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Yemen

Yemen's crisis and the reactionary imperialist interventions

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At the end of March 2015, a massive military intervention, called "Decisive Storm", led by nine Arab countries (five of the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in addition to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and with the exception of Oman), which must be added Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan) and in the beginning with the support of Pakistan, but the Parliament of Islamabad has finally voted not to join the Saudi-led military intervention in order "to be able to play a proactive diplomatic role to end the crisis". Saudi Arabia had asked Pakistan to provide ships, aircraft and troops for the campaign.

The military intervention is conducted under the leadership of Saudi Arabia under the pretext of opposing the Houthis sectarian militia (from Zaidi sect close to Shiism), or also known as Ansar Allah. The Houthis took total control of the capital Sanaa in January 2015, but there was already a significant military presence since September 2014, with the complicity of the Air Force units close to former dictator Ali Abdallah Saleh, pushing the Prime Minister at the time to resign. The Houthis have since late March extended their operations to the South of the country.

Meanwhile, four provinces of southern Yemen, including that of Aden, decided to refuse orders from the capital Sanaa since the capture of the city by the Houthis and of the military units and security forces in these regions. The second largest city, Aden, remains the scene of clashes between supporters and opponents of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi supporters have called the coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia to send ground forces in Yemen and not to limited the intervention to air strikes. However, the possibility of Saudi Arabia to embark in a new military ground operation in Yemen is very risky after their 2009 defeat in the country, already against the Houthi militias in the mountainous regions in the north of Yemen.

The Houthi forces have been according to various sources supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in terms of weapons, money and military training, while a senior Iranian official declared in December 2014 that the Quds Force, the external arm of the Revolutionary Guard, had a "few hundred" military personnel in Yemen who train Houthi fighters [1]The Houthis have also received some small assistance from Hezbollah that provided military logistical support. According to some sources, Hezbollah's Military Unit 3800 commander Khalil Harb has also been spotted in Yemen already in 2012 training Houthi rebels in Yemen and has been accused of facilitating the movement of large amounts of currency to them [2]. In addition to this, Sheikh Mohammad Abdel Malek al-Chami, one of the leaders of the Houthis, who died of his wounds in a terrorist by the Islamic State in Yemen in March, was buried in in the "martyrs cemetery" in southern Beirut, where leading Hezbollah figures are buried. He lived for 17 years in Lebanon, previous to his death. He was the Special Representative of the Houthi leader Abdel Malek al-Houthi in Lebanon and Syria.

The IRI, just as the Gulf monarchies, has indeed intervened in the region (Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen) to support authoritarian regimes or reactionary forces to expand its political influence in the region, in the backdrop of Shi'a Sunni sectarian religious tensions exacerbated by the IRI and the Gulf monarchies.

The IRI has condemned the military intervention in Yemen by Saudi Arabia, and the Iranian Supreme's leader Khamenei described it as "genocide". Iran has called for a halt to the Saudi-led military operation against Yemen's Houthi rebels, suggesting "holding dialogue in a neutral location with the participation of all Yemeni political factions to reach an agreement on a national government".

Yemen's internal issues

The Yemeni government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, a former vice president of the country and close ally to Saudi Arabia, where he has taken refuge, and the Gulf monarchies, was completely defeated by military advances of the Houthis allied in this circumstance with their former enemy the former dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had fought them between 2004 and 2009 (the fighting had caused more than ten thousand deaths and over 300 000 people displaced) and accused them of being subservient to the IRI. Saleh was actually also a former ally of the Gulf monarchies and the United States.

Saleh was pushed out by a solution negotiated by Saudi Arabia and the United States in 2011 after the beginning of a popular uprising in the country, but which kept the regime intact with the inclusion of some political forces including supporters of Al-Islah party, which is composed of the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, of Salafists and of tribal leaders in the north, notably the powerful tribe of the Al-Ahmar. Saleh continued to benefit from the allegiance of a significant part of the security apparatus and army, while he continued to act as Chairman of the General People's Congress, the ruling party in his time. Saleh also benefited as a result of a negotiated solution in 2011 a legal immunity and kept the money accumulated as president (for more than 30 years!), estimated at more than \$ 60 billion according to a UN report in February 2015.

The territorial conquests of the Houthis have been facilitated by the weakness of the state since the uprising of 2011, in the backdrop of deep social and economic problems. Socio economic problems such as the lack of work for graduate students, and the stopping of subsidies to essential products such as gas and fuel oil fuelled anger among the popular classes. In addition, the peasants, such as in Jahachine, are victims of land grabs by tribal chiefs.

The military offensive also took place while the Yemenis were still waiting since September 2014 for the implementation of the results of the national dialogue conference (which included a federal system, renegotiation of the powers of the president, etc) concluded under the auspice of Saudi Arabia, but which many Yemeni actors criticized its limitations, including the Houthis.

The reasons underlying the crisis in Yemen are political and socio-economic one side as we saw above and on the other side also linked to regional tensions with the north (with the Houthi movement) and the South (secessionist will) of the country against the central authority in Sanaa. In the addition to this, the conflict in Yemen has taken increasingly a sectarian color, without being the dominant characteristic. This has been observed with the assassination of the Houthi intellectual Abdel Karim Al Khaywani on March 18, 2015, and two days later with the attack against the two Zaydi mosques in Sanaa that killed more than 150 dead. These attacks have been claimed by the organization of the Islamic State (IS), previously inactive in Yemen, illustrates a devastating dynamic ... Indeed the Houthis advances in Sunni areas of some northern regions of Yemen, Taiz especially and now Aden, have produced a deep resentment, in addition to the confrontation against Sunni jihadist groups close to Al Qaeda or today claiming to be from the IS.

On the other side, in the South, where the population is exclusively Sunni, a rejection of the Houthi rebellion has increased and thus of Shiism but also of the North. In addition, the main bulwark to the progress of the Houthis is Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which is allied with the tribes of the border areas between North and South in Al-Baida, Al-Dhala or the Yafea. In this context, anti-houthism, turned into anti-Shiism, is a powerful cement of opposition.

A counter revolutionary military intervention

The military campaign against Yemen led by Saudi Arabia has the support of the imperialist Western governments, of

Turkey, and a large majority of Arab regimes in the region. President Barack Obama authorized the provision of logistical and intelligence to support the military operations of the coalition, while a common planning cell with Saudi Arabia was established. The interventions of the reactionary monarchy of the Saud in Yemen are not new, already in the 1960s, it supported by all means the royalist forces in North Yemen (composed at the time of the Zaydi tribes) against the Yemeni revolution at the time, supported by the Nasser regime, although this latter did not support the peasant and popular demands of the Yemeni revolutionaries.

As a reminder, Saudi Arabia with the assistance of the reactionary Gulf monarchies intervened in the various revolutionary processes in the region by playing a massive counter-revolutionary role in supporting the old regimes (Tunisia and Egypt) or fundamentalist reactionary forces (Syria or Iraq), with the exception of Qatar that supported the other side of the counter revolution the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood. These differences are outstripped in the case of intervention in Yemen, where we see all these counter revolutionary forces support this military campaign. It reminds us that tactical competition and differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar may be surpassed when their common interests are threatened, as in the joint military intervention of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in March 2011 in Bahrain to crush a popular uprising against an allied regime.

The military intervention in Yemen is led, according to the Saudi propaganda, to "rescue a neighbour and the legitimate authority", but this intervention is of course made for other objectives: to defend the sphere of influence of the Gulf monarchies, especially of Saudi Arabia, and prevent Houthis reaching Aden and Bab el-Mandeb, which, with the Strait of Hormuz is the crossing point of oil, nearly three million barrels per day of crude oil, and of the Gulf gas. In addition to this, the intervention is also a message sent to the Shi'a oppressed minorities in Saudi Arabia to remain calm.

Moreover, since September 11, Yemen is a key centre in the "war against terror" and some US special forces were stationed there, coordinating actions against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (including drone attacks). The United States has actually evacuated their base of Al-Anad following the progress of the Houthis to Aden. This did not prevent the US to continue to use their drones to attack AQAP basis. An American drone strike has actually killed Ibrahim al-Rubeish, a top ideologue and spokesman for Al Qaeda's branch in Yemen. Al-Rubeish, a 35-year-old Saudi citizen, had been held for five years in the United States military prison at Guantánamo Bay.

All this is occurring in the context of inter-regional imperialist battle between the IRI and the GCC led by Saudi Arabia. The Saudi massive military deployment demonstrates the importance attached by the monarchy to Yemen: more than a hundred combat aircraft and 150,000 troops would be massed on the border with Yemen. It should be added that this intervention is happening in the backdrop of the relative decline of US imperialism since 2003 that allows regional imperialist forces to play a greater role in the region and give them more autonomy.

In this perspective, the fact that the military intervention led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen occurred at the same period than the agreements concluded between the Western powers and Iran around the nuclear issue is not fortuit. It is a clear message from Saudi Arabia to the US to take into consideration their political interests and that any kind of US rapprochement with Iran should not be made at the expense of the Saudi Monarchy. This latter is indeed worried and has complained on several occasions that the US administration is not taking into serious consideration the expansion of the political influence IRI's in the region.

Conclusion

The Saudi led military campaign is therefore not for the purpose of defending the self-determination of the Yemeni people, and to allow them to continue the objectives of the popular uprising began in 2011.

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Moreover, the first victims of the bombing of the counter revolutionary coalition are the Yemeni civilians, several hundreds of dead, including children, few thousands injured, and ten of thousands of displaced, not to mention the widespread destruction caused by the fighting and bombing. Many humanitarian organizations have declared that the situation on the ground for the civilians is catastrophic.

Progressive organizations must oppose this military intervention led by a counter revolutionary coalition led by the Saudi monarchy and supported by Western regimes, as well as oppose the IRI interventions supporting the military coup of Houthis with the assistance of former dictator Saleh. None of these two forces carry or support the will of political and socio economic changes upheld by the popular classes of Yemen or elsewhere in the region.

Solidarity with the Yemeni popular classes who started the revolutionary process in 2011 for freedom and dignity and who are opposing all counter revolutionary forces.

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[Syria Freedomforever](#)

- 1) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-yemen-houthis-iran-insight-idUSKBN0JT17A20141215>
- 2) <http://iswiraq.blogspot.ch/2014/08/echoes-of-syria-hezbollah-reemerges-in.html>

[1] <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014...>

[2] <http://iswiraq.blogspot.ch/2014/08/...>