Yemen’s Muslim Brotherhood Remains the Biggest Obstacle Towards Peace

The elephant in the room that no one wishes to directly address Yemen’s Muslim Brotherhood, also known as Al Islah party has become the single biggest impediment to peace. Unlike many of its political counterparts who remain willing to compromise to see an end to the violence and bloodshed, the Brotherhood has adopted a contrarian attitude, choosing instead to pursue socio-political hegemony by actively foiling peace negotiations, promoting divisions and sectarianism while carrying out acts of senseless violence against civilians to better play into the anti-Saudi narrative within Yemen proper.

And though no one is under any impression that Yemen’s war has not been the scene of atrocious abuses by all warring factions - each caught in the rationale of their own respective ‘legitimacy’, Al Islah proved to be rather radically odious and callous in how it has inflicted pain onto Yemen ... all in the name of political survival and a heightened sense of entitlement.

Very much the poisoned well many came to drink to in view of leveraging their position, Al Islah has plotted against Yemen so that its men could eventually rise themselves to the very height of power and claim the very seat which for decades has eluded them - the presidency it needs to be said is Al Islah’s end-game. Or rather the platform upon which its ‘practitioners’ intend to use to mould Yemen to their image: one of radicalism, bigotry, misogyny, and socio-economic nihilism.

A remnant of the former regime’s political, social, and religious hierarchy, Al Islah has already proven it is willing to sacrifice however many men, women and children is required to see manifest its ambitions. In Taiz such rationale has manifested in Al Islah’s unholy alliance with Al Qaeda and many of its offshoots, all the while utilising its
contacts to both Ansarallah and President Abdel Rabbo Mansour Hadi’ supporters to prevent the formulation of any resolution to the overdrawn military stand-off.

A former stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood the city of Taiz has long become centrestage to a destructive powere struggle in between the many factions which laid claims on Yemen. As war has ravaged the impoverished nation the southern city of Taiz has become somewhat of a perfect representation of the complexity of Yemen’s war. At the heart of it all is Al Islah - a dangerous power-broker with links to Terror and a well-documented propensity to play out those connections to better arm wrestle officials into complying with their wishes.

Let us not forget that Sheikh Abdel Majeed Al Zindani, who, since 2004 has been listed by the United States as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist”, still accounts among Al Islah’s most senior leaders.

Made strong by the chaos which war created, Al Islah has oftentimes, since late March 2015, flaunted its ties to Al Qaeda, mainly on social media, but somehow few ever clued up to the ramifications of such an admission of collusion in narrative and politics ... not even Hadi felt he ought to create distance.

For a lack of support within Yemen, Hadi has often turned and leaned on Al Islah to prop up his fading base and thus hold on to the title he well knows is as hollow as his claim of return to the presidential helm.

The Muslim Brotherhood first emerged in Yemen in the 1960s and 1970s, when UN-sanctioned Abdel Majeed al-Zindani - the founder of the Brotherhood’s branch in Yemen - led a group of clerics to establish a religious schooling system in northern Yemen. When Yemen united in 1990 the group then decided to reinvented itself a coalition by opening its ranks to like-minded individuals, all seating on different places within the spectrum of religious radicalism. Saudi Arabia designated Al Islah as a terrorist organization in 2014.

The risk today is that the Brotherhood through its medium: Al Islah will attempt a re-enactment of the 1980s Jihadist movement which eventually led to the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and the subsequent rise of the Taliban.

By limiting our analyses to the actions of Saudi Arabia’s war coalition, Ansarallah and to some extent the Southern Transition Council we are truly closing our eyes to the very serpent which patiently awaits to strike.

For the beant chasm laid out in between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis both parties remain committed to brokering an acceptable peace. The same cannot be said of the Muslim Brotherhood since the faction’s very existence is articulated around the formulation of an enemy and the need to wage war against that enemy - might it within or without.

Today the Brotherhood is playing the populist card, hiding itself behind a convenient narrative of false morality, nationalism, and calls for reparation in the face of disturbingly rampant human rights violations.

Tawakkul Karman, a long-time member and poster child of the Brotherhood has often used her fame to argue against any and all rapprochement between warring factions on the basis, she claims, their will is not that of the ‘people’.

A well-oiled dogmatic machine the Brotherhood should not be discounted … as often in times of great unrest it those who can best hold on to order and efficiency who will ultimately seize power.

Yemen’s Muslim Brotherhood exists today in political suspension as it awaits to see what fate will strike its opponents. To look away now would be to condemn Yemen to the fate which befell Afghanistan ... hopefully this time around we will learn from History and not allow for another pocket of radicalism to claim territories to its name.

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