayn. Britain quickly negotiated an agreement with Ibn Sa’ud in 1927, called the Treaty of Jeddah, which “recognized Ibn Sa’ud as the sovereign king of the Hijaz and sultan of Najd and its dependencies; he, in turn, acknowledged Britain’s special relationships with the coastal rulers [of the Arabian Peninsula] and pledged to respect their domains.” In 1932, the state became known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.[7]

Following World War II, the United States became the single greatest superpower and it overtook the colonial possessions of the old European empires that collapsed prior to, during, and following World War II. In the Middle East:

New social and political forces emerged after 1945 to challenge the old elites and demand reform. Among them were pro-Soviet communist parties, but much more important and popular were radical nationalist movements and independent groups of young army officers determined to free their countries from lingering foreign control and chart a new course toward development and greater social justice.[8]

The Imams in North Yemen had begun laying claim to all of “natural Yemen,” directly challenging British rule in the south. In the 1940s, “there began to develop political oppositions, to both the Imams in the North and the British in the South.” The “Free Yemeni” movement in the North staged a failed coup in 1948 to free the North from the authoritarian rule of the Imams.[9]

Egypt saw the most significant upheavals in the immediate post-War years. In 1952, a group of junior military officers in the Egyptian Army orchestrated a bloodless coup in which they overthrew the Egyptian Monarchy and Colonel Abd al-Nasser took power, forming the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). The RCC’s primary political rival in Egypt was the Muslim Brotherhood, so when an assassination attempt on Nasser took place in 1954, the RCC outlawed the Brotherhood, arrested thousands of its members and executed several of its leaders. Nasser was not only the primary progenitor of nationalism in the region, but he was considered the exalted leader of the pan-Arab movement for unity.

Nasser set up a Soviet arms deal in 1955, in which Egypt exchanged cotton for Soviet military equipment, which dealt Nasser an impressive propaganda effect among Arab peoples who saw it as a rebuff of the Anglo-American grip on Egypt. Nasser, meanwhile, had been attempting to construct a dam at Aswan, and sought funds to do so from the World Bank in 1955. The World Bank approved a loan package (designed by the British and Americans), which would have required Egypt to accept particular conditions of the loan. Nasser had not made a decision on the package, when, in July of 1956, America announced it was withdrawing the offer.[10]

On July 26, 1956, days following the loan withdrawal, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, giving Nasser incredible support across the Muslim and Arab worlds, as the Canal, “built with Egyptian labour but operated by a French company and used as the

lifeline of the British Empire, had stood as a symbol of Western exploitation.”[11] On October 29, 1956, Israel, Britain and France attacked Egypt, and a UN-sponsored cease-fire was signed by Britain and France on November 6, following the condemnation of the attack by both the USSR and America. The Suez Crisis, an Egyptian military defeat, had become a political success for Nasser.[12]

In Yemen, the struggle of the Free Yemenis in the North waged on against both the rule of the Imams in the North and the British in the South. The Free Yemenis were largely influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt initially, but changed the rhetoric as the 1950s changed the dynamic of politics in the region, with the rise of Arab nationalism, and thus, “the predominant politics of the oppositions in North and South was nationalistic, involving support not only for the general goal of ‘Arab unity’ but also for ‘Yemeni’ unity.” Following the failed coup in 1948, the opposition in the North was split between intellectuals and groups of officers. In 1962, the officers overthrew the Imams and proclaimed the “Yemen Arab Republic.”[13]

When this took place in the North, opposition spread to the countryside in the South where a guerilla movement developed. Between 1963 and 1967, the guerilla movement became a powerful force competing for power in Aden and the countryside, and was split into two: a Nasser-influenced group and a more radical Marxist “National Liberation Front” (NLF). Nasser inserted himself into the Yemeni civil war in 1962. The deposed Imam of Yemen had escaped to the mountains and rallied tribesmen to his cause, with significant support from powerful regional monarchs (and staunch American allies), Saudi Arabia and Jordan. So the new Yemeni regime turned to Nasser for assistance, and by 1965, close to 70,000 Egyptian troops were in Yemen fighting for the military regime in power. After several years of fighting rebels and traversing harsh terrain, Egypt withdrew in 1968.[14]

During the civil war, the British were still holding onto their protectorate in the South, and were still very much politically bruised by Nasser since the Suez Crisis. Thus, the British “devised a scheme with Israel’s secret service, the Mossad, to aid the anti-Nasser forces in Yemen by supplying them with arms and financial help.” This effort was aided by the CIA, as well as Saudi intelligence and the Iranian SAVAK.[15] Throughout the 1960s, the United States rapidly accelerated a program of military support for Saudi Arabia, which included a \$400 million Anglo-American air defense program, military bases, infrastructure, “and a \$100 million U.S. program to supply Saudi Arabia with trucks and military transport vehicles.”[16] The aim was to weaken Egypt and Nasser through a civil war in Yemen, with each side using various groups for their own geopolitical ambitions.

In 1967, the National Liberation Front (NLF) came to power in South Yemen, as the British left, and South Yemen became an independent state. Subsequently, North and South Yemen supported opposition movements within each other’s territory. In 1972, the two sides briefly went to war with one another, when the North attempted to conquer the South with Saudi and Libyan support.[17] While Yemen’s civil war had seen Yemen divided among itself, it had also become a regional conflict between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Yet, when the radical Marxist NLF government came to power in South Yemen in 1967, the NLF had “pledged its support for the overthrow of all the traditional monarchies in the Arabian Peninsula”:

The Saudi regime thus faced two hostile Yemens, both of them with radical governments, both of them supported by the Soviet Union, and both of them committed to the establishment of republican forms of rule. [Saudi] King Faysal responded to this danger by mending fences with the northern Yemen Arab Republic and attempting to foment discord

between it and the People's Republic of the south.[18]

The situation Saudi Arabia faced to its south created an impetus for the acceleration and growth of the Saudi armed forces. Thus, in the 1970s, "the Saudis allocated between 35 and 40 percent of their total annual revenues to defense and security expenditures." In 1970, the defense budget had increased to \$2 billion; by 1976 it was \$36 billion.[19]

In North Yemen, the radical left fought a guerilla war against the government from 1978 until 1982, with support from South Yemen. This movement in the North "saw itself as the vanguard of a mass movement that would bring about unity through overthrowing the military and tribal forces dominating the country." [20] The North Yemen government was not centralized, and so lacked a strong measure of legitimacy. During the 1970s, the President "promoted closer ties with the South as part of an attempt to strengthen the central government." [21] Throughout the 1980s, closer ties between the two nations were sought, and "unity" committees were established, but with little if any success. Not until the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War in 1989-1990 was progress on unity made, when "the internal weaknesses of both regimes led them to agree to enter a provisional unification," which occurred in May 1990.[22]

Each state thought that they could exploit the process of unification to exert their own authority over the other region. Thus, unity was "not a policy aimed at fusion but an instrument for inter-regime competition." [23] The North, in particular, "believed it could impose its will on the South," following the 1993 elections and through the process of misleading negotiations. Eventually, this goal started to be realized, and "Yemeni unity was thus achieved by the successful imposition of the Northern regime's power on the South, in alliance with both Islamists in the North, and with dissident exiles from the South." [24]

However, these disagreements and problems "led to a de facto split in the country in early 1994, followed at the end of April by an outright Northern attack on the South. On 7 July 1994 Northern forces entered Aden, thus effectively unifying the country under one regime for the first time in several centuries." [25]

Operation Scorched Earth

During the 1994 civil war in Yemen, the North was aided in its war against the south by Wahhabist Sunni rebels (practicing the strict branch of Islam common to Saudi Arabia as well as al-Qaeda). Following the war and the success of the North, the government had granted the Wahhabis a stronger voice in the government. This is a major complaint of the Zaydis, a Shi'a branch of Islam. The Zaydis had Saada as their main stronghold in the North, but were driven from power in the 1962 revolution, left to a region that remained undeveloped. Saudi Arabia drew increasingly worried about having a rebellious group of Shi'a Islam fighters (the Houthi) so close to their border, with the potential to stir up groups within Saudi Arabia itself.[26]

In 2004, the Yemen government tried to arrest the leader, Hussein al-Houthi, a Zaydi religious leader, which sparked fighting and the leader was subsequently killed in an air strike, leaving the movement to be run by his brothers. In 2004, between 500-1000 people were killed in the fighting. In 2005, the fighting continued, and an estimated 1,500 people were killed. Fighting broke out again in 2007 between the government and the rebels, in which hundreds of people were killed.[27] In 2008, a Shi'a mosque was bombed during prayer in the Northern stronghold of Saada, with the Yemen government blaming the Shi'a

rebels, who both denied responsibility and denounced the attack.[28] This spurred on further clashes between the government and the rebels, so that by late 2008, since the outbreak of fighting in 2004, between 3,700 and 5,500 “militants and civilians” had been killed in the fighting.[29]

In June of 2009, nine foreigners were kidnapped while having a picnic in Saada, “the bodies of three of them, a South Korean teacher and two German nurses were discovered. Five Germans, including three children and a Briton, are still missing and their status is unknown.” It was never determined who was behind the kidnappings and murders, but the government blamed the Houthi rebels. The Houthis in turn blamed drug cartels in the region for the murders. Yemen was faced simultaneously with a secessionist movement in both the North and the South, and was reportedly facing a “greater threat from al-Qaeda,” which had been a “growing concern” of the United States. In July of 2009, Gen. David Petraeus, CENTCOM Commander, “and an accompanying delegation, flew to Yemen and met with [President] Saleh,” at which one of the topics of discussion was “how to better combat terrorism.” In August of 2009, Yemen launched a military offensive against Houthi rebels in the North.[30]

This was Operation Scorched Earth, launched by the Yemen military on August 11, 2009. Troops, tanks and fighter aircraft were used in this Yemeni blitzkrieg against the Houthi and Zaydi in the North, with the President vowing to crack down with an “iron fist.”[31]

This led to a refugee crisis in which, by October 2009, over 55,000 people fled their homes due to the conflict.[32] In November, the rebels had a border fight with Saudi Arabia, killing a Saudi officer and injuring several others.[33] Saudi Arabian “warplanes and artillery bombarded a Shiite rebel stronghold,” and Saudi Arabia and Yemen were “cooperating and sharing intelligence in the fight.”[34] Moroccan special forces trained in guerilla warfare were accompanying Saudi soldiers, and Morocco cut off relations with Iran, which was being accused of arming the Houthi rebels. Jordan also reportedly sent 2,000 of its own special forces to help Saudi Arabia.[35]

The American Empire in the Gulf of Aden and Africa

What is America’s particular interest in Yemen, and more broadly, in the region that encompasses the Gulf of Aden, over which Yemen rests at the pinnacle? The Gulf of Aden connects the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea, with Yemen positioned directly across the water from Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea. The Gulf of Aden is a vital transport route for the shipment of Persian Gulf oil, forming “an essential oil transport route between Europe and the Far East.”[36] Clearly, control of the major oil transport routes is a key strategic imperative of any global power; in this case, America. Yemen, situated beneath Saudi Arabia, positions itself as even more significant to American strategic initiatives, in securing their interests in the world’s most oil-rich nation and key US ally. An American-friendly government in Yemen is a Saudi-friendly government.

Another key facet of American imperial strategy in the Gulf of Aden and Yemen regards the American imperial strategy in Africa. In 2005, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the main policy-planning group of the US elite, published a Task Force Report on US strategy in Africa called, “More Than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach Toward Africa.” In the report, it was stated that:

Africa is becoming more important because of its growing role in supplying the world with oil, gas, and non-fuel minerals. Now supplying the United States with 15 percent of oil imports, Africa's production may double in the next decade, and its capacity for natural gas exports will grow even more. In the next decade, Africa could be supplying the United States with as much energy as the Middle East.[37]

The report stated that, "The United States is facing intense competition for energy and other natural resources in Africa," identifying India and primarily China as its main competitors "in the search for these resources and for both economic and political influence on the continent." [38] In particular, "China presents a particularly important challenge to U.S. interests." [39]

Further, "To compete more effectively with China, the United States must provide more encouragement and support to well-performing African states, develop innovative means for U.S. companies to compete, give high-level attention to Africa, and engage China on those practices that conflict with U.S. interests." [40] In analyzing how the War on Terror had been brought to Africa, the report stated:

Post-9/11, the U.S. counterterror approach to Africa has been led by the U.S. military: CENTCOM in the Horn; EUCOM in West, Central, and southern Africa; and the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM). More quietly, U.S. intelligence cooperation with key states has expanded in parallel with the enlargement of the U.S. military's role. [41]

As the Guardian reported in June of 2005, "a new 'scramble for Africa' is taking place among the world's big powers, who are tapping into the continent for its oil and diamonds." A key facet of this is that "corporations from the US, France, Britain and China are competing to profit from the rulers of often chaotic and corrupt regimes." [42] In May of 2006, the Washington Post reported that in Somalia, the US has been "secretly supporting secular warlords who have been waging fierce battles against Islamic groups for control of the capital, Mogadishu." [43]

In December of 2006, Ethiopia, heavily backed and supported by the US, invaded and occupied Somalia, ousting the Islamist government. The US support for the operations was based upon the claims of Somalia being a breeding ground for terrorists and Al-Qaeda. However, this has now turned into an insurgency. Wired Magazine reported in December of 2008 that, "for several years the U.S. military has fought a covert war in Somalia, using gunships, drones and Special Forces to break up suspected terror networks – and enlisting Ethiopia's aid in propping up a pro-U.S. 'transitional' government." [44] Again, another case of America being on the "wrong side of a world revolution."

The Ethiopian troops occupied Somalia for a couple years, and in January of 2009, the last Ethiopian troops left the capital city of Mogadishu. In 2007, the UN authorized an African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Somalia. In March of 2007, Ugandan military officials landed in Somalia. Essentially, what this has done is that the more overt Ethiopian occupation of Somalia has been replaced with a UN-mandated African Union occupation of the country, in which Ugandan troops make up the majority. Since Uganda is a proxy military state for the US in the region, the more overt US supported Ethiopian troops have been replaced by a more covert US-supported Ugandan contingent.

Africom

In 2007, Newsweek reported that, “America is quietly expanding its fight against terror on the African front. Two years ago the United States set up the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership with nine countries in central and western Africa. There is no permanent presence, but the hope is to generate support and suppress radicalism by both sharing U.S. weapons and tactics with friendly regimes and winning friends through a vast humanitarian program assembled by USAID, including well building and vocational training.” The Pentagon announced the formation of a new military strategic command called “Africom” (Africa Command), which “will integrate existing diplomatic, economic and humanitarian programs into a single strategic vision for Africa, bring more attention to long-ignored American intelligence-gathering and energy concerns on the continent, and elevate African interests to the same level of importance as those of Asia and the Middle East.”[45]

The article gave brief mention to critics, saying that, “not surprisingly, the establishment of a major American base in Africa is inspiring new criticism from European and African critics of U.S. imperial overreach.” Some claim it represents a “militarization of U.S. Africa policy,” which is not a stretch of the imagination, as the article pointed out, “the United States has identified the Sahel, a region stretching west from Eritrea across the broadest part of Africa, as the next critical zone in the War on Terror and started working with repressive governments in Chad and Algeria, among others, to further American interests there.”[46] The article continued:

The problem is that, increasingly, African leaders appear not to want Africom. They see it as the next phase of the War on Terror—a way to pursue jihadists inside Africa’s weak or failed states, which many U.S. officials have described as breeding grounds for terror. They worry that the flow of arms will overwhelm the flow of aid, and that U.S. counterterrorism will further destabilize a region already prone to civil wars.[47]

Ever since the 2007 US-supported air strikes and invasion of Somalia, piracy has been a significant issue in the waters off of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. In 2009, several major nations, including America, Britain and China, sent navy ships into Somali waters to combat the pirates who were negatively impacting trade through the region. As Johann Hari explained in the Independent:

In 1991, the government of Somalia collapsed. Its nine million people have been teetering on starvation ever since – and the ugliest forces in the Western world have seen this as a great opportunity to steal the country’s food supply and dump our nuclear waste in their seas.

Yes: nuclear waste. As soon as the government was gone, mysterious European ships started appearing off the coast of Somalia, dumping vast barrels into the ocean. The coastal population began to sicken. At first they suffered strange rashes, nausea and malformed babies. Then, after the 2005 tsunami, hundreds of the dumped and leaking barrels washed up on shore. People began to suffer from radiation sickness, and more than 300 died...

At the same time, other European ships have been looting Somalia’s seas of their greatest resource: seafood. We have destroyed our own fish stocks by overexploitation – and now we have moved on to theirs. More than \$300m-worth of tuna, shrimp, and lobster are being stolen every year by illegal trawlers. The local fishermen are now starving... This is the context in which the “pirates” have emerged. Somali fishermen took speedboats to try to dissuade the dumpers and trawlers, or at least levy a “tax” on them. They call themselves the Volunteer Coastguard of Somalia – and ordinary Somalis agree. The independent

Somalian news site WardheerNews found 70 per cent “strongly supported the piracy as a form of national defence”.[48]

In 2009, an American Navy commander suggested that the Somali pirates were in receivership of not only a great amount of sympathy from Yemeni people (while the government would help combat the piracy), but that “private citizens in Yemen are selling weapons, fuel and supplies to Somali pirates. And maritime experts worry that pirates are increasingly able to find refuge along Yemen’s vast coast.” Some Yemeni officials “suggest the extensive international attention to piracy is just a pretext for big powers like the U.S. to gain control of the Gulf of Aden, a waterway through which millions of barrels of oil pass every day.” One member of the Yemeni Parliament suggested that, “Western powers are allowing piracy to continue as a way to serve their own interests.”[49]

Al-Qaeda in Yemen

The current war in Yemen and US support for it is predicated on the basis of aiding Yemen in the fight against al-Qaeda. Said Ali al-Shihri was arrested by the Americans in 2001 in Afghanistan, and was promptly taken to Guantanamo Bay. The Americans released him into Saudi custody in 2007, and he “passed through a Saudi rehabilitation program for former jihadists before resurfacing with Al Qaeda in Yemen.” In other words, the US handed him over to Saudi Arabia, who enrolled him in a program for ‘former jihadists’, and then he became the second in command in Al-Qaeda in Yemen. As one American intelligence official stated, “he returned to Saudi Arabia in 2007, but his movements to Yemen remain unclear.” One Saudi security official had reported (on condition of anonymity) that, “Mr. Shihri had disappeared from his home in Saudi Arabia [in 2008] after finishing the rehabilitation program.”[50]

In June of 2009, US officials were reporting that Al-Qaeda fighters were leaving Pakistan to go fight in Somalia and Yemen. The CIA, the Pentagon and the White House reported that Al-Qaeda groups in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia were “communicating more frequently, and apparently trying to coordinate their actions.” The CIA Director, Leon Panetta, said that, “the United States must prevent Al Qaeda from creating a new sanctuary in Yemen or Somalia.” Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Brookings Institution, a major US policy think tank, “I am very worried about growing safe havens in both Somalia and Yemen, specifically because we have seen Al Qaeda leadership, some leaders, start to flow to Yemen.”[51] So the American national security establishment had refocused its efforts on Yemen. War seemed inevitable.

In the 1980s, millions of Yemeni men had worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, sending remittances back home to Yemen. In 1991, in the lead-up to the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia viewed these migrant workers as a potential security threat, so they expelled 800,000 Yemeni workers back to Yemen, and henceforth, Yemeni labour was banned in Saudi Arabia. Saudi financed Wahhabi madrasas sprung up across Yemen, providing a place for the disenchanted and unemployed Yemeni Sunni population to find an outlet for their political and economic dislocation. President Saleh of Yemen had often used Yemeni Wahhabis “to fight his domestic opponents – first the communists, then the Zaidis, and then the H[o]uthis.”[52]

In August of 2009, as the Saudi assault on the Houthi rebels in the North was underway, a Houthi leader and brother to the slain former leader, Yahya al-Houthi, spoke to a Middle Eastern news agency. He was a former Yemeni Member of Parliament, who had fled to

Libya, and subsequently sought political asylum in Germany. He told Press TV:

Saudi Arabia wants the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh to remain in power because he is meeting all the Saudi demands especially those related to terrorism. Yemen is now a main party in carrying out terrorist plots sponsored by Saudi Arabia, therefore it is important for Saudi Arabia to keep Ali Abdullah Saleh in power as the overthrow of his regime would lead to many big secrets being revealed. The regime in Saudi Arabia also supports the Wahhabi ideology and is trying to spread this ideology amongst our people in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is also suffering from internal problems which it wants to export to Yemen. Many members of al-Qaeda, Yemenis and non Yemenis, are now in Yemen. In recent months [Yemeni President] Ali Abdullah Saleh has taken many recruits of Al-Qaeda who were afraid of falling into the hands of their regimes in countries like Egypt, Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. His plan was to use these fighters from al-Qaeda to battle the Houthis in Saada. A training camp was also erected for these terrorists which still exists today in the area of Waila. These members of al-Qaeda and also Baathist elements are now taking part in the fighting alongside the Yemeni army against the Houthis. The areas of Malahit and Hasana which the Houthis have taken control over were used to transfer weapons from Saudi Arabia to the terrorists. These areas are also where most of the terrorists' plans are made.[53]

In other words, according to al-Houthi, Yemen (along with Saudi Arabia) are directly supporting the al-Qaeda contingent in Yemen in an effort to sow chaos (thus providing a pretext for the military assault), as well as aiding in the fight against the Houthis. In October, as the fighting raged on, it was reported that the Yemeni governor in the northern province had "signed a deal" with al-Qaeda, in which the government "would provide the militants with arms, budget and other military requirements to assist the Yemeni army against the Shia fighters." [54] Saudi Arabia remains, as it did throughout the entire history of the movement (since the 1980s), as the principle financier of al-Qaeda.[55]

In fact, in 2009, it was revealed that members of the Saudi royal family directly provide "extensive financial support for al-Qaeda and other extremist groups." The documents were revealed in a court case in which families of victims of the September 11th attacks were seeking to bring legal action against the Saudis for their financial support. The documents were leaked to their lawyers, and the US Justice Department stepped in (on behalf of the Saudis), and "had the lawyers' copies destroyed and now wants to prevent a judge from even looking at the material." [56] Clearly, al-Qaeda is not an organization autonomous of Saudi financing.

The Southern Secessionist Movement

Apart from simply the Houthis, the Saleh dictatorship seeks to suppress a Southern Yemeni secessionist movement seeking autonomy and liberation against the illegitimate central government. Since 2007, "southern Yemenis have been staging mass protests calling for reinstatement of southerners dismissed from the civil service and army, higher pensions, a fairer share of the country's dwindling national wealth, and an end to corruption." The protests were met with "severe repression by the security services, which seemed to only spur on the demand for secession by the south, where most of the country's oil is located." [57] One Yemeni analyst stated that, "If there is one thing that will break the country, it's going to be the southern secession." One southern secessionist activist stated that Saleh's government was using the pretext of al-Qaeda and its war on terror "for the liquidation of the southern movement," and that, "the southern movement is trying to continue the peaceful struggle. But the powers in Yemen have used excessive violence

against peaceful protests.” The government, for its part, has attempted to propagate the baseless claim that the southern secessionists have links with al-Qaeda.[58]

Interestingly, al-Qaeda’s leader in Yemen, in a recorded statement, “declared support for the Southern Movement, but Southern leaders have thus far rejected his endorsement.”[59] In an interview with France24, former South Yemen President, Ali Salem al-Beidh, explained that, “We have nothing to do with al Qaeda, we have never been in contact with this organization. Our movement rejects terrorism, which in contrast thrives in the north of the country. President Ali Abdallah Saleh uses al Qaeda to scare westerners and the United States.”[60] Saleh’s government has committed several human rights abuses against the movement in the South, unlawfully and unjustly killing innocents during protests, with the military surrounding peaceful protests and opening fire.[61]



Mass protest in South Yemen

The “rapidly spreading” protest movement in the South, explained the New York Times, “now threatens to turn into a violent insurgency if its demands are not met.” While the leaders of the movement favour peaceful protest, the government’s violent repression has made it so that “their ability to control younger and more violent supporters is fraying.” One southern leader stated, “We demand an independent southern republic, and we have the right to defend ourselves if they continue to kill us and imprison us.” Again refuting claims that the movement is tied to al-Qaeda, the leaders “say that they stand for law, tolerance and democracy, and that it is the north that has a history of using jihadists as proxy warriors.” A major problem arises within the Southern movement in that it remains deeply divided, with no clear singular leadership, drawing from an array of people, from socialists to

Islamists, “with wildly different goals and unresolved disputes.”[62]

The Underwear Bomber

On December 25, 2009, a 23-year old Nigerian-born man named Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab boarded Northwest Airlines Flight 253, en route from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan, when he tried to detonate plastic explosives hidden in his underwear. This incident, still shrouded in mystery, provided the excuse for American involvement in the conflict in Yemen, as it was reported that Farouk had been trained by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the newly-formed Saudi and Yemeni al-Qaeda group.

However, how Farouk managed to get on the plane, let alone past security with explosives on his person, is still an important question. After all, America knew about Farouk for up to two years prior to the incident, and even had him “on a list that includes people with known or suspected contact or ties to a terrorist or terrorist organization.”[63] Britain’s MI5 knew three years prior to the incident that Umar had connections with Islamic extremists in Britain.[64] Umar’s father, a former Nigerian government minister and successful banker, had even warned the US Embassy in Nigeria of his son’s extremist beliefs.[65] Umar even had a US entry visa, and when the State Department stepped in to have his visa revoked, “intelligence officials asked [the State Department] not to deny a visa to the suspected terrorist over concerns that a denial would’ve foiled a larger investigation into al-Qaida threats against the United States.”[66]

Suddenly, there was a flurry of reports from “respected” newspapers (such as the Washington Post and New York Times propaganda rags), that this “failure” of following through with the intelligence that was available on Umar meant that a review of security was needed, both in terms of possibly expanding the “watch lists” and in terms of expanding airport security, and proposing the use of body-scanners. Several politicians and news-rags were also calling for expanded military operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.[67]

Interestingly, there were several reports of eyewitnesses on board the plane who contradict the official account of Umar’s attempted terrorist act. An attorney on board the plane said that, “he saw another man come to the assistance of accused bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab when he tried to board the airplane in Amsterdam without a passport.” The attorney and his wife had both seen this incident. The wife, also a lawyer, stated, “My husband noticed two men walk up to the ticket counter lady. The only reason he noticed them is that he thought they were really a mismatched pair.” She said that Umar “wore older, scraggly clothing, but the man who was assisting him, who appeared to be of Indian descent, was dressed in what looked like an expensive suit and shoes.” She recounted that the well-dressed man had told the ticket agent, “We need to get this man on the plane,” and that, “He doesn’t have a passport.” The ticket agent responded that no one was allowed to board the plane without a passport, to which the Indian man replied, “We do this all the time; he’s from Sudan.”[68] Yet no further information has come forward about this mysterious ‘second man’ who helped Umar board the plane. Nevertheless, the propaganda of this attempted terrorist ‘attack’ had taken effect, as people were again afraid of the menace of “Islamic terror” and “al-Qaeda,” and the U.S. got the pretext to justify its intervention in Yemen.

American Imperialism in Yemen

While the 'Underwear Bomber' was used as a propaganda vehicle for supporting direct US military intervention in Yemen, covert US military involvement in Yemen had already been underway for some time (as well as British). In 2002, a mere six months following 9/11, President Bush authorized the deployment of 100 US troops to Yemen "to help train that nation's military to fight terrorists." The troops "would consist predominantly of Special Forces, but could also include intelligence experts and other specialists. The main target would be Al Qaeda fighters who are hiding in Yemen." [69] In September of 2002, it was reported that the United States was deploying Special Forces and CIA agents into the Horn of Africa in an effort to combat al-Qaeda in Yemen, and "800 US special forces have been moved to Djibouti, which faces Yemen." [70] In November of 2002, a CIA Predator drone (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle - UAV) launched an attack on an al-Qaeda target within Yemen, killing six suspected al-Qaeda members, one of whom was an American citizen. [71]

Prior to the 'Underwear Bomber' (as he has come to be known), the conflict in Yemen was primarily viewed as a civil war, and then with the participation of Saudi Arabia, as a regional Arab conflict. In September of 2009, it was reported that while the Yemeni government attempted to subdue a rebel Shi'a army in the north (Houthi), a refugee crisis was emerging, and a wider conflict was erupting, which could "suck the US into another sensitive conflict zone." Many observed that if the US manages to stay out of the war, "the conflict might be subsumed in a regional war by proxy," as in, through Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, further, was accusing Iran of supporting the Shi'a rebels in northern Yemen, with both money and arms, but Saudi Arabia "has produced no hard evidence." From the time the Saudi assault on northern Yemen began in August of 2009, between 25,000 and 100,000 Yemeni refugees were displaced. One top official with the World Food Program (WFP) stated that, "We're not confronted with a humanitarian crisis, it's becoming a humanitarian tragedy." [72]

A member of the International Crisis Group (ICG) said, "that the United States might be forced to intervene as the security situation worsened to prevent Yemen becoming a 'failed state'." Further, "the country has been used as an al-Qaeda base before, and its strategic location between the oil supply routes of the Gulf and the piracy haven of Somalia means its stability is regarded as a key western interest." Thus, said the ICG analyst, "You might well see American advisers, maybe even some special troops, go in for special operations." President Obama declared in September of 2009 that, "the security of Yemen is vital for the security of the United States." [73]

In November of 2009, it was reported that a "delegation of military officers from Yemen arrived in the United States recently" for training, of which the purpose "was to familiarize the Yemeni military officers with formal training programs currently in use by the United States Marine Corps. Support to Yemeni military officer training is likely to increase the effectiveness of [Yemen's] military force." [74] On December 13, 2009, (less than two weeks prior to the "Underwear Bomber" incident), it was reported that, "US special forces have been sent to Yemen to train its army amid fears the unstable Arab state is becoming a strategically important base for al-Qaeda." [75]

It would appear, then, that the "Underwear Bomber" incident arrived just in time for the United States to have an excuse to expand its war in the region. Without the propagandized attempted terrorist attack, the American public would not readily accept America's entry into yet another war. Questions might be asked about the nature of the war, such as the US supporting the government of Yemen in its suppression and oppression of its own people and the autonomous movements developing within Yemen seeking change. Whereas with a

terrorist attack (or attempted, rather), and the convenient link to al-Qaeda, which suddenly was reported to be heavily represented in Yemen, Americans see their involvement in Yemen as a war against al-Qaeda, and a necessary one at that.

Two days after the “Underwear Bomber” incident took place, the New York Times reported that, “in the midst of two unfinished major wars, the United States has quietly opened a third, largely covert front against Al Qaeda in Yemen.” In 2008, “the Central Intelligence Agency sent several of its top field operatives with counterterrorism experience to the country,” and simultaneously, “some of the most secretive Special Operations commandos have begun training Yemeni security forces in counterterrorism tactics.” Further:

The Pentagon is spending more than \$70 million over the next 18 months, and using teams of Special Forces, to train and equip Yemeni military, Interior Ministry and coast guard forces, more than doubling previous military aid levels.[76]

It was even reported that the US had been providing both intelligence and “fire power” to Yemen in its air strikes against “suspected al-Qaeda targets” throughout December, prior to the “Underwear Bomber.”[77] The New York Times did its part to propagandize the al-Qaeda issue by stating that, “al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has rapidly evolved into an expanding and ambitious regional terrorist network thanks in part to a weakened, impoverished and distracted Yemeni government.”[78] Naturally, the British were not far behind in supporting an imperialist campaign to crush indigenous movements for autonomy, directed against western-supported dictators. After all, the British have been doing this for centuries. Roughly one week following the attempted Detroit plane bomber story broke, it was reported that the UK sent counter-terrorist forces to Yemen, where they will train the Yemeni military “and will assist in planning operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.” The British media referred to Yemen as “the ancestral homeland of Osama bin Laden,” and had revealed, perhaps unsurprisingly, that:

Even before the attack, Britain quietly sent a military unit, believed to be about 30-strong and include members of the SAS, to train and mentor Yemeni forces in surveillance and strike operations, intelligence gathering, hostage rescue and interrogation techniques. It is understood that the detachment is being assisted by members of Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service, MI6.[79]

There further seems to be an effort to not only use al-Qaeda to advance US interests in the region, but also to draw a link to Iran, so as to further demonize Iran and even draw it into a regional war.

Pushing for a Proxy War With Iran

Government officials in Yemen had been declaring that the greatest threat to Yemen’s security comes not from al-Qaeda, but Iran, as they blame Iran “for fermenting the Shia rebellion,” and the chairman of Yemen’s national security agency stated that, “there are indeed signs, proof of Iranian interference.” While these allegations are made without any proof, “Western diplomats claim it is probable that Iran is providing money or materiel to the group, as it has to Hizbollah in Lebanon.”[80]

In November of 2009, when Saudi Arabia had stepped up its military campaign in Yemen, the New York Times reported that, “the border skirmish could lead to the realization of Saudi Arabia’s worst fear: a proxy conflict with its archrival, Iran, on its doorstep.” Quoting a

Yemeni professor as saying that the Iran link to the Houthis was “a myth,” the Saudi assault against the Shi’a group could provoke Iran to “turn myth into reality”:

A battle between the Arab world’s leading Sunni power and Shiite Iran, even at one remove, could significantly elevate sectarian tensions across the region. Iran gained tremendous leverage over the Israeli-Palestinian problem by supporting the militant groups Hezbollah, in Lebanon, and Hamas, in Gaza. Helping the Houthis, another guerrilla group with great staying power, could give them a way to put pressure on Saudi Arabia.[81]

However, even as the New York Times acknowledged, the idea that the Houthis are more religiously aligned to Iran than the Arab Gulf nations is a misnomer, as the Houthi religion of Zaydism “is doctrinally closer to Sunnism than to mainstream Shiism.”[82] However, facts take a back seat to war propaganda.

On December 18, 2009, roughly one week before the “Underwear Bomber,” Time Magazine ran an article in which they reported on the claims of Yemen and Saudi Arabia that the Houthis “are receiving their funding, weapons and training from Iran in a bid to destabilize the region.” While acknowledging that there is no evidence of Iranian involvement, the Time article was entitled, “Yemen’s Hidden War: Is Iran Causing Trouble?” and the last sentence in the article wrote, “As for Iran — the only party that doesn’t seem to have any real involvement just yet — the time may soon be ripe to jump in.”[83] The Washington Post carried an article entitled, “Yemen denounces Iran’s ‘interference’,” yet only in the final paragraph of the article did they report, “Yemen has accused Iran of funneling arms and providing financial backing to the rebels, but the Yemeni government has not provided evidence to support the assertions. The rebels have insisted that they receive no support from Iran or any other foreign powers.”[84]

Saudi and Yemeni media and government propaganda presented a view that Iran was extensively involved in the internal conflict in Yemen. Yemen had seized an Iranian ship which it claimed was transporting weapons to Houthi rebels, while Saudi papers reported that the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps was training the Houthi rebels. Another Saudi media outlet “reported that a dozen Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon were killed during battles in October,” and Saudi Arabia placed blame for the conflict on Iran, saying that “the insurgents are working for Tehran and [are] wanting to take their front to the Saudi border.”[85]

While there has been no actual evidence of Iranian involvement put forward, the situation could become a self-fulfilling prophecy of the Saudis and Yemenis, in the sense that the more they accuse Iran of involvement, the more they demonize and publicly lambaste Iran, the more likely it is that Iran will be drawn into the conflict. If they are already the target of a campaign aimed at blaming their alleged involvement for creating the crisis, what do they have to lose from entering the conflict? Thus, Yemen could “possibly become a battleground for a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.” Regardless of whether or not the Iranians are or will be physically involved in the conflict, it has resulted in a war of rhetoric between both Saudi Arabia and Iran, further inflaming tensions between the two nations.[86]

In January of 2010, General David Petraeus, commander of US Forces in the Middle East, said that, “the domestic conflict in Yemen could become a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.” He explained that, “it is not a proxy war now, but has the potential to become one, and there may already have been some movement in that direction.”[87]

There was even a pathetic attempt on the part of the Washington Times to link Iran to al-Qaeda.[88] Obviously, the Washington Times seemed to be blithely unaware of the fact that Iran is a Shi'a dominated state, which is religiously and ideologically opposed to al-Qaeda, which practices a strict Wahhabist Sunni brand of Islam, as propagated and practiced by Saudi Arabia, a major regional antagonist of Iran's. To claim that there would be a link between Iran and al-Qaeda is simply to proclaim one's own ignorance. No wonder then, that Senator John McCain, while on the campaign trail for President in 2008, so often 'proclaimed his ignorance' by several times making the claim that Iran was supporting al-Qaeda.[89]

Could the United States be seeking to foment a wider war in the region? Could the civil war in Yemen be expanded into a proxy-war against Iran? Well, the United States (with the participation of several other NATO partners) fueled the proxy war in the last civil war, where the target was Nasserist Egypt. Could the US simply be employing the same strategy today as they were then, with simply a change of target? To understand this answer, we must look to the direct role played by the United States in the Yemeni civil war.

America Wages War on Yemen

Over a week prior to the "underwear bomber" fiasco, on December 16, 2009, the United States reportedly "perpetrated an appalling massacre against citizens in the north of Yemen as it launched air raids on various populated areas, markets, refugee camps and villages along with Saudi warplane," according to the Houthi fighters. Over 120 people were reported to have been killed in the US bombing.[90] The Houthi rebels have even reported that U.S. fighter jets "have launched 28 attacks on the northwestern province of Sa'ada." [91]

On December 21, 2009, days before the "underwear bomber" pretext, ABC news reported that the US had begun launching cruise missile attacks in Yemen under the authorization of President Obama, and the French media reported on one such strike having massacred "49 civilians, among them 23 children and 17 women." While the air strikes were reportedly undertaken to target al-Qaeda in Yemen, they took place in the south near where some of the leaders of the secessionist movement were reportedly living. These raids had been increasingly taking place, and as the New York Times reported, "the United States provided firepower, intelligence and other support to the government of Yemen as it carried out raids." [92]

Over 2009, the Pentagon supplied the Yemeni military with \$70 million, effectively subsidizing their military (as they do with a plethora of nations worldwide, most notably Colombia, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia), in order for Yemen's military to be more able to crush the secessionist uprising in the South, the rebels in the North, and that pesky al-Qaeda which rears its head in any nation America seeks to conduct military operations in. As Newsweek reported in late December of 2009:

Over the past year U.S. and Yemeni interests have increasingly begun to align as Al Qaeda's presence in the country has grown. "We started seeing a lot of foreign fighters coming in—Saudis, Pakistanis," says one Yemeni diplomatic source. Many of those have arrived (or returned) from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. As they have, the networks of militants have begun to launch quiet, pinpoint strikes on local Yemeni intelligence chiefs—six or seven in the past several months alone. The government's retaliatory raids were launched partly in response to those strikes... Government raids are almost certainly the products of close cooperation with the U.S.—perhaps carried out by CIA-operated

Predator drones launched from nearby Djibouti. A. A. Al-Eryani, a former Yemeni prime minister who advises the current president, says that there is “complete intelligence cooperation” with the U.S. on counterterrorism.[93]

In other words, as the US brought in key Pakistani and Saudi assets (who themselves make up both the financial and operational arms of al-Qaeda), al-Qaeda militants began to emerge and launch strikes against Yemen. Suddenly, then, a pretext for US military involvement in the nation is delivered in the guise of fighting the “War on Terror.” Just as during the Cold War, the threat of ‘Communism’ was used to rally support for suppressing and waging war against national liberation movements all across the world, so now these movements are suppressed and waged war against under the guise of “fighting terror.” An odd ‘irony’ of history, then, that in order to “fight terror,” the West simply spreads it.

On December 29th, 2009, the Australian reported that, “the Americans have quietly opened a third, largely covert front against the al-Qa’ida terror network in Yemen, to combat a new generation of militants keen on transforming the country into a launching pad for jihad against the US, its Arab allies and Israel.” Besides the blatant propagandizing in the opening sentence, the first part reveals the fact of a new ‘secret war’ that America is waging. The article explained that a year previous, “CIA sent many of its top field operatives with counter-terrorism experience to the country, while some of the most secretive US special operations commandos began training Yemeni security forces in counter-terrorism tactics.”[94]

As US Senator Joe Lieberman proclaimed, “Iraq was yesterday’s war. Afghanistan is today’s war. If we don’t act pre-emptively, Yemen will be tomorrow’s war.” Barbara Bodine, the former US Ambassador to Yemen, said that, “I think it would be a major mistake to turn this into a third front, if Iraq and Afghanistan are somehow front number one and number two.” She explained, “If we try to deal with this as an American security problem and dealt with by American military, we risk exacerbating the problem.” She astutely observed the nature of occupational forces when she warned, “If we go in and make this our war ... it is suddenly going to become a war against us and we will lose it.”[95]

The United States took it upon itself to “press” the Yemeni government – a hard-line oppressive dictatorship – to “toughen its approach.”[96] In February of 2010, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates approved “more than doubling U.S. funding to train and equip Yemeni security forces to combat al Qaeda” at a figure of \$150 million, up from \$67 million the previous year. However, “the sum does not include covert U.S. assistance for Yemen, which has quietly increased in recent months.” U.S. CIA Director Leon Panetta, however, raised doubts as to whether Washington can count on Yemen in the long-term to fight al-Qaeda.[97] Covertly, the United States had increased ‘assistance’ to Yemen through U.S. Special Forces, the CIA and the National Security Agency, “sharing satellite and surveillance imagery, intercepted communications and other sensitive information to help Yemen pinpoint strikes against al Qaeda targets,”[98] or at least what are said to be al-Qaeda targets, but usually end up as civilian casualties.

In April of 2010, it was announced that the Pentagon had implemented plans to “boost U.S. military assistance to Yemen’s special operations forces to lead an offensive targeting al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” AQAP, providing roughly \$34 million in “tactical assistance” to Yemen’s special forces. A further \$38 million will provide Yemen with military transport aircraft.[99]

As the United States has dramatically increased CIA drone attacks in Pakistan, killing thousands of innocent civilians,[100] in May of 2010, the United States announced that it had deployed drones to Yemen to target al-Qaeda.[101] In June of 2010, it was leaked that the U.S. “secret war” has expanded globally, as “Special Operations forces have grown both in number and budget, and are deployed in 75 countries, compared with about 60” at the beginning of 2009. As the Washington Post reported:

In addition to units that have spent years in the Philippines and Colombia, teams are operating in Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia... Plans exist for preemptive or retaliatory strikes in numerous places around the world, meant to be put into action when a plot has been identified, or after an attack linked to a specific group... Obama, one senior military official said, has allowed “things that the previous administration did not.”

Special Operations commanders have also become a far more regular presence at the White House than they were under George W. Bush’s administration, when most briefings on potential future operations were run through the Pentagon chain of command and were conducted by the defense secretary or the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“We have a lot more access,” a second military official said. “They are talking publicly much less but they are acting more. They are willing to get aggressive much more quickly.”

... Bush-era clashes between the Defense and State departments over Special Operations deployments have all but ceased. Former defense secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld saw them as an independent force, approving in some countries Special Operations intelligence-gathering missions that were so secret that the U.S. ambassador was not told they were underway. But the close relationship between Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is said to have smoothed out the process... In every place, Special Operations forces activities are coordinated with the U.S. ambassador and are under the operational control of the four-star regional commander.[102]

The British are also involved in supporting the conflict in Yemen. In July of 2010, the head of Yemen’s Special Forces met with a British military delegation, in which “aspects of bilateral military cooperation between Yemen and the UK were discussed in addition to training, and ways to benefit from British military expertise to bolster the military and security capabilities of Yemen’s armed forces.”[103]

In May of 2010, an air strike took place, which was reported to have killed al-Qaeda militants, in “a secret mission by the U.S. military.” However, “the strike, it turned out, had also killed the province’s deputy governor, a respected local leader who Yemeni officials said had been trying to talk al-Qaida members into giving up their fight.”[104] As the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported, “that would be the equivalent of some foreign military force killing the lieutenant governor of an American state in an air strike.” Further, the “U.S. attacks have had no apparent impact on al-Qaida or on anyone else in Yemen, apart from its civilian population who have taken casualties in badly targeted attacks.” Commenting on the fact that US Special Forces operations in Afghanistan, Algeria, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan and Yemen, the reporter asks some important questions:

Why is Mr. Saleh our ally? Why are we killing innocent civilians in the back country of Yemen? Why are we stirring up the kind of trouble that can end up trashing Yemen the way

we have trashed Iraq and Afghanistan? Does anyone believe for one minute that we are any safer for all that we are doing in those 12 countries — probably more — than we would be if we had normal, mutually respectful, mutually helpful relations with them?[105]

The questions are surprising to see being asked in the American media, as the rest of the corporate controlled media outlets simply report (without questioning) the government line, and explain that the U.S. has decided to expand the drone attacks in Yemen, which “would likely be modeled after the CIA’s covert drone campaign in Pakistan,” and that the Obama “administration will mount a more intense targeted killing program in Yemen,” without questioning who they are killing. As Glenn Greenwald of Salon Magazine pointed out:

There is anti-Americanism and radicalism in Yemen; therefore, to solve that problem, we’re going to bomb them more with flying killer robots, because nothing helps reduce anti-American sentiments like slaughtering civilians and dropping cluster bombs from the sky... And it’s therefore unsurprising that the 2009 Nobel Peace laureate [Obama] is rapidly becoming as disliked in the Muslim world as the prior U.S. President: what looks to five Norwegians sitting in Oslo to be a Man of Peace looks much different in the region where his bombs are falling, his hit squads deploying, his war commitments expanding, and his sky robots multiplying.[106]

In September of 2010, it was reported that the Pentagon was considering expanding Yemen’s military ‘assistance’ to \$1.2 billion over the next five years, but don’t worry, “the US is also providing significant development and humanitarian assistance” to Yemen.[107]

The ‘Cleansing’ of a Liberation Movement



A mass protest in Southern Yemen

In September 2010, while the Obama administration’s top counter-terrorism official, John Brennan, was in Yemen for talks with President Saleh, Yemeni security forces “laid siege” to a town in the South, Hawta, “where several dozen Qaeda militants were said to be holed up,” which led to thousands of civilians being forced to flee, while the military, as the New York Times reported, “was intermittently shelling the town with tanks and artillery and firing on the jihadists from attack helicopters.” As the article explained:

Hawta, in southern Yemen's mountainous Shabwa Province, is at the heart of the remote area east and south of the capital where Al Qaeda's regional arm has sought sanctuary. It is also just to the north of a major new liquid natural gas pipeline — a crucial resource in a country that is rapidly running out of oil and water — and Yemeni officials have voiced concern about the possibility that jihadists could rupture the line.[108]

In other words, the Yemeni government, under intense pressure and support from the United States, is laying siege to a town in the South – in the midst of a massive and growing secessionist movement – which represents the greatest threat to the stability of the staunch U.S.-ally, and which also happens to be home to natural gas reserves. But we are told that the siege is a fight against 'al-Qaeda'. Meanwhile, civilians were being killed, and one fleeing family said that, "the troops did not spare any one from their fire over the past two days." [109] The reality of what is going on in the village is "hard to know," as NPR points out, "because the government is banning any independent observers from going in there." As a reporter with NPR explained:

In fact, what the locals are saying is that this is a blood feud against the government. And that, in fact, these are local or armed tribesmen [i.e., Islamist forces such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – AQAP] that are sort of fighting with the government. And that this is more about fighting or subduing the secessionist movement than it is about al-Qaida... The government says about 2,000 people have fled. But actually, the Yemen Red Crescent and other aid groups that have had some contact with the people on the ground there put the numbers much higher. They say about 12,000. And that would be about three-quarters of the town emptying out and running away.

And this has created a real problem, because this is a very poor area. And so the other villages in the area cannot really accommodate or absorb these refugees. And so, you have a lot of people, now, living outdoors without any water, food or tents or any sort of medical, 'cause one can assume that there are probably injuries, if not deaths. So it's become a real humanitarian crisis.[110]

Yemen's government is not new to media censorship and obfuscation, as there have been "dozens of extralegal abductions, politicised trials, illegal confiscations, writing bans, and censorship over the years. What's particularly alarming is a recent legislative push to erect an elaborate legal facade to obscure repressive tactics." The government is also attempting to pass "a repressive bill designed to regulate television, radio and online media. If passed, these changes would significantly reduce an already narrow margin for free expression." The government has even arrested, tortured and tried critical journalists as "supporting al-Qaeda" with absolutely no evidence.[111]

The "Friends" of Yemen: 'Democratic Imperialism' and NGOs as Modern Missionaries

In January of 2010, a group of nations and organizations met in London to form the "Friends of Yemen," which includes the United States, U.K., 20 other countries, as well as the UN, EU, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Arab League, World Bank and IMF. The purpose of the group was to coordinate foreign aid to Yemen, so that it coincides with military, economic and civil assistance aid programs, including forcing Yemen to cooperate with the conditions set by the IMF in order to receive foreign aid. The overall aid would be used to combat what the 'Friends' refer to as "appalling indicators," which include "a growing population, dwindling oil reserves, water shortages and political instability as the government battles Houthi insurgents in the north and secessionists in the south." [112]

In September of 2010, the Friends of Yemen met in New York to organize a plan for Yemen's foreign aid. As part of the package, Yemen has been forced to accept an IMF plan to increase taxes by 10% and to eliminate fuel subsidies.[113] At the meeting in New York, the UN reported that there are "168,000 Somali refugees in Yemen, as well as 304,000 Yemeni civilians who continue to be displaced by the seven-month conflict between government forces and Houthis rebels which ended with a shaky truce in February." [114] The 'Friends' further encouraged "progress in the negotiations towards Yemen's accession to the World Trade Organisation, which they hoped would be concluded by the end of 2010," and while acknowledging that the proposed economic reforms would have an "adverse impact on the poor," the Friends thus "committed to provide additional support for social protection," as well as supporting the formation of national multi-party elections.[115]

At the 'Friends' meeting, the United States vowed to commit \$67 million for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), "to work in partnership with communities to directly address local needs. This includes health, education, and water projects; mobile health and veterinary clinics; and support for increasing the capacity of local governments to deliver essential services." Further plans include funneling millions of dollars through NGOs aimed at providing social services and 'poverty alleviation' programs.[116]

While sounding very pleasant and helpful, we must place the concept of promoting 'democratization' and the spread of NGOs in their proper geopolitical context. The fact that NGOs, 'democratization', economic programs under the direction of the IMF, and military assistance from the West are taking place at the same time is very significant, and not as contradictory as it might seem.

In Africa, the IMF and World Bank's "Structural Adjustment Programs" that deconstructed society to service illegitimate debts to Western banks had the effect of spreading poverty and effectively induced "social genocide." The national leaders became very rich, creating a tiny elite which was subservient to Western imperial interests. Western nations would arm the nation and use it as a proxy force in the region when necessary or help it in the oppression of its own people, in order to ensure the stability of their interests. The people of these various nations would protest, demonstrate, riot and rebel, so much so that between 1976 and 1992, there were 146 protests against IMF 'austerity measures' in 39 countries around the world.[117] Governments, in response, would generally resort to violence to suppress these demonstrations, with "strikes declared illegal, universities were closed, and trade unions, student organizations, popular organizations and political parties also became the target of repressive legislation or actions." [118] This essentially created a "crisis of legitimacy," where the economic 'reforms' were seen as destructive, where the political process was seen as corrupt, where the state oppressed and foreigners profited, while the people suffered. It didn't help the situation that it was often authoritarian governments introducing these economic reforms.[119]

In 1989, the World Bank concluded that the reason for the failure of 'structural adjustment' across Africa was not due to the destructive poverty-inducing nature of the reforms, but was do to the corrupt governments implementing them. Thus, it was a "crisis of governance." [120] The solution, in this sense, was to promote 'democratization', as in, a neoliberal concept of democracy. Africa had been experiencing a growth of democratic movements around the continent during the time of Structural Adjustment, which led the IFIs (International Financial Institutions) and Western nations to conclude that democratization and economic liberalization go hand-in-hand. In short, Structural

Adjustment is 'inherently' democratic. The failure of this analysis was quite obvious: the pro-democracy movements that had arisen across Africa "reflect, to a significant extent, a popular reaction against the socially painful effects of structural adjustment." [121]

The 'democratization' movement is largely an effort to maintain 'stability' in the hegemony of the IMF/World Bank and Western interests over Africa and other regions, as instead of rotating from one coup to another, there is a parliamentary democracy where you go from one party to another (who all accept the dominance of the West and the 'advice' of the IFIs), which produces a more 'stable' environment for Western interests, as it also has the effect of pacifying popular opposition under the guise of promoting democratic accountability. However, these are not true democracies (nor are those in the West), where you simply vote between competing factions of elites who are collectively co-opted by the same international financial elites. They impose the institutions of democracy (legislatures, political parties, judiciaries) "without combining political democracy and social reform." Thus, these democracies are essentially stillborn (dead before they even exited), as "formal democracy without social reform increases economic inequality and thereby intensifies unequal distribution of power in society." [122] As Noam Chomsky has argued, "the guardians of world order have sought to establish democracy in one sense of the term, while blocking it in a different sense." He argued that "power holders use democracy as justification for their power and as an ideological instrument for keeping the public quiescent and out of decision-making processes." [123]

Alison Ayers analyzes 'democratization' as a multi-faceted approach in Africa, entailing: multiparty elections, constitutionalism, the rule of law, a "particular conception of human rights," 'good governance', and an "independent civil society." [124] Multiparty elections comprise an occasional election in which people choose between competing factions of elites, while constitutionalism implies establishing a "set of rules securing property rights, governing civil and commercial behaviour, and limiting the power of the state." [125] In promoting 'multiparty systems', "the dominant agents of the democratization project have established a veritable 'elections industry' comprising voter and civic education campaigns, party-building activities, and electoral assistance and monitoring." [126] The "engineering of civil society" has taken on an explicitly neo-liberal form, in which it focuses on the "liberation of civil society" from the state, and of which NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have come to play a decisive role. Western aid agencies heavily finance international and local NGOs (thus often negating the notion that they are non-governmental), with the World Bank exponentially increasing its support of NGOs (often through governments). [127]

In fact, NGOs have come to play a pivotal role in the modern imperial project, as they have been co-opted into a program of "welfare provision, a social initiative that could be more accurately described as a programme of social control." [128] The NGOs were used to respond to the social upheaval brought about by the age of 'Structural Adjustment', to provide a degree of social services that were formerly provided by the state. Thus, as the spread of Structural Adjustment increased throughout Africa, so too did the spread of Western NGOs. Western nations heavily support these supposed non-governmental organizations, with the U.S. transferring nearly 40 percent of its aid through NGOs. [129] They have become an essential aspect of the 'development' agenda in Africa, itself based upon a colonial mindset. Whereas in the formal colonial period at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, Africans were considered "uncivilized," and so colonialism in Africa was not about oppression and economic exploitation, but was rather a 'civilizing

mission.’ Today, Africa is not ‘uncivilized’ but rather, ‘undeveloped’, and so, just as the missionaries of the formal colonial period played a role in ‘civilizing’ Africa – in the vision of the West (akin to how God created man in ‘his own image’) – the NGOs of the new imperial era have come to Africa in a ‘developing mission’. The ‘development’ paradigm had the effect of sterilizing popular opposition, as it framed the problem in Africa not as one of ‘emancipation’ (from colonial and oppressive powers), but as a problem of ‘poverty’ and ‘basic needs’.[130] The role of NGOs in ‘development’:

Represents a continuity of the work of their precursors, the missionaries and voluntary organizations that cooperate in Europe’s colonization and control of Africa. Today their work contributes marginally to the relief of poverty, but significantly to undermining the struggle of African people to emancipate themselves from economic, social and political oppression.[131]

There are further concerns to take into account in regards to ‘democratization’ and ‘aid’ through NGOs, not simply in the establishment of a system of lobotomizing resistance – preventing emancipation – and promoting the legitimization of the status quo powers (by treating the symptoms of poverty and oppression rather than the causes), but NGOs and ‘democratization’ often play a very covert role in imperialism, particularly through USAID (United States Agency for International Development) as well as a host of so-called Non-Governmental Organizations (which happen to be funded by the government), such as the National Endowment for Democracy. These organizations are effectively able to organize opposition to a national ruler, create a parallel media system, provide activist training and funding to covertly orchestrate a “soft power” coup, in which it is seen as a “democratic revolution” or a “peaceful revolution,” often following contested elections. This is done to create the illusion that these are popular people’s movements elevating leaders of “change”, but which simply are leaders that are subservient to Western imperial interests. Often, the CIA itself operates through such agencies covertly.

In South Vietnam for example, USAID provided cover for the CIA so extensively, “that the two became almost synonymous.”[132] In the 1980s, during the largest CIA covert operation in history, funding the Afghan Mujahideen to fight the Soviet Union, the CIA and USAID worked very closely, coordinating their efforts, as “the United States spent millions of dollars to supply Afghan schoolchildren with textbooks filled with violent images and militant Islamic teachings, part of covert attempts to spur resistance to the Soviet occupation.” The textbooks, made in America at the University of Nebraska with tens of millions of dollars of financing from USAID, taught children “to count with illustrations showing tanks, missiles and land mines,” and while USAID dropped funding for the program in 1994, the books continued in circulation, even after the Taliban came to power in 1996, and “private humanitarian groups paid for continued re-printings during the Taliban years. Today, the books remain widely available in schools and shops.”[133] The entire program was coordinated with the CIA.[134]

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is another particularly covert imperial force, a NGO that gets all it’s funding from the US government, and about which U.S. Congressman Ron Paul explained eloquently:

The misnamed National Endowment for Democracy is nothing more than a costly program that takes US taxpayer funds to promote favored politicians and political parties abroad. What the NED does in foreign countries ... would be rightly illegal in the United States. The NED injects ‘soft money’ into the domestic elections of foreign countries in favor of one

party or the other.

Imagine what a couple of hundred thousand dollars will do to assist a politician or political party in a relatively poor country abroad. It is particularly Orwellian to call US manipulation of foreign elections 'promoting democracy.' How would Americans feel if the Chinese arrived with millions of dollars to support certain candidates deemed friendly to China? Would this be viewed as a democratic development?[135]

The NED and a host of other NGOs (backed by government funding), as well as private foundations, have implemented a "soft power" approach to implementing "democratic regime change" in countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, often aimed at replacing former Western puppet leaders with new puppet leaders to better promote imperial interests in the nations where they take place. This has occurred in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and many other countries.[136] An effort was undertaken to impose a similar "democratic regime change" with the CIA funneling \$400 million for implementing this "soft power" strategy in Iran, resulting in the Iranian elections protests in the summer of 2009. While the strategy failed in its aims of "regime change" it mounted an incredibly successful international propaganda campaign, so much so that the world was lashing out against Iran for what the West claimed were fraudulent elections (but turned out to be free and fair elections), and at the same time, the Western media failed to cover a successful military coup in Honduras, in which the democratically elected President was kidnapped and sent to a foreign country, while the subsequent dictatorship brutally repressed people's protests and demonstrations, with the new regime all the while being supported by the United States.[137]

From this we can see that the "Friends of Yemen" promoting democratization and "good governance" in Yemen serves Western imperial ambitions. In the very least, it is designed to stifle and ultimately lobotomize organic, indigenous liberation, self-determination, and autonomy movements, while the same Western nations militarily arm and support the oppressive government in its repression of these people. It seems that for the time being, America has chosen to support the current Yemeni dictatorship, propping it up to crush its own people and their struggles for liberation. Simultaneously, America and the West are preparing themselves for a long-term strategy of "democratization," in which they may have to replace Saleh and the current regime with a new client regime to secure American interests and hegemony in the region.

In this context we may view the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a program of the U.S. State Department aimed at supporting "reforms" in the Middle East and North Africa, in which they support international and local NGOs, educational institutions, local governments and private businesses to implement projects designed to directly engage and invest in the people of the region. MEPI has completed roughly 28 programs in Yemen alone, with roughly seven grants ongoing, aimed at organizing journalists, 'human rights' activists, improving the Parliamentary process, improving political participation, promoting women's 'empowerment', and "raising democratic awareness." [138]

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is also active in Yemen, funding and running programs aimed at promoting "civic and human rights awareness," facilitating "the free flow of independent news information to Yemenis on issues related to social, political, and economic growth of the country and to build the capacity of journalists to effectively monitor and report on human rights issues," as well as identifying "the political needs and concerns of women, and to push political parties to adopt women's issues in their party platforms."

One program of the NED includes nearly \$200,000 of funding for the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). According to their website, CIPE “strengthens democracy around the globe through private enterprise and market-oriented reform. CIPE is one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy,” and is also an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.[139] The \$184,000 grant to CIPE from the NED is to “facilitate access to information and analysis about economic reform,” which will include producing “thirty 20-30 minute radio programs on economic reform in Yemen and sponsor economic reform pages in two independent newspapers,” in order to “empower Yemenis to participate in the democratic and economic reform process.”[140] However, considering the group promotes “private enterprise” and is affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the “information and analysis” about economic reform is more likely to be misinformation and propaganda. In total, the NED is operating roughly 13 programs in Yemen at the moment.[141]

USAID’s programs in Yemen aim at taking the “missionary position” in addressing some of the symptoms of conflict, deprivation, disenfranchisement, and oppression, without allowing the people to seek emancipation and liberation. These programs includes a “new three-year Responsive Governance Project [which] aims to strengthen government institutions, support reforms including decentralization, and improve the delivery of public services while encouraging more citizen participation in the political process,” as well as “the Community Livelihoods Project that is focusing on improving agriculture and increasing employment opportunities in highly vulnerable communities, especially for youth.” Other programs aim at promoting education, health care, and ‘peace and security.’[142]

So, while the U.S. government uses the IMF to wreck the economy of Yemen, spreading poverty and dismantling health care, social services and education; the U.S. simultaneously funds and arms the Yemeni dictatorship to repress the people rising up against their economic, social and political conditions; yet, again simultaneously, the United States – through USAID and various other “democratization” programs – aims to alleviate some of the social repercussions to maintain stability of their interests. Imperialism has an economic facet (the IMF), a political facet (military-intelligence support), and a social facet (NGOs and ‘democratization’).

Thus we also see the significance in that while the CIA expands its operations in Yemen (in support of the dictatorship), the current CIA Director holds doubts about “whether Washington can count on Yemen in the long-term to fight al Qaeda, citing internal unrest that threatens to destabilize the government and break up the country, along with growing anti-American sentiment.”[143] This is made all the more interesting to take into account that the CIA Director announced that the CIA will be expanding its use of under-cover assets through a variety of unofficial organizations – such as corporations or other organizations.[144]

War, Empire, and “Perception Management”: Propaganda Creates ‘Cultural Schizophrenia’

So who exactly is the US supporting in Yemen? Ali Abdullah Saleh has been in power since 1978, first ruling North Yemen, and subsequently ruling all of Yemen. Saleh has managed to remain the ruler of a ‘united’ Yemen by “clamping down on the press, concentrating military and economic power in the hands of friends and family and winning elections by suspiciously high margins.” Time Magazine reported that Saleh described ruling Yemen as “dancing on the heads of snakes.” Saleh, however, can hardly act as if he rules a ‘united’ Yemen, when “two-thirds of the country is in the hands of either separatist groups or local

tribes.” Further:

Yemen’s most volatile regions are among those hardest hit by drought and government neglect — are at the heart of most of those conflicts, especially the war between the government and Shi’ite rebels, known as Houthis, that is being waged in the northern province of Sa’ada.[145]

The significance of this piece of information, located in the Time article, which was otherwise propagandistic of the “fight against al-Qaeda,” is that it acknowledges that the key to Yemen’s issues today is the legitimacy of the central government’s rule over the people of Yemen. The essential issue is that this is about people’s rights to govern themselves, to not be oppressed, not be murdered, nor economically devoured by international capital and national industrial interests. Our nations and our media call these people “terrorists”; our intelligence agencies sponsor ‘terrorists’ in these nations, who kill these people, and then we use that as an excuse to send in the military to kill more of these people. We support an illegitimate government, an oppressive and brutal dictator who vowed to crack down with an “iron fist” in August of 2009. His subsequent “iron fist” created “a humanitarian tragedy,” where by September over 25,000 people had become refugees,[146] by October 2009, over 55,000 people fled their homes due to the conflict.[147] These are the people the West is helping the Yemeni dictator kill. And not only him, but Saudi Arabia is helping, as are Pakistan and Jordan, three other nations subservient to American interests, and whose militaries are ‘American made’. Saudi Arabia especially, as it seeks to prevent the spread of the Shi’a resistance, which to the illegitimate state of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, combined with several other resistant and oppressed groups, could create the political, economic and social conditions for revolution. No wonder then, that the United States is planning to undertake the largest arms deal in American history with Saudi Arabia, valued at \$60 billion, which “is aimed at establishing air superiority over rival Iran while also addressing weaknesses bared in border fighting with Yemeni rebels.”[148]

A state seeks only its own survival and growth in power; that is the nature of all states. This is why nation-states are naturally inclined to forgo competition for power with the economic sphere, and simply merge interests and elite social structures. It is in their interest for both survival and growth in power.

Our oppressive and illegitimate nation-states seek to aid in the oppression of other peoples in other places, and increasingly so at home. However, it is through the media that this massive collective wave of ignorance and ‘cultural schizophrenia’ takes place. This is why most in the west see the world, blissfully unaware of its realities. The media leads the people through that old wardrobe into the land of Narnia: the media’s ‘perception management’ of the world is nothing but a ‘fantasy’. A good example of this ‘fantasy world’ is located in a Time Magazine article. It wrote:

On Dec. 17 and 24, joint Yemeni-U.S. strikes against purported AQAP [Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula] training camps took place and killed more than 60 militants, U.S. intelligence officials claimed.[149]

The attack, in reality, killed 52 people, more than half of them being women and children, in which a US missile armed with cluster ammunition was used, with both the Yemeni and American governments claiming the target was an al-Qaeda training camp. The cruise missile was designed to be fired from a warship or submarine, and was filled with “cluster

munitions which spray steel fragments for 150 meters along with burning zirconium for igniting buildings.” However, “the Yemeni government does not possess cruise missiles, which are part of the arsenal of US Navy vessels patrolling off the Horn of Africa and in the Arabian Sea.”[150] The missiles were “launched on direct presidential orders.”[151]

Our governments kill these people and call them “militants” and “terrorists,” our media repeat the accusation with no dissent. War is like no other situation that can lead to the growth of the state. War is the ultimate organizing principle in society, for with war powers, a nation can build, destroy, grow, oppress, control, expand, consume, corrupt and continue. As this power grows, so too does the power of all the other various major spheres of influence over humanity, such as the media and the academics. We can add to that the scientific and technological elite, who help to create the conditions, understanding, technology, and means of expanding power and controlling the masses so that today we have unmanned aerial vehicles called “Predator Drones” flying over Yemen killing innocent civilians, while the drones are operated from American military bases in Florida. America has been doing the exact same thing in Pakistan at a much more significant rate and for a much longer period of time (and most rapidly accelerated under the Obama administration of ‘change’).

This ‘invisible empire’ is managed through ‘perception management’ – propaganda – which infects all spheres of social power structures, but which is arguably most prominent and powerful in the media. This creates among western citizens, and most particularly among Americans, a type of ‘cultural schizophrenia’ in which the ‘mind of the nation’ (how the majority of people view their nation and their world) is so contrary to the reality of that nation and the world around it, that it creates a nation or a people ‘of two minds’, holding both the fantasy world of those who encompass it, and the hard-bitten reality of global power structures and systems.

This ‘cultural schizophrenia’ is most emblematic in the United States, where the majority of those within it view it as a force for good in the world, spreading freedom, democracy and ‘free markets’ around the world; while the reality is so different, that the majority of the rest of the world view the United States as a force for spreading fear, war, economic exploitation and power. This is the view, especially, of those to whom the United States has attempted to spread “freedom and democracy.”

This has slightly changed in the context of the “war on terror”, which has allowed for flowery rhetoric about democratic rights and liberty to subside beside the urgency of “fighting terror.” Around the world, people were rejecting the “liberal democratic” project in replacing the dictatorships of the 70s – 90s with [neo]liberal democratic governments, which were democratic only so much as they created political powers and held usually corrupt elections in which various power factions would compete for the authority to plunder the nation in cooperation with international corporations, financial institutions and western governments. Democracy in the ‘Third World’ had essentially proven itself a farce, and people’s movements were increasing. The “war on terror” has subsequently fiercely mobilized the American military (and its NATO cohorts), vastly increased its scope, operations, abilities and entanglements; and created the political conditions for the nation to rapidly accelerate the use of its military apparatus around the world, something which the American people would not support without what is perceived to be a good reason. After all, they will largely be the ones forced to fight and partake in these wars.

And so we come back to Yemen. As Martin Luther King said in 1967, *“We are on the wrong*

side of a world revolution."

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