

THE EMERGENCE AND ASCENDANCY OF YEMEN'S HOUTHIS



NEAR EAST
INSTITUTE



Abdullah Alkatheri

Near East Institute Reports No: 01/2024

THE EMERGENCE AND ASCENDANCY OF YEMEN'S HOUTHIS

Abdullah Alkatheri

The opinions expressed in this report are the author's own and do not reflect the view of the Near East Institute.

Report 1/2024

Near East Institute (NEI)
Yakın Doğu Enstitüsü (YDE)

NEI Reports
1/2024



Copyright @ Near East University 2024

All rights reserved.

First Edition

Library Catalogue Information

The Emergence and Ascendancy
of Yemen's Houthis
Report
Near East Institute Publications
Near East University Press, Nicosia/TRNC
Tel: 0392 680 2000 - 321.

Near East Institute
Yakın Doğu Enstitüsü (YDE)
İktisadî ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, 4. Kat
Yakın Doğu Bulvarı PK/99138
Lefkoşa/KKTC
Tel: 0392 680 2000 -532.
<http://yde.neu.edu.tr/>

THE EMERGENCE AND ASCENDANCY OF YEMEN'S HOUTHIS

Abstract:

This report explores the ideological orientation and political role of the Houthi movement, tracing its rise from a small local group in Sa'dah in the early 1990s to a dominant force controlling much of Yemen's population and around a third of its territory. Over the years, the Houthis have expanded their influence significantly, benefiting from Yemen's fragile political landscape and deep-rooted structural weaknesses. Their ascent has been marked by the country's gradual descent into conflict, culminating in the outbreak of civil war in 2014 when the group seized power in the capital, Sana'a.

Even before this turning point, Yemen had long been grappling with political instability, economic decline, stalled development, and widespread corruption. The state's failure to enforce the rule of law and maintain a monopoly on violence eventually led to its designation as a 'failed state'—a label that, while formalised after 2014, had been foreshadowed by years of fragility and dysfunction. Divisions across ideological, tribal, sectarian, and elite lines have only deepened over time, fuelling a protracted conflict that has proved highly resistant to resolution. Despite repeated efforts to convene inclusive dialogues, no political settlement has succeeded in uniting the country or satisfying all major actors.

The report examines the internal and external factors that have contributed to the Houthis' rise, including the nature of governance in Yemen and the obstacles to state-building. It analyses the group's ideological compass and evolving political strategy, and situates their role within the broader context of the Saudi-Iranian rivalry. Finally, it considers the Houthis' recent actions in relation to the Gaza war and their growing regional assertiveness, offering insights into how the Yemeni conflict is increasingly intertwined with wider geopolitical tensions.

Keywords: Yemen, Houthi, civil war, Saudi Arabia, Iran

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Imperial history of Yemen and the Zaydi Imams.....	2
Proclamation of the Independent Republic	5
Unification process and the post-unification era	7
The Houthis	15
<i>The March towards Sana'a</i>	17
<i>A key actor in the Saudi-Iranian power struggle</i>	21
<i>Growing strategic importance in the Red Sea and beyond</i>	26
Summary and Outlook	31
REFERENCES	32

THE EMERGENCE AND ASCENDANCY OF YEMEN'S HOUTHIS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to examine the Houthi ideology, their rise to power, and the development of their movement in connection with Yemeni political governance. It will therefore offer historical insight into Yemeni political governance and analyze the political condition through various facets, including ideologies, political parties and movements, the roles of ruling elites, and tribal relations—thus emphasizing the contributing factors that led to the emergence and rise of the Houthi group. It will also address the Houthis' involvement in the balance of power between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as their increasing regional influence.

The country has been frequently turbulent due to decades of struggle for power and resources. Most of Yemen's presidents ended their rule either by fleeing as a result of conflict or through assassination. This is in addition to ongoing disputes—whether internal, between the two Yemeni states before the 1990 unification, or with neighboring countries. While the Yemeni uprising initially brought hope for change in governance and the possibility of improving the political and economic situation, it also created a rift in the security structure. Soon after, conflicts erupted between various parties vying to preemptively secure power and interests.

A period of reconciliation followed, aimed at resolving the long-standing issues inherited by the Yemeni state and establishing comprehensive peace through dialogue. However, these efforts failed due to stakeholders' rejection of both the process and its outcomes. The Houthis' capture of Sana'a in 2014 hindered any remaining prospects for peace talks. Since then, Yemen has entered a spiral of conflict that has fractured the country and caused the Yemeni people's hopes and expectations to evaporate.

The Houthis managed to develop their relationship with Iran, which has helped them sustain their rule in Yemen and expand their sphere of influence—serving Iran's strategic interests. Saudi Arabia, for its part, has pursued a foreign policy aimed at maintaining a balance of power with Iran. It has directly intervened and created a military coalition to counter the Houthi insurgency in Yemen.

The report aims to examine the Houthis and their ascendancy in relation to the domestic governance conditions of the Yemeni state. It also explores the power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which has positioned the group as an important player in the region—one capable of posing significant challenges. The first part of the report provides a historical overview of the contributing factors that led to the weakness of the Yemeni state and paved the way for the Houthi capture of Sana'a. This includes a section which covers the rule of the Zaydi Shiite Imams in northern Yemen, the influence of imperial powers, ideological differences, and the power struggles that contributed to the state's fragility. The second part then focuses on the Houthi group's ideology and emergence. It examines how they began to engage in armed conflict with the Yemeni government and their rise following the seizure of Sana'a in 2014. This discussion also explores the Houthis' role in the context of the Saudi-Iranian power struggle. Finally, the report offers an analysis of their expanding capabilities and their impact on current regional events. It highlights how the Houthis' growing military strength and strategic alliances, particularly with Iran, have enabled them to influence key geopolitical dynamics. This rise not only challenges existing regional powers but also raises concerns about the potential for a wider conflict if left unchecked.

Imperial History of Yemen and the Zaydi Imams

Yemen has long been a contested region, attracting the interests of various imperial powers over the past few centuries. In the early 20th century, both the Ottoman Empire and the British had a foothold in the region and controlled most of the geographical territory. Each of these powers had their own motives justifying their presence in Yemeni lands. Given Yemen's strategic location in the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula, with access to the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, British colonial interests focused on securing trade routes from India to the West and exploiting the region's fine ports.¹ The British entered Yemen in 1839, taking control of the city of Aden, which at the time was administered as part of British India. A century

¹ Bab al-Mandab is a geographically strategic chokepoint located between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa in the Red Sea. It holds critical importance as it controls nearly all maritime trade passing between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal.

later, in 1937, Aden became a colony under the British Crown. Similarly, the Ottomans took control of the city of Hudaydah, which hosts a port overlooking the Red Sea. Their aim was to secure their legitimate rule by safeguarding the Arabian Peninsula from the south. This included preventing any claims to the *Caliphate* by the Zaydi Imams and hindering potential British expansion.² Both imperial powers played a role in creating divisions that persisted even after Yemen gained independence. For instance, the boundary negotiated in the early 20th century and ratified in 1914—known as the 'Violet Line'—delineated the territorial control of the Ottoman and British empires, establishing their respective spheres of influence in Yemen. This contributed to territorial fragmentation and laid the groundwork for the emergence of two hostile Yemeni republics.³

Despite the imperial presence, local government systems—mainly monarchies based on sectarian and tribal affiliations—existed in both the northern and southern parts of Yemen. In Northern Yemen, Zaydi Imams, followers of *Zaydism*, governed for over a thousand years through a theocratic system in which they served as both spiritual and political leaders. However, their authority was gradually challenged by the expanding influence of the Ottoman Empire.⁴ The Ottomans reconquered Yemen in 1872 and took control of the capital city, Sana'a. This significantly reduced the Imam's role and stripped him of much of his power, including the authority to appoint and dismiss judges and his influence over the tribesmen.⁵ In 1904, Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamid al-Din succeeded his

² Caliphate is an Arabic word that refers to the Islamic state, and the ruler is known as the Caliph, which means successor. Abu Baker was the first Caliph, succeeding Prophet Mohammed PBUH in 632. There is a division among the major Islamic denominations over the Caliph. While Sunnis believe he should be chosen by Muslims or their representatives. Shiites, on the other hand, assert that a Caliph should be an Imam chosen by God from the Ahl Al-Bayt (the Prophet's household). The Caliphate lasted until 661, when the fifth Caliph, Al-Hasan bin Ali (Grandson of the Prophet), abdicated rule to Mu'awiya in order to prevent bloodshed after the last demanded the Caliphate. The Islamic state continued in dynastic based hereditary, with the Umayyad and several other dynasties succeeding each other in claiming the Caliphate until finally the Ottomans before it collapsed and the Caliph title was abolished in 1923 in Turkey.

³ Dresch, Paul. *A History of Modern Yemen*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

⁴ Zaydism is a branch of Shiite Islam that predominantly exists in northern Yemen. It is regarded as moderate and the closest to Sunni among the other Shiite sects.

⁵ Yaccob, Abdol Rauh. "Yemeni Opposition to Ottoman Rule: An Overview." *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, Vol. 42, 2012, pp. 411-419.

father and ascended to power. The following year, with the support of tribal forces, he was able to besiege Sana'a and compel the Ottomans to abandon the city. Rather than confronting the Imam militarily, the Ottoman administration recognized that a different approach was necessary. Consultations began, but they failed to reach an agreement. The Ottomans were concerned that the Imam might lay claim to the *Caliphate* and pursue broader political ambitions. To prevent the Imam from advancing to a point that would threaten their authority, the Ottoman administration concluded that reaching an agreement was essential—not only to preserve their influence in the region but also to win him over as an ally.⁶

It was not until 1911 that the Ottomans reached an agreement with Imam Yahya, following the signing of the Treaty of Da'an. The agreement restored



many of the Imam's powers that existed before Ottoman troops entered Sana'a. It acknowledged the Imam as a spiritual and temporal leader and gave the Imam the ability to appoint and dismiss governors and judges in the Zaydi territories, control taxation, and receive subsidies from the Ottoman government.⁷ With the Treaty of Da'an, the Ottomans maintained that the Imam could not have administrative authority over non-Zaydis and that his authority would be under Ottoman

sovereignty.⁸ After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Imam Yahya declared the Mutawakkilite Kingdom and extended his authority over the whole of Yemen excluding the Aden Protectorate, which was under

⁶ Kühn, Thomas. "Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1919." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2007, pp. 315-331.

⁷ Barrett, Roby Carol. Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm in Context. *JSOU Press*, 2011.

⁸ Kühn, 2007, *op.cit.*

British control.⁹ His plan to acquire the remaining territories and unify Yemen under his control was based on the claim of a 'greater Yemen'.¹⁰

Tribes have always played an essential role in shaping and maintaining Yemen's political landscape. Imam Yahya, followed by his son Ahmed, consolidated their power by applying a policy of reward and punishment with the tribes to ensure their compliance—providing financial stipends to tribal leaders or taking the relatives of rebellious leaders as hostages.¹¹ Another method implemented by the Imamate was 'divide and rule', aimed at keeping the tribes relatively weak and preventing them from posing a threat to their authority.¹² However, alongside the tribal-based social authority network, Sunni Muslims Muhammad Mahmud al-Zubayri and Ahmad Muhammad Numan—students in Egypt influenced by Arab nationalist and Muslim Brotherhood ideologies—led the Free Yemeni Movement (FYM) in opposition to the Imam and called for the establishment of a republic. Their opposition to the Imamate regime stemmed from the traditional theocratic state's rejection of 'modernity'.¹³

Proclamation of the independent Republic

The 1960s were characterized by ideological struggle, political unrest, and the proclamation of republics in both the northern and southern parts of Yemen. Similar to what happened in Egypt, a group of "Free Officers" led by Abdullah al-Sallal overthrew the theocratic-monarchical Imamate in the north and formed the Yemen Arab Republic in 1962. Consequently, a civil war broke out between the nationalist (Republican) forces and the Royalists, who supported Imam Muhammad al-Badr. The civil war lasted for eight years and became a proxy conflict for regional actors. Following the dissolution of the United Arab Republic—the political union between Egypt and Syria that lasted from 1958 to 1961—Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser sought to restore his image as an Arab nationalist leader. To achieve this, he dispatched 70,000 soldiers to Yemen to support the nationalists. On

⁹ al-Abdin, A. Z. "The Free Yemeni Movement (1940–48) and Its Ideas on Reform." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1979, pp. 36-48.

¹⁰ Dresch, 2000, *op.cit.*

¹¹ Manea, Elham M. "Yemen, the Tribe and the State." *International Colloquium on Islam and Social Change, University of Lausanne*, 1996, pp. 1-12.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ al-Abdin, 1979, *op.cit.*

the side, despite their hostile history and previous territorial dispute over Asir, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia backed Imam Muhammad al-Badr.¹⁴ The decision was prompted by Egypt's support of the Republican forces, which posed a threat to the Saudi monarchical regime. The war concluded with the withdrawal of Egyptian troops and the recognition of the Yemen Arab Republic by the Saudi Kingdom—thus marking the end of the theocratic rule of the Zaydi Imams, which had endured for ten centuries, and the reign of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom, established in 1918.

The political situation in the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) remained unstable during the 1970s. Two presidents—Ibrahim al-Hamdi and Ahmad al-Ghashmi—were assassinated within less than a year, in October 1977 and June 1978, respectively. Ali Abdullah Saleh became president after being chosen by the constitutional assembly following al-Ghashmi's assassination. However, he faced legitimacy issues due to allegations of his involvement in former President al-Hamdi's death.¹⁵ Yet, he depended on his Sanhan clan and favored his close relatives for key government posts, to assert security control and eradicate opposition.

Meanwhile, in the south, the British authorities formed the Federation of South Arabian Emirates in 1959, initially with six sheikhdoms and sultanates; three years later, nine others joined. The remaining tribal states formed what became known as the Protectorate of South Yemen. However, nationalist groups such as the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) rebelled against both the British protectorates and the Federation of South Arabia. These tribal states collapsed following the withdrawal of British forces from South Yemen in 1967, paving the way for the formation of the People's Republic of South Yemen. Three years later, the state was renamed the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, marking the emergence of the only communist state in the Arab world after the NLF shifted its ideological compass from Pan-

¹⁴ King Abdulaziz Al-Saud founded the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, following a sequence of conquests that began in the early 20th century. In 1934, a conflict broke out between King Abdulaziz and Imam Yahya over the territories of Asir, Najran, and Jazan. This conflict culminated in Saudi control of the lands and the signing of the Taif Treaty, which stipulated a 20-year truce. Territorial disputes remained between Saudi Arabia and Yemen until the Treaty of Jeddah in 2000.

¹⁵ Barrett, 2011, *op.cit.*, p.55.



Arabism to Marxism.¹⁶ The southern state entered into a spiral of internal disputes. The Yemeni Socialist Party was formed in 1978 and succeeded the NLF; however, the factional rivalry among its leading members grew with time. It reached its peak on January 13, 1986, when President Ali Nasser Muhammad's security

guards opened fire on an adversary faction during a politburo meeting, resulting in a bloody coup attempt. The causes of the 13 January were attributed to the divided leadership that had existed since the NLF took control in the post-independence period.¹⁷ The Politburo members were divided due to a clash of ideological views and a struggle over power. Nothing remained the same after January 13; the conflict exhausted the party. It resulted in the deaths of thousands, including many senior party members, while President Ali Nasser Muhammad and several thousand others fled the country to the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).

Unification process and the post-unification era

Despite numerous attempts to merge the two Yemeni states since the 1960s, none successfully concluded in unification. The ideological differences between the two states were too significant to facilitate a smooth unification process. The political and economic structures of the Yemen

¹⁶ Bryjka, Filip. "North and South Yemen as a Theatre of a Proxy War during the Cold War." *Journal of Science of the Military Academy of Land Forces*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2016, pp. 19-34. p.24.

¹⁷ Fattah, Khaled. "A Political History of Civil-Military Relations in Yemen." *Alternatif Politika*, Vol. 2, No. Special, 2010, pp. 25-47.

Arab Republic (YAR) in the north and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the south were divergent, leading to skepticism and forming a major obstacle to unification. The YAR was characterized by traditionalism and a free-market economic orientation, while the PDRY operated under a Marxist system.¹⁸ In 1988, talks resumed between the leaders of the two states, accelerating the unification process. The political and economic devastation in the South made unification more appealing than ever. Factors contributing to this shift included inter-party conflicts and the reduction of technical and financial assistance from the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Additionally, oil resources located in the border areas of Shabwah and Marib provinces piqued the interest of both sides.²⁰ Overall, the potential success of the unification process was due to the pragmatic policies adopted by both parties.²¹

On May 22, 1990, after intense and contentious negotiations, the Republic of Yemen was officially declared. Ali Abdullah Saleh was named President, and Ali Salem al-Beidh was appointed Vice President. The former



President of the PDRY, Haydar Abu Bakr al-Attas, became Prime Minister, with Yassin Saeed Noman, the former Prime Minister of the PDRY, serving as the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The transition period was intended to be based on power-sharing until national elections could be held. During negotiations, PDRY leaders initially opposed fresh

elections and proposed the six-month period envisaged for the transition government to be extended. They believed that six months would not be

¹⁸ Jawad, Haifaa A., (Ed.). *The Middle East in the New World Order*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2001.

¹⁹ Miss Choueiri, Nada, et al. "Yemen in the 1990s: From Unification to Economic Reform". *International Monetary Fund*, 2002

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jawad, 2001, *op.cit.*

sufficient to change the voters' perception of their regime's bad reputation. The issue was resolved when the sides agreed to a 30-month transition period for unification and the first election was conducted on the 27 April 1993.²² The YSP's concerns regarding the election were on point. They performed badly and managed to secure only 56 seats out of the 301 in the parliament; coming third behind the GPC and the *Islah* (Yemeni Congregation for Reform), which retained 122 and 63 seats, respectively.²³ The YSP aspired to acquire the same share they had pre-election, however, they kept the 'vice president' and 'prime minister' posts, but they lost the 'speaker of the house' post to the *Islah* party.

Despite the establishment of the new republic, tensions between northern and southern officials soon escalated, leading to notable disputes—particularly over the national curriculum—which highlighted deep ideological disagreements between Islamists and socialists.²⁴ Political friction also affected military structures, complicating command and loyalty dynamics.²⁵ As disputes intensified, Vice President Ali Salem al-Beidh left Sana'a for Aden in 1993. The atmosphere was marked by political unrest and distrust among elites, exacerbated by the assassination of several southern Yemeni leaders, whom they believed were targeted by northern elites. This turmoil culminated in a civil war in 1994. In an attempt to mediate the conflict, King Hussein of Jordan intervened, leading to the signing of the 'Document of Pledge and Accord' (DPA) in Amman on February 20, 1994. However, this de-escalation was short-lived, as fighting resumed on April 27 of that year. The war concluded with Vice President al-Beidh fleeing the country along with many other southern leaders. President Saleh promised reconstruction and reconciliation, providing amnesty for most Southern leaders who were involved in the war. He also appointed Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi as his Vice President to emphasize his commitment to the northern-southern power-sharing agreement.

President Saleh, who has repeatedly stated that ruling Yemen is like "dancing on the heads of snakes," consolidated his grip on power by establishing a patronage system. He allegedly funded the patronage system

²² Dunbar, Charles. "The Unification of Yemen: Process, Politics, and Prospects." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 1992, pp. 456-476.

²³ "Yemen Majlis Annwab (House of Representatives)." Inter-Parliamentary Union, http://archive.ipu.org/parline/reports/2353_arc.htm.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Fattah, 2010, *op.cit.*

with state resources, particularly from oil revenue, and received assistance.²⁶ Many actors were indulged in and benefited from the patronage system such as the military personnel and the tribal sheikhs.²⁷ According to Nadwa al-Dawsari, Saleh's efforts to consolidate his power with relations to tribal groups were carried out in two main ways. First, he aimed to integrate these tribes into the patronage system. Second, he empowered certain tribal sheikhs over others who were hesitant to join Saleh's corrupt network.²⁸

Since unification and until the end of the Saleh era in 2012, the country has undergone only three parliamentary elections in 1993, 1997, and 2003,



and two presidential elections in 1999 and 2006. In the parliamentary elections, President Saleh's party, the GPC consistently secured the largest number of seats, and its representation grew with every election leading to acquiring a supermajority in 1997 and 2003. On the other hand, the YSP could not recover after the civil war. The party boycotted the 1997 parliamentary election and thus did not have representation in parliament, which in turn prevented them from fulfilling the

constitutional requirement of obtaining the endorsement of 5% of parliament members in order for their candidate to be able to run for the 1999 presidential elections.²⁹ On the other hand, the *Islah* party preserved close

²⁶ Clausen, Maria-Louise. "Competing for Control over the State: The Case of Yemen." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2018, pp. 560-578.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Al-Dawsari, Nadwa. "Tribal Governance and Stability in Yemen". Vol. 24, *Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2012.

²⁹ The first amendment to the 1991 constitution was made in 1994, following the Civil War, while the second and final amendment were introduced in 2001. These amendments were enacted by the ruling political elite to consolidate their control and monopolize power, which reinforced the dominance of certain political parties and established Northern authority over

ties with the GPC autocratic regime and provided support in forming a coalition. With the 1997 parliamentary election, the GPC scored a remarkable performance and consolidated their power, which left the party less in need of Islah's support. In response, and despite their differing ideologies and historical conflicts, opposition parties successfully formed a coalition with the common aim of ousting the GPC from power. The Joint Meeting Parties (تكتل احزاب اللقاء المشترك) was formed in 2002, comprising several parties, including the two main ones: the Islah and YSP.

Arab uprising and the reconciliation period

Yemen was among several countries that experienced an uprising during the Arab Spring. The spillover effect of the events, which initially began in



Tunisia, eventually reached Yemen. The Yemeni people called for regime change after President Saleh had ruled for over 30 years, with youth making up the majority of those who took to the streets. The demonstrators' demands stemmed from various issues, most notably the rampant corruption within the system and the deteriorating economic situation. In response, the regime mobilized pro-Saleh

supporters to demonstrate confidence in and support for the Yemeni

the Southerners. Among the changes introduced by the amendments was the extension of terms for both the president and members of parliament. According to the 1994 amendments regarding presidential nominations, Article 108 stipulated that an individual must obtain the endorsement of 5% of the total membership present in the House of Representatives to be considered a presidential candidate.

leadership.³⁰ In the first year, during the clashes between the opposition and the loyalists, nearly 2,000 civilians and soldiers were killed.³¹

When it became clear that President Saleh would not step down, other actors saw an opportunity and moved to win the civilian movement aimed at ousting him. On 21 March 2011, General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmer publicly supported what he called the “peaceful youth revolution” and provided protection to the protesters. It was also common knowledge that the Hashid tribes backed him, viewing him as an alternative to President Saleh to lead the country.³² An armed conflict spread between tribal leaders of Hashid under Sadiq al-Ahmer with the Saleh's republican guards.³³ By the end of May, they agreed on a truce; however, an assassination attempt targeting President Saleh at a mosque within his palace left him wounded, along with other officials. Saleh accused the al-Ahmer family of orchestrating the attack, but they denied any involvement in the incident. While Saleh was in Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, his vice president, Abd Rabbuh Hadi, assumed the role of acting president. As the country's conflicts worsened, Saleh returned to Yemen after a three-month stay in Riyadh. In November 2011, he signed a deal based on an initiative by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), stipulating that he would hand over power to Hadi within 30 days. The agreement also called for elections to be held in February of the following year. Although the agreement made no explicit mention of immunity for Saleh, it was later agreed that he would be granted immunity in return for stepping down. This amnesty deal is considered the key reason for Saleh's abdication of power.

In January, the cabinet passed a law granting immunity to Saleh and other members of his regime. In response, thousands of Yemenis and human rights organizations called for the rejection of this law and demanded

³⁰ “Rival Camps Stage Mass Rallies in Yemeni Capital.” *France 24*, 1 April 2011, <https://www.france24.com/en/20110401-rival-camps-stage-mass-rallies-yemeni-capital-sanaa-saleh>.

³¹ al-Haj, Ahmed. “Yemen Says More than 2000 Killed in Uprising.” *The Washington Post*, 18 March 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/yemen-says-more-than-2000-killed-in-uprising/2012/03/18/gIQAQOtcLS_story.html.

³² “Top Yemeni General, Ali Mohsen, Backs Opposition.” *BBC*, 21 March 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12804552>.

³³ Kasinof, Laura. “Yemeni Leader, Saleh, Said to Be Wounded in Palace Attack.” *The New York Times*, 3 June 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/04/world/middleeast/04yemen.html>.

an independent international investigation into human rights violations during Saleh's reign.³⁴ While the opposition supported Hadi's nomination for the election, Saleh was bargaining through his loyal members of parliament to support Hadi's candidacy in exchange for immunity until the last minute.³⁵ The parliament passed the amnesty law just a month before the elections, which forged the path for Hadi to run for the presidency. The election, which was scheduled for 21 February, witnessed Hadi running uncontested with the backing of both the GPC and JMP. This resulted in Hadi becoming the interim president of the Republic of Yemen for a two-year term.

Some consider the GCC initiative to be more of an elite pact and political deal rather than a genuine national accord reflecting the aspirations of the Yemeni people. Its purpose was to balance competing parties for dominance and prevent confrontations that might disrupt the transition process. Saleh and his loyalists represented one side of the power struggle; on the other hand, there was the al-Ahmer family, which led the Islah party and the Hashid tribal confederation. The elite power struggle also included the Hadi faction and his supporters, who received international backing. Conversely, others viewed the initiative as a national pact aimed at ending the ongoing war and addressing long-standing issues that had yet to be resolved from a national unity perspective. Accordingly, the agreement stipulated an inclusive national dialogue, involving Yemen's political and civil society components, to develop an agreed-upon roadmap. A total of 565 delegates from various political parties and movements—including the GPC, Islah, the Southern Movement (Hirak), the Houthis, and civil society groups—participated in the conference. The delegation included youth representatives, and women's participation was ensured through a requirement of a 30% quota for women's presence in government.

³⁴ Yemen Urged to Reject Amnesty Law for President Saleh and Aides." *Amnesty International*, 9 January 2012, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2012/01/yemen-urged-reject-amnesty-law-president-saleh-and-aides/>.

³⁵ Almasmari, Hakim. "Yemeni President Saleh Granted Immunity." *CNN*, 21 January 2012, <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/01/21/world/meast/yemen-saleh-immunity/index.html>.

The conference concluded by signing a document outlining the outcomes of the dialogue, which included provisions for restructuring the legislative branch—comprising the two houses, the Parliament and the Shura Council—to be equally shared between Northerners and Southerners. This equal sharing was also to apply across all leadership structures within



government branches and the military. Regarding the Houthi issue however, the draft called for prohibiting the presence of armed militias, mandating the handing over of weapons to the state, and extending state authority throughout Yemen. The document also included points, texts, and specifications for the next constitution. Furthermore, the representatives of the

NDC agreed on a new governing system, turning Yemen into a federation consisting of six regions: two in the south—Hadhramaut and Aden—and four in the north—Al-Jand, Tihama, Azal, and the Sheba region. Sana'a and Aden were to have a special status, meaning they would not be subject to the authority of any region.³⁶

However, the Conference ultimately failed to produce a decisive outcome, leaving many of Yemen's core issues unresolved. As Stephen W. Day described it, the NDC operated under difficult conditions, with several persistent conflicts and the absence of representatives from key groups further weakening the process.³⁷ Indeed, both the Houthis and the Southern Movement rejected the outcomes of the NDC. A few days before the NDC

³⁶ Kechichian, Joseph A. "Yemen to Become Six-Region Federation." *Al Jazeera*, 10 February 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/2/10/yemen-to-become-six-region-federation>.

³⁷ Day, Stephen W. "The 'Non-conclusion' of Yemen's National Dialogue." *Foreign Policy*, 27 January 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/27/the-non-conclusion-of-yemens-national-dialogue>.

closing session, the Houthi group's representative, Ahmed Sharaf al-Din, was assassinated. As a result, Houthis withdrew from the session and refused to sign the document. Leaders of the Southern Movement stated that they did not participate in the NDC and that those who attended under their name did not represent the movement but rather their own interests.

The Houthis

The Houthis are a *Zaydi* Shiite group residing in northwest Yemen, near the border with Saudi Arabia, primarily in the city of Sa'daa. They are regarded as a moderate Shiite denomination with differences that set them apart from the *Twelver Shiites*, who are predominantly found in Iran. Zaydis believe that Imams are appointed by the Muslim community (*Umma*), which contrasts with the Twelver Shiite belief that an Imam must be designated by a prophet or a previous Imam. Additionally, Zaydis do not share the Twelvers' belief in the infallibility of their religious leaders; they do not consider their priests to be always right.

The name 'Houthi' comes from the founder and leader of the movement, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, whose father is a prominent Zaydi cleric. Although the Houthis operate within Zaydi beliefs, not all Houthis are Zaydi; and the movement also includes members from other sectarian backgrounds. The movement began in the 1990s and was initially limited to cultural activities, including youth gatherings and summer camps at local boarding schools for a group known as *Shabab al-Moumineen* ('Believing Youths'). It was formed as a reaction to Saudi Sunni influence, as Saudi Arabia was actively providing schooling and financial aid in the region ever since the 1962 coup that toppled the Zaydi Imamate. Given that Zaydis make up about 35% of the Yemeni population, the Yemeni government encouraged Sunni settlement in the northern region to reduce Zaydi influence, while Saudi Arabia assisted in spreading Sunni Wahhabism to further marginalize the Zaydis.

The Houthis, who call themselves *Ansar Allah* (“Supporters of God”), have an ideology centered on distinctive religious and political beliefs that influence the group’s policies.



Their slogan—“God is Great, death to America, death to Israel, a curse upon the Jews, victory to Islam”—clearly identifies their defined enemies. An analysis of a study based on lectures by the Houthi founder, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, given between December 2001 and November 2003, further reveals that Houthi ideology is not primarily sectarian; it does not single out Sunnis or Saudi Wahhabism as the main adversaries, but rather

targets Jews, Christians, the U.S., and Israel. This does not mean that the group does not recognize a sectarian tension between Sunni and Shiite; rather, their strategic choice is to focus on the broader conflict.

Besides their social and cultural activities, the Houthis also had a presence in the political arena in their early days under the leadership of Hussein al-Houthi. Al-Houthi served one term in Parliament after contesting the 1993 election through the *al-Haq* (‘The Truth’) party. Although it was a fundamentalist religious political party, *al-Haq* maintained a form of alliance with the socialists in the early 1990s.³⁸ The socialists supported the party in their efforts to weaken the influence of the Sunni Islamic *Islah*. For its part, the government accused the al-Haq and the Houthis for supporting the socialist separatist movement prior to the 1994 war and they were frequently blamed for inciting sectarian strife and contributing to the nation’s instability.

³⁸ “حسين الحوثي... من الدعوة إلى التمرد [Hussein Al-Houthi... from Da'Wah to Rebellion].” *Aljazeera.net*, 4 October 2004, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2004/10/4/%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF>.

In the early 2000s, the group explicitly turned against the government and increasingly resorted to armed action as they expanded.

The march towards Sana'a

The Houthi rebellion and armed struggle with the Yemeni government began in 2004 and lasted until 2010, resulting in six conflicts known as the Sa'daa Wars. It is difficult to pinpoint the insurgency's exact roots or attribute the conflict to a single cause. Nonetheless, it was mainly attributed to the government's acquiescence to the U.S. in the "war on terror" and the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003.³⁹ Hussain became a direct opponent of the Yemeni administration, mobilizing supporters who became vociferous with anti-U.S. chants and slogans. During a visit by President Saleh to Sa'daa in 2003, before departing for Saudi Arabia on pilgrimage, he was met with anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli chants as he intended to deliver a speech.

In 2004, President Saleh stated in a meeting with religious scholars that the Houthi movement was not limited to such chants but intended to destabilize the country and harm its interests, based on reports presented to him.⁴⁰ President Saleh tried to summon Hussain for a meeting, but Hussain refused. In June, the Yemeni government launched an offensive in the northern regions aiming to arrest or kill the group's leader, Hussain al-Houthi, who was eventually killed in September. He was succeeded by his father, Badr al-Din al-Houthi. The fighting subsided, and no further attacks were carried out, but the second war broke out six months later. In 2006, Badr al-Din al-Houthi passed away at the age of 84, and his son Abdul-Malik succeeded him as leader of the movement. Prior to the 2006 presidential election, the Houthis reached an agreement with the government for good conduct, and in return, the government released 600 Houthi followers who had been arrested earlier.⁴¹ Despite this, fighting resumed in 2007 and

³⁹ Freeman, Jack. "The Al Houthi Insurgency in the North of Yemen: An Analysis of the Shabab Al Moumineen." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 32, no. 11, 2009, pp. 1008-1019.

⁴⁰ فخامة رئيس الجمهورية يلتقي عددا من اصحاب الفضيلة العلماء [Brief of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's Meeting With Religious Scholars in 2004]. "National Information Center, 3 July 2004, <http://mail.yemen-nic.info/presidency/detail.php?ID=6523>.

⁴¹ الرئيس اليمني يصدر عفوا عن قاض دعم تمرد الحوثيين [Yemeni President Pardons Judge Who Supported Houthi Rebellion]. "Aljazeera.net, 12 Aug. 2006, www.aljazeera.net/news/2006/8/12/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8

escalated after the Houthis launched major attacks. Qatar, a member of the GCC, intervened as a mediator to facilitate a ceasefire and agreement between the Houthis and the Yemeni government. By June 2007, the parties had reached a ceasefire deal, but it lasted only a few months before fighting resumed. As a result, the Doha Agreement was reached in February 2008, providing a more comprehensive resolution to the Sa'daa conflict. The agreement included a grant of amnesty, the release of prisoners, and the reconstruction of Sa'daa. In return, the Houthis agreed to disarm.⁴²

Qatar's involvement in the deal was notable for providing political asylum to the Houthi leaders and pledging to fund the construction in Sa'daa.⁴³ The Yemeni ambassador in Doha said that "the Qatari mediation did not stop for a single moment," and added that "this new success is credited to the persistent Qatari diplomacy, which is moving on more than one Arab front."⁴⁴ Throughout the mediation process however, fighting continued, and despite all efforts, the accords failed to reach a lasting conclusion. One of the main reasons which contributed to this failure was the lack of clarity regarding the specifics of the clauses and the implementation process. Additionally, Qatar's role as mediator and its tense relationship with Saudi Arabia further undermined the agreement. Both the Yemeni government and the Houthis blamed each other for the breakdown. The Houthis held the Yemeni government responsible for refusing to withdraw army forces from areas where they had been deployed during the battles.⁴⁵

%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A-
 %D9%8A%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%81%D9%88%D8%A7-
 %D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-
 %D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF.

⁴² Doha agreement, <https://www.peaceagreements.org/view/1433>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "اتفاق بين الحكومة اليمنية والحوثيين في الدوحة" [An Agreement between the Yemeni Government and the Houthis in Doha]. *Aletihad news center*, 2 February 2008, <https://www.aletihad.ae/article/5265/2008/%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86--%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D>. Accessed 25 May 2024.

⁴⁵ "الحوثي يعلن فشل الوساطة القطرية ويحمل الحكومة المسؤولية" [Houthi Declares the Failure of the Qatari Mediation and Holds the Government Responsible]. *Aljazeera.net*, 21 April 2008, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2008/4/21/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A>

For his part, President Saleh rallied the Hashid tribes to fight with the government against the Houthis, even though some tribal chiefs requested that the government revert to the Doha Agreement explaining their concern over the consequences of such decisions.⁴⁶ However, the government was poised to launch an intensive operation, and accordingly, it began 'Operation Scorched Earth' in August 2009 to defeat the Houthi rebels once and for all. Several unsuccessful attempts at a ceasefire were made due to the Houthis' demand for a military withdrawal; nonetheless, a ceasefire was eventually reached in February 2010.

In the time of the uprising and the chaos that was taking place in Sana'a between the civilians' demands and power rivalry among the prominent elites, the Houthis seized the opportunity and extended their control over the northern province of Sa'daa. After the ousting of Saleh, they had clear political and social engagement with the events. For instance, they called for a protest against the government over the unexpected cut of fuel subsidies.⁴⁷ A popular rage erupted in the streets in response to the government's decision to reduce fuel subsidies and calls for the government's resignation.⁴⁸ However, on 21 September 2014, the Houthis took over Sana'a in a move that had far-reaching implications for the next decade. This action destabilized the country, undermined the peace process, and led to what the UN has described as the world's most severe humanitarian crisis in recent history.⁴⁹ Upon entering Sana'a, the Houthis

B%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%81%D8%B4%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%84.

⁴⁶ Sallam, Mohammed. "With Top Salafi Leader Al-Zindani at His Sidesaleh Calls for Recruiting Tribesmen to Fight Houthis [Archives:2008/1171/Front Page]." *Yemen Times*, 10 July 2008, <https://yementimes.com/with-top-salafi-leader-al-zindani-at-his-sidesaleh-calls-for-recruiting-tribesmen-to-fight-houthis-archives2008-1171-front-page/>.

⁴⁷ The IMF urged the Yemeni government to implement specific measures to reduce the budget deficit, including a 20-40% reduction in gasoline subsidies, which was approved later in May for a loan of \$560 million.

⁴⁸ "Yemen Fuel Subsidy Cut Drives Poorest Deeper into Poverty." *The Guardian*, 26 Aug. 2014, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/aug/26/yemen-fuel-subsidy-cut-drives-poorest-poverty.

⁴⁹ Since the war broke out in 2015, more than three million people have been displaced, and 80% of the Yemeni population needs urgent humanitarian assistance, while they are facing famine and malnutrition.

faced no armed clashes; instead, they were joined by soldiers loyal to former President Saleh, who retained significant control over the Republican Guards and some military units. On the same day, President Hadi and other political parties signed the so-called 'Peace and National Partnership Agreement' (PNPA) under the auspices of the United Nations, which stipulated the inclusion of the Houthis in governance; however, the Houthis did not adhere to the agreement. They raided several government institutions and military bases, as well as locations belonging to the Islah party, such as their headquarters and the Iman University.⁵⁰

On 21 January 2015, the Houthi fighters besieged the house of President



Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and placed them under house arrest. With the Houthis tightening their grip on the joints of the state and arresting government officials, they pressured the president and the government to resign. However, the parliament refused to approve President Hadi's resignation. A month after his resignation, Hadi escaped his house arrest and fled to the former capital of the Southern Yemeni Republic, Aden.⁵¹

There where he withdrew his resignation; Hadi called the resigned government to relocate to Aden. Consequently, he survived an unidentified fighter jet attack on his palace in Aden, forcing him to flee from the country to Saudi Arabia. Following the attack incident, he accused the former regime of being behind

⁵⁰ "Shia Rebels in Yemen Besiege University Run by Sunni Radicals." *The Guardian*, 18 Sept. 2014, www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/18/yemen-shiite-sunni-rebels-university-houthi.

⁵¹ "Yemen's President Retracts Resignation after Escape from House Arrest." *The Guardian*, 24 February 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/24/yemens-president-retracts-resignation-after-escape-from-house-arrest>.

the coup attempt.⁵² Even though the development on the ground indicated support and coordination between former President Saleh and the Houthis, nothing was official. Nevertheless, by May 2015, Saleh publicly declared his alliance with the Houthis against what he called the Saudi aggression, given that the Saudi-led coalition launched air strikes on his palace.⁵³

A key actor in the Saudi-Iranian power struggle

For Saudi Arabia, Yemen has always been an important security concern. The Kingdom shares a 1,800-kilometer-long border with Yemen, extending from the Red Sea in the west to the border with the Sultanate of Oman in the east. While the two countries have had territorial disputes since the founding of the Kingdom in 1932, Saudi involvement in Yemeni domestic affairs began with the civil war in the 1960s and has continued since then.⁵⁴ Rather than open confrontation, Saudi Arabia has maintained a precarious stability in Yemen by interfering in its internal affairs, favoring and supporting certain domestic actors, employing Yemeni guest workers as a bargaining tool—given that Saudi Arabia today hosts more than two million Yemenis—buying off tribal leaders, and conducting limited military actions over territorial disputes.⁵⁵ For Instance, *Islah* MP and Chief of the Hashid tribes confederation, Sadiq al-Ahmer, in a televised debate on *al-Saeedah* channel, in 2012, did not reject the allegation of receiving financial stipends from the Saudi government stating that "the Saudis are generous," and that President Saleh was "on the top of recipients list".⁵⁶

Saudi Arabia had traditionally refrained from military actions inside Yemeni territory, limiting its involvement to territorial disputes. This changed when it joined forces with the Yemeni government to counter the Houthi

⁵² "Yemeni President Accuses Former Regime of Attempted Coup." *Reuters*, 19 March 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0MF2A6/>.

⁵³ "Yemen's Saleh Declares Alliance with Houthis." *Al Jazeera*, 11 May 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/5/11/yemens-saleh-declares-alliance-with-houthis>.

⁵⁴ See footnote 14

⁵⁵ Darwich, May. "The Saudi intervention in Yemen: Struggling for status." *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2018, pp. 125-142.

⁵⁶ "الشيخ صادق عبدالله الأحمر في عمق الحدث" [An interview in the Yemeni Al Saeedah Channel with Islah party MP and the Chief of the Hashid tribe's confederation Sadiq al-Ahmer]. *Al Saeedah Channel*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw5G18iZcnI&t=1618s>.

militia's incursion into Saudi lands during the 'Operation Scorched Earth' in 2009. However, at the beginning of 2015, Saudi Arabia experienced events that culminated in an unprecedented shift in the country's political structure. King Abdullah died in January and was succeeded by his brother, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, who appointed his son Muhammad bin Salman as Minister of Defense, making him the youngest in Saudi history to hold the position at the age of 29. Two years later, Muhammad bin Salman was appointed Crown Prince in a move that ended the tradition of succession based on the seniority of the sons of the founding King Abdulaziz. The young prince was given authority and considered the heir apparent to the Saudi throne. Since then, significant changes have taken place in both domestic and foreign policies. One of the earliest signs of these changes was the military intervention in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia had not previously engaged in full-scale military intervention in Yemen until 2015, when President Hadi fled to Riyadh. Subsequently, a Saudi-led coalition was formed to counter the Houthi



insurgency, and 'Operation Decisive Storm' began on March 26. The coalition included all Gulf states except Oman, along with Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Sudan. It received political and material support from the United States. Each country participated with its own unique capabilities, with a total of 185 fighter jets taking part in the sorties, 100 of which belonged to Saudi Arabia.⁵⁷ The U.S.

shared intelligence with the Saudis and assisted in refueling the fighter jets striking the Houthi bases.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Saudi Deploys 100 Fighter Jets, 150,000 Soldiers for Anti-Houthi Campaign." *Alarabiya News*, 26 March 2015, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2015/03/26/Saudi-deploys-100-fighter-jets-150-000-soldiers-for-anti-Houthi-campaign>.

⁵⁸ Crawford, Jamie. "U.S. Boosts Assistance to Saudis Fighting Rebels in Yemen." *CNN*, 8 April 2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/08/politics/yemen-u-s-assistance-saudi-coalition/index.html>.

'Operation Decisive Storm' lasted for 27 days when the spokesman for the joint forces, Brig. Gen. Ahmed Asiri stated that the operation had achieved its three main objectives: to defend the legitimacy of Yemen, deter the Houthis, and prevent them from endangering the Yemeni population and destroying their military capabilities, as well as their neighboring countries.⁵⁹

Consequently, the coalition announced the initiation of the second phase, 'Operation Restoring Hope,' which would be concerned with finding a political solution in Yemen and providing humanitarian assistance. The Saudi intervention was justified in two ways: first, it was framed as a response to the calls from the legitimate authority residing in the interim President Hadi, who had relocated to Riyadh. President Hadi wrote a letter on the 24 March requesting immediate intervention based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, which gives the right to self-defense.⁶⁰ Secondly, the Houthis were framed by the Saudis as a regional threat, with Yemen portrayed as a 'failed state' that allowed such instability to jeopardize broader security interests.⁶¹

In relation to Iran, the relationship between Tehran and the Zaydi Imamate in northern Yemen was very limited. Iran provided limited support to the Zaydi Imam Muhammad al-Badr during his war with the Republicans in the 1960s, alongside Saudi Arabia during the rule of Shah Pahlavi before the 1979 'Islamic revolution.' The Shiite Iranian Islamic regime's relations with the Houthis began in the early 2000s, but it was minimal and did not result in any material support. Military support started in 2009, and since the Houthis took control, Iran has maintained close ties with the Shiite group in Sana'a, with military support intensifying. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard

⁵⁹ "عاصفة الحزم حققت جميع أهدافها: عسيري" [Asiri: Decisive Storm Achieved All Its Goals].

Aljazeera.net, 21 April 2015,

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2015/4/21/%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B2%D9%85-%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%82%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%A3%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%87%D8%A7>.

⁶⁰ "Identical Letters Dated 26 March 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council." Security Council, 27 March 2015, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_217.pdf.

⁶¹ Clausen, 2019, *op.cit.*

Corps (IRGC), Iran's paramilitary security arm, oversees multiple regional factions collectively known as the 'Axis of Resistance,' which includes groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood



faction in Palestine— Hamas.⁶² Since then, the Iranians have provided the Houthis with advanced weapons, military training, and financial aid, which significantly improved the Houthis' missile and drone capabilities. In exchange for Iran's assistance, the Houthis have become an increasingly vital part of Iran's 'axis of resistance.'

The consensus among many analysts regarding the Iran's relationship with the Houthis is that the latter and other regional groups act as proxies given the Iranian regime's leverage over them. Others have suggested however that while Tehran exerts some control, the group maintains a degree of autonomy. Indeed, regardless of the depth of Iranian support, the Houthis appear to retain a level of autonomy, particularly in domestic matters.⁶³ The ongoing civil conflict is mainly driven by local and political factors, such as power and resource competition, rather than solely serving as an Iranian proxy in the region or being fueled by sectarian tensions.⁶⁴ While Iran's influence is notable, it does not translate into outright control. Instead, the Houthis are positioned more as strategic allies within Iran's regional agenda rather than mere proxies, especially, considering Yemen's strategic location significance to the Iranian influence in the region. Iran already retains much control over the Strait of Hormuz and has always aspired to extend its

⁶² Robinson, Kali. "Iran's Support of the Houthis: What to Know." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 31 March 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/irans-support-Houthis-what-know#:~:text=By%20some%20experts%E2%80%99%20estimations%2C%20Iranian,the%20year%20they%20captured%20Sanaa.>

⁶³ Juneau, Thomas. "Iran's Policy Towards the Houthis in Yemen: A Limited Return on a Modest Investment." *International Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 3, 2016, pp. 647-663.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

sphere of influence to the Red Sea and gain control over waterways, which the Houthis are helping with. Furthermore, the Red Sea is perceived to be an alternative route around the Western sanctions.⁶⁵

In any case, in the regional competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the group has become a key player in challenging Saudi Arabia. They have exhausted Saudi Arabia's budget during the war in Yemen when the daily cost of military equipment and operations reached \$200 million per day.⁶⁶ Saudi Arabia aimed to end the war by eliminating the Houthis and restoring political stability in their favor in the neighboring country, but it turned out to be a war of attrition. The Saudis have sensed the deeper implication of the war on their national security therefore they have been preparing to end the war since 2022 in serious efforts. Saudi Arabia pushed President Hadi for resignation and the formation of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) which includes eight members, headed by Rashad al-Alimi, Hadi's advisor, and seven deputy chairmen. The PLC's goal was to unite all anti-Houthi factions under one umbrella. Ceasefire and de-escalation measures were agreed upon between the Saudis and the Yemeni government in negotiations with the Houthis. However, Houthis consistently violated these agreements. When the Yemeni government committed to de-escalation, it made certain concessions, such as opening Sana'a airport and easing the blockade on Hudaydah Port. In return, Houthis failed to meet their obligations, particularly in lifting its siege on the city of Taiz.

The Iranian-Saudi deal that was brokered by China in March 2023 eased the path for Saudi-Houthi talks toward ending the war. Yet, the Houthis quickly changed tact and waged an economic war on the Yemeni government, with forces launching several drone attacks on oil ports in southern Yemen, disrupting oil exports and cutting off one of the Yemeni

⁶⁵ Bonesh, Farzad Ramezani. "Why the Red Sea Matters to Iran." *The Cradle*, 18 March 2024, <https://thecradle.co/articles-id/23944>.

⁶⁶ Khashoggi, Jamal. "Saudi Arabia Has Devastated Yemen — but a Lesson from 1965 Can Help Fix the Mess." *Washington Post*, 22 November 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/11/22/saudi-arabia-has-devastated-yemen-but-a-lesson-from-1965-can-help-fix-the-mess/>.



government's most vital sources of revenue, putting more pressure on the government to surrender and share oil revenues.⁶⁷ As talks continued in 2024, the Yemeni government escalated when the central bank of the legitimate government in Aden demanded that banks move their headquarters to Aden or be cut off from the SWIFT banking system.⁶⁸ However, Saudi Arabia urged the Yemeni

government to reverse the measures that had been taken on the banking sector in the Houthi-controlled territories.⁶⁹ At the time of writing, the Houthis appear to be negotiating from a position of strength. However, the negotiations remain stalled primarily over civil servants' salaries and the management of oil revenues, which continue to be the main obstacles to reaching an agreement.

Growing strategic importance in the Red Sea and beyond

When the Houthi was formed, its members were few, consisting mainly of family members and those close to them; they numbered in the hundreds and grew to a couple of thousand by the early 2000s. Some local sources indicated they had around 100,000 combatants by 2010 though this figure

⁶⁷ al-Batati, Saeed. "Yemeni Government Calls for International Action Against Houthi 'Economic War.'" *Arab News*, 14 June 2024, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2321776/middle-east>.

⁶⁸ Khaled, Fatma, and Ahmed aL-Haj. "Fight for Control of Yemen's Banks between Rebels, Government Threatens to Further Wreck Economy." *AP News*, 16 June 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthis-banks-currency-economy-7ac9bcfc6f883f52573df6147db51b13>.

⁶⁹ "Statement by the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen." *Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen*, 23 July 2024, <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/statement-office-un-special-envoy-yemen>.

seems largely exaggerated.⁷⁰ It is clear, nevertheless, that the Houthis' personnel and military capabilities have grown significantly since then. Today, it is estimated that the group has around 200,000 fighters with 10,000 of the recruits being children.⁷¹ Recruitment of new fighters has



increased drastically since 2014, and the number of new fighters joining the group is accelerating, making it very difficult to determine the group's precise size.

The Houthis initially obtained light weapons from Iran, and they also seized the Yemeni state's

weapons when they took over Sana'a, and after they assassinated former President Saleh.⁷² Indeed, Iran supported the Houthis and continues to do so; notwithstanding, the Houthis are capable today of developing their own missiles and drones, which are manufactured fully in Yemen or sometimes assembled with smuggled Iranian parts.

Despite their growing capabilities however, the group only briefly captured international attention during earlier incidents, until the war in Gaza

⁷⁰ Almasmari, Hakim. "Thousands Expected to Die in 2010 in Fight against Al-Qaeda." *Yemen Post*, Internet Archive, 10 April 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110303112426/http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=1749&MainCat=2>.

⁷¹ "Militarized Childhood: A Report on the Houthis' Recruitment of Yemeni Children during War." *ReliefWeb*, 15 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/militarized-childhood-report-houthis-recruitment-yemeni-children-during-war-february>.

⁷² "كيف حصل الحوثيون على ترسانتهم العسكرية؟" [How Did the Houthis Obtain Their Military Arsenal?]. *Aljazeera.net*, 26 March 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2018/3/26/%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%AD%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85>.

brought them into sharper focus. Indeed, while they became a global concern after attacking Saudi oil facilities in 2019 and 2022 — incidents that triggered widespread fears over the global oil supply — and their more recent activities in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait have similarly raised alarm, this drew only brief international attention.⁷³ But in the wake of the Gaza war, their role in the region drew renewed focus.

Following the Hamas attack on the periphery of Gaza on 7 October 2023, and the taking of over 250 hostages, the Israeli government launched a war in Gaza aiming to dismantle Hamas. Yemen's Houthis, who share Hamas's



adversaries and function as part of the Iranian 'Axis of Resistance' alongside Hamas, launched offensive strikes with cruise missiles and drones, which were intercepted by the U.S. Navy stationed in the Red Sea.⁷⁴ This strike demonstrates the Houthis' growing cruise missile capabilities, which now have an estimated range

of around 2,000 kilometers. Their attacks did not stop there; they continued to target Israel with cruise and ballistic missiles, as well as drones. However, it was their operations at sea that had a far greater impact on global security. On 19 November, the *Galaxy Leader*, a commercial ship owned by an Israeli businessman, was seized in the Red Sea by Houthi forces and redirected to the Hudaydah Port, while the entire crew was taken captive. The Houthis vowed to attack all Israeli ships, or any vessel associated with Israel. Given that this route is one of the world's busiest and shortest — connecting Asia and Europe via the Suez Canal — Houthi activities at sea have significantly disrupted international trade. As a result, major shipping firms have opted for a longer alternative route around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid Houthi

⁷³ See footnote 1

⁷⁴ "Us Navy Intercepts 3 Missiles Fired from Yemen 'Potentially' at Israel: Pentagon." *Arab News*, 19 October 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2394376/middle-east>.

attacks, increasing the journey between Asia and Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean from 18,500 km over 26 days to 24,800 km over 36 days.⁷⁵

To counter the Houthi threat to global security and deter their assaults in the Red Sea, the U.S. formed a multinational patrolling coalition and announced, 'Operation Prosperity Guardian'. As the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, described: "This is an international challenge that



demands collective action.”⁷⁶

The operation saw participation from more than 20 countries worldwide; however, notably, almost no Arab states from the Middle East joined the coalition, with Bahrain being the sole regional participant. Most significantly, Saudi Arabia chose not to take part, citing several reasons—chief among them was the desire not to jeopardize ongoing

negotiations with the Houthis and concerns over the possibility of renewed Houthi attacks on Saudi territory.⁷⁷ The escalation came in January after the Houthi conducted missile and drone attacks on American warships. Consequently, the U.S. and the UK targeted Houthi sites in their controlled territories. In the meantime, Saudi Arabia expressed great concern over the events, called for restraints, and stressed the importance of regional security and stability.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Race, Michael. "What Do Red Sea Assaults Mean for Global Trade?" *BBC*, 12 January 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-67759593>.

⁷⁶ "Us Announces Multinational Force to Secure Red Sea Shipping against Houthi Attacks." *France 24*, 19 December 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231218-us-announces-multinational-force-to-counter-houthi-red-sea-attacks>.

⁷⁷ Ali, Rabia. "Red Sea Coalition: Why Have Major Arab Nations Opted Out?" *Anadolu Ajansı*, 20 December 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/red-sea-coalition-why-have-major-arab-nations-opted-out/3088087>.

⁷⁸ "Saudi Arabia Closely Monitors with Great Concern Military Operations in Red Sea Region, Air Strikes on Sites in Yemen." *Saudi Press Agency*, 12 January 2024, <https://www.spa.gov.sa/en/N2028073>

According to Houthi claims, they have carried out over 100 attacks on ships within six months. While some media reports suggested a decline in the militia's maritime assaults, Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi stated, "Our actions have not decreased, but there has been a reduction in navigation and ship movements on the American and British sides, with almost no Israeli activity."



Despite this, the operational range of their attacks has expanded beyond the Red Sea and Arabian Sea to include the Eastern Mediterranean. In early May, Yahya Sarea, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces affiliated with the Houthis, declared, "We will target any ships heading to Israeli ports in the

Mediterranean Sea in any area within our reach."⁷⁹ The Houthis have already expressed that they would continue their operations until Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip, removes the siege, and facilitates the unobstructed entry of the desperately needed humanitarian assistance.⁸⁰ Despite their use of force to seize power and their actions in Yemen and the broader region over the past decade, the Houthis' role in intercepting Israeli and allied ships amid the Gaza war has boosted their popularity both in the Middle East and globally. Many who oppose Israel's war on Gaza now see them as resisting Western influence and interests in the region, positions which have become increasingly subject to criticism.

⁷⁹ "Houthis Say They Will Target Israel-Bound Ships Anywhere within Their Range." *Al Jazeera*, 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/3/yemens-houthis-say-they-will-target-ships-heading-for-israel-within-range>.

⁸⁰ Al-Ahmadi, Aziz. "Houthis Insist on 3 Gaza-Related Conditions to Halt Red Sea Attacks." *Anadolu Agency*, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/houthis-insist-on-3-gaza-related-conditions-to-halt-red-sea-attacks/3164178>.

Summary and outlook

Since the Houthis took over Sana'a, they have grown stronger in terms of operational capacity, and they have continued to spread their ideology across the territories they control. They are evolving in terms of manpower, military strength and technological equipment. And the extent to which their military forces can now inflict meaningful damage is expanding, challenging not only their regional adversaries but also global powers. In parallel, their ties with Iran are strengthening as differences between them diminish, and their connection with the other factions of the 'Axis of Resistance' is advancing.

As this report has highlighted, their ascendance can be attributed to the weakness of the Yemeni state, the disintegration of its institutions, and the internal fighting among rival Yemeni actors. Former President Saleh was heavily involved in the events that led to the Houthis seizing power. He had no intention to stop "dancing on the heads of snakes," which ultimately led to his demise at the hands of the Houthis. During the uprising, when the Gulf countries attempted to mediate the conflict and reach an agreement for a peaceful transfer of power, Saleh always refrained and delayed at every opportunity to shield himself and his loyal circle from accountability and ensure his continued role in the political arena, which he succeeded in maintaining, albeit for a short time. Still, his alliance with the Houthis later empowered them and also gave them access to state weapons.

Nonetheless, the Houthis' development lies in their alliance with Iran, which has provided them with military and technological capabilities. Accordingly, their reach has extended beyond the national level to now threaten the neighboring countries, their allies but also the interests of the global actors. While they have garnered some sympathy in Middle Eastern public opinion due to their anti-US and anti-Israeli stance, their growing threat to U.S. hegemony in particular—especially in collaboration with Iran—raises the risk of a broader regional war, which, if left unchecked, could unleash a devastating disaster for the entire region.

REFERENCES

- al-Abdin, A. Z. "The Free Yemeni Movement (1940–48) and Its Ideas on Reform." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1979, pp. 36-48.
- Al-Ahmadi, Aziz. "Houthis Insist on 3 Gaza-Related Conditions to Halt Red Sea Attacks." *Anadolu Agency*, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/houthis-insist-on-3-gaza-related-conditions-to-halt-red-sea-attacks/3164178>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- al-Batati, Saeed. "Yemeni Government Calls for International Action against Houthi 'Economic War.'" *Arab News*, 14 June 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2321776/middle-east>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Alblosi, Hamad H. "Ideological Roots of the ḥūṭhī Movement in Yemen." *Journal of Arabian Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2016, pp. 143-162, DOI: 10.1080/21534764.2016.1247522.
- Al-Dawsari, Nadwa. Tribal Governance and Stability in Yemen. vol. 24, *Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2012.
- al-Haj, Ahmed. "Yemen Says More than 2000 Killed in Uprising." *The Washington Post*, 18 March 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/yemen-says-more-than-2000-killed-in-uprising/2012/03/18/gIQAGOtclS_story.html. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Ali, Rabia. "Red Sea Coalition: Why Have Major Arab Nations Opted Out?" *Anadolu Ajansı*, 20 December 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/red-sea-coalition-why-have-major-arab-nations-opted-out/3088087>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Almasmari, Hakim. "Thousands Expected to Die in 2010 in Fight against Al-Qaeda." *Yemen Post*, Internet Archive, 10 April 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110303112426/http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=1749&MainCat=2>. Accessed 16 May 2024.
- Almasmari, Hakim. "Yemeni President Saleh Granted Immunity." *CNN*, 21 January 2012, <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/01/21/world/meast/yemen-saleh-immunity/index.html>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- "اتفاق بين الحكومة اليمنية والحوثيين في الدوحة" [An Agreement between the Yemeni Government and the Houthis in Doha]. *Aletihad news center*, 2

- February 2008,
<https://www.alethead.ae/article/5265/2008/%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D.> Accessed 25 May 2024.
- الشيخ صادق عبدالله الأحمر في عمق الحدث“ [An interview in the Yemeni Al Saeedah Channel with Islah party MP and the Chief of the Hashid tribe’s confederation Sadiq al-Ahmer].” *AlSaeedah Channel*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw5G18iZcnI&t=1618s>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- عاصفة الحزم حققت جميع أهدافها“ [Asiri: Decisive Storm Achieved All Its Goals].” *Aljazeera.net*, 21 April 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2015/4/21/%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B2%D9%85-%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%82%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%A3%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%87%D8%A7.> Accessed 25 May 2024.
- Barrett, Roby Carol. *Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm in Context*. JSOU Press, 2011.
- Bonesh, Farzad Ramezani. “Why the Red Sea Matters to Iran.” *The Cradle*, 18 March 2024, <https://thecradle.co/articles-id/23944>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Bryjka, Filip. “North and South Yemen as a Theatre of a Proxy War during the Cold War.” *Journal of Science of the Military Academy of Land Forces*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2016, pp. 19-34.
- Clausen, Maria-Louise. “Competing for Control over the State: The Case of Yemen.” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2018, pp. 560-578. 10.1080/09592318.2018.1455792.
- Clausen, Maria-Louise. “Justifying Military Intervention: Yemen as a Failed State.” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2019, pp. 488-502, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1573141>.
- Crawford, Jamie. “U.S. Boosts Assistance to Saudis Fighting Rebels in Yemen.” *CNN*, 8 April 2015,

- <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/08/politics/yemen-u-s-assistance-saudi-coalition/index.html>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Darwich, May. "The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status." *Insight Turkey*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2018, pp. 125-142.
- Day, Stephen W. "The 'Non-conclusion' of Yemen's National Dialogue." *Foreign Policy*, 27 January 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/27/the-non-conclusion-of-yemens-national-dialogue/>. Accessed 18 April 2024.
- Dresch, Paul. *A History of Modern Yemen*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Dunbar, Charles. "The Unification of Yemen: Process, Politics, and Prospects." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 1992, pp. 456-476.
- Fattah, Khaled. "A Political History of Civil-Military Relations in Yemen." *Alternatif Politika*, Vol. 2, No. Special, 2010, pp. 25-47.
- Freeman, Jack. "The Al Houthi Insurgency in the North of Yemen: An Analysis of the Shabab Al Moumineen." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 32, No. 11, 2009, pp. 1008-1019.
- الحوثي يعلن فشل الوساطة القطرية ويحمل الحكومة المسؤولية [Houthi Declares the Failure of the Qatari Mediation and Holds the Government Responsible]." *Aljazeera.net*, 21 April 2008, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2008/4/21/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%81%D8%B4%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%84>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- "Houthis Say They Will Target Israel-Bound Ships Anywhere within Their Range." *Al Jazeera*, 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/3/yemens-houthis-say-they-will-target-ships-heading-for-israel-within-range>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- كيف حصل الحوثيون على ترسانتهم العسكرية؟ [How Did the Houthis Obtain Their Military Arsenal?]." *Aljazeera.net*, 26 March 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2018/3/26/%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%AD%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89->

- %D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “حسين الحوثي... من الدعوة إلى التمرد” [Hussein Al-Houthi... from Da'Wah to Rebellion].” *Aljazeera.net*, 4 October 2004, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2004/10/4/%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “Identical Letters Dated 26 March 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council.” *Security Council*, 27 March 2015, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_217.pdf. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Jawad, Haifaa A., editor. *The Middle East in the New World Order*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2001.
- Juneau, Thomas. “Iran’s Policy Towards the Houthis in Yemen: A Limited Return on a Modest Investment.” *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 3, 2016, pp. 647-663.
- Kasinof, Laura. “Yemeni Leader, Saleh, Said to Be Wounded in Palace Attack.” *The New York Times*, 3 June 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/04/world/middleeast/04yemen.html>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Kechichian, Joseph A. “Yemen to Become Six-Region Federation.” *Al Jazeera*, 10 February 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/2/10/yemen-to-become-six-region-federation>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Khaled, Fatma, and Ahmed aL-Haj. “Fight for Control of Yemen’s Banks between Rebels, Government Threatens to Further Wreck Economy.” *AP News*, 16 June 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthis-banks-currency-economy-7ac9bcfc6f883f52573df6147db51b13>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Khashoggi, Jamal. “Saudi Arabia Has Devastated Yemen — But a Lesson from 1965 Can Help Fix the Mess.” *Washington Post*, 22 November 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global->

- opinions/wp/2017/11/22/saudi-arabia-has-devastated-yemen-but-a-lesson-from-1965-can-help-fix-the-mess/. Accessed 07 May 2024.
- Kühn, Thomas. "Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1919." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2007, pp. 315-331.
- Manea, Elham M. "Yemen, the Tribe and the State." *International colloquium on Islam and Social Change*, University of Lausanne, 1996, pp. 1-12.
- "Militarized Childhood: A Report on the Houthis' Recruitment of Yemeni Children during War." *ReliefWeb*, 15 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/militarized-childhood-report-houthis-recruitment-yemeni-children-during-war-february>. Accessed 24 May 2024.
- Miss Choueiri, Nada, et al. "Yemen in the 1990s: From Unification to Economic Reform." International Monetary Fund, 2002.
- "National Dialogue Conference Outcomes Document." 2014, <https://yemenlg.org/resources/national-dialogue-conference-outcomes-document/>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Race, Michael. "What Do Red Sea Assaults Mean for Global Trade?" *BBC*, 12 January 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-67759593>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- "Rival Camps Stage Mass Rallies in Yemeni Capital." *France 24*, 1 April 2011, <https://www.france24.com/en/20110401-rival-camps-stage-mass-rallies-yemeni-capital-sanaa-saleh>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Robinson, Kali. "Iran's Support of the Houthis: What to Know." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 31 March 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/irans-support-Houthis-what-know#:~:text=By%20some%20experts%E2%80%99%20estimations%2C%20Iranian,the%20year%20they%20captured%20Sanaa>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Salhani, Justin. "Houthis Are Recruiting Record Fighters. How Will It Affect Yemen?" *Al Jazeera*, 23 February 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/2/23/houthis-are-recruiting-record-fighters-how-will-this-affect-yemen>. Accessed 13 May 2024.
- Sallam, Mohammed. "With Top Salafi Leader Al-Zindani at His Sidesaleh Calls for Recruiting Tribesmen to Fight Houthis [Archives:2008/1171/Front Page]." *Yemen Times*, 10 July 2008,

- <https://yementimes.com/with-top-salafi-leader-al-zindani-at-his-sidesaleh-calls-for-recruiting-tribesmen-to-fight-houthi-archives2008-1171-front-page/>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “Saudi Arabia Closely Monitors with Great Concern Military Operations in Red Sea Region, Air Strikes on Sites in Yemen.” *Saudi Press Agency*, 12 January 2024, <https://www.spa.gov.sa/en/N2028073>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “Saudi Deploys 100 Fighter Jets, 150,000 Soldiers for Anti-houthi Campaign.” *Alarabiya News*, 26 March 2015, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2015/03/26/Saudi-deploys-100-fighter-jets-150-000-soldiers-for-anti-Houthi-campaign>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “Shia Rebels in Yemen Besiege University Run by Sunni Radicals.” *The Guardian*, 18 September 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/18/yemen-shiite-sunni-rebels-university-houthi>. Accessed 12 April 2024.
- “Statement by the Office of the Un Special Envoy for Yemen.” Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, 23 July 2024, <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/statement-office-un-special-envoy-yemen>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “فخامة رئيس الجمهورية يلتقي عددا من اصحاب الفضيلة العلماء [Brief of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's Meeting with Religious Scholars in 2004].” *National Information Center*, 3 July 2004, <https://yemen-nic.info/presidency/detail.php?ID=6523#>. Accessed 4 May 2024.
- “الرئيس اليمني يصدر عفوا عن قاض دعم تمرد الحوثيين [Yemeni President Pardons Judge Who Supported Houthi Rebellion].” *Aljazeera.net*, 2006, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2006/8/12/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%81%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “Top Yemeni General, Ali Mohsen, Backs Opposition.” *BBC*, 21 March 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12804552>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- “US Announces Multinational Force to Secure Red Sea Shipping against Houthi Attacks.” *France*, 24, 19 December 2023,

- <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231218-us-announces-multinational-force-to-counter-houthi-red-sea-attacks>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- "US Navy Intercepts 3 Missiles Fired from Yemen 'Potentially' at Israel: Pentagon." *Arab News*, 19 October 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2394376/middle-east>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- Yaccob, Abdol Rauh. "Yemeni Opposition to Ottoman Rule: An Overview." *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, Vol. 42, 2012, pp. 411-419.
- "Yemen Fuel Subsidy Cut Drives Poorest Deeper into Poverty." *The Guardian*, 26 August 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/aug/26/yemen-fuel-subsidy-cut-drives-poorest-poverty>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- "Yemeni President Accuses Former Regime of Attempted Coup." *Reuters*, 19 March 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0MF2A6/>.
- "Yemen Majlis Annowab (House of Representatives)." Inter-Parliamentary Union, http://archive.ipu.org/parline/reports/2353_arc.htm. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- "Yemen's President Retracts Resignation after Escape from House Arrest." *The Guardian*, 24 February 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/24/yemens-president-retracts-resignation-after-escape-from-house-arrest>. Accessed 13 April 2024.
- "Yemen's Saleh Declares Alliance with Houthis" *Al Jazeera*, 11 May 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/5/11/yemens-saleh-declares-alliance-with-houthis>. Accessed 19 April 2024.
- "Yemen Urged to Reject Amnesty Law for President Saleh and Aides." *Amnesty International*, 9 January 2012, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2012/01/yemen-urged-reject-amnesty-law-president-saleh-and-aides/>. Accessed 19 April 2024.