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“The absence of effective counterterrorism legislation contributed to Yemen’s appeal as a safe haven for terrorists,”

Compiled by: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA’A, Aug 28 — A recent report carried out by the US State Department and Counter-Terrorism Center showed that Yemen’s porous borders have allowed many terrorists to base operations within Yemen.

According to the report, the Yemeni government lacked a strong security apparatus outside major cities and its Counterterrorism Unit and Yemen Special Operations Force, the state’s two premier counterterrorism entities, required additional training and funding in order to effectively target terrorist elements.

The report indicated that Department of State provided training and equipment to Yemen’s security forces in the Ministry of Interior, including the Yemeni Coast Guard and the Central Security Forces Counterterrorism Units (CTU).

The report showed that the United States also supported regional and multilateral efforts to help Yemen stop the flow of funding to terrorism, including regional training of Yemeni officials from the Central Bank, Ministry of Finance, and Financial Intelligence Unit.

Security continued to deteriorate

“The security situation in Yemen con-

tinued to deteriorate during 2009. Al-Qa’ida in Yemen (AQY) announced its merger with al-Qa’ida (AQ) elements in Saudi Arabia in January 2009, creating al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP),” said the report.

It added, “This strategy of consolidation received significant publicity and demonstrated AQ’s recruitment efforts and commitment to expand operations throughout the Peninsula.”

The creation of AQAP, according to the report, coincided with fewer attacks within Yemen. “This was due in part to Yemeni security forces’ disruptions of the group, but also may have reflected the desire of AQAP’s leadership to re-

duce its attacks within Yemen and use the country – and particularly those regions that were largely outside government control – as a safe haven for planning future attacks.”

The report revealed that the government’s response to the terrorist threat was intermittent, and its ability to pursue and prosecute suspected terrorists remained weak throughout most of the year.

It indicated that the draft counterterrorism legislation stalled in Parliament but the government’s response, however, improved dramatically later, exemplified by the heightened pace of counterterrorism operations.

Problems prosecuting terrorists

The report added that prosecuting terrorists remained extremely difficult for Yemeni courts, largely because current law, as applied to counterterrorism and the financing of terrorism, remained weak.

According to the report, the absence of effective counterterrorism legislation that criminalized the activities of those engaged in planning and facilitating acts of terrorism, both in Yemen and abroad, contributed to Yemen’s appeal as a safe haven and potential base of operations for terrorists.

The report added that, “the government was forced to apply other available laws, including fraudulent document

charges or “membership in an armed gang” charges to thwart foreign fighters going to Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Legal, political, and logistical hurdles remained, according to the report, a hindrance to an effective detention and rehabilitation program for Guantanamo returnees. “The government lacked a secure facility to house Guantanamo returnees, a plan for rehabilitating the returnees, or the legal framework to hold returnees for more than a short amount of time.”

The government’s monitoring program of released Guantanamo returnees remained largely ineffective, the report said.

Yemeni youth give back to the community



A group of the volunteers repackaging the meals from Al-Hamra Restaurant before taking them to Al-Sunaina to be distributed to the poor.

By: Amira Al-Arasi

SANA’A, Aug 28 — Around 30 young Yemeni men and women from two volunteering initiatives “Eyoon Shaba” and “Min Jadeed” have been dedicating their services to help some of the very poor families in Sana’a.

For the last two weeks the youth collected surplus food from restaurants and repackaged them and distributed them as meals for the poor locals in Al-Sunaina area. The best part is that

this initiative empowered some of the young men in the area and included them in the packaging and distribution process so that they feel useful.

“I have 13 members in my family and my father works as a daily laborer fixing floor tiles. Last year Eyoon Shaba provided this service to my neighborhood and I wanted to help them but they said they had enough volunteers. This year their work expanded and now I am part of this project which is great,” said Laheem Hussein a 17 year old

young man from Al-Sunaina.

He feels good being productive and this project has helped also employ him at the restaurant. “It has opened my eyes to the volunteerism and I will not stop here.”

The youth were able to distribute near 800 meals to the poor. Most of the meals came from Al-Hamara Restaurant

Samar Al-Matari one of the volunteers says this is not her first experience in distributing food to the poor. “For over 15 years my mother collects donations, cooks food and distribute it to the poor.”

The project also includes an awareness element as the youth talk to people in the restaurants and whoever would listen about good hygiene and eating manners.

“We talk to the customers about our initiative and that the leftovers from their meals would be fixed and given to those who can’t afford to buy food.

They praise us and are delighted that there are girls working in volunteerism in Yemen, but some just ignore us,” said Randa Al-Harazi a coordinator and awareness person at Eyoon Shaba.

The volunteers talk to the customers about how to avoid messing their food so that the leftovers are in good condition. They try without offending the customers advising them not to mix all the food items and not to bite from every piece without finishing them.

“I wish more people join us. Here we have a strong giving spirit there are girls that come from far away just to be part of this initiative. I wish the government would also take interest and promote such activities,” said Al-Harazi.

This has also been an educational experience for the families of the volunteers. Amani Nizar explains how at first her family did not approve of her going after dark to the restaurant and to a shabby poor neighborhood such as Al-Sunaina.

“When I showed them a video of our work and the distribution process, when they saw the joy in the eyes of the poor they changed their mind and supported me. Now my little sister who is 11 wants to join us,” said Amani Nizar.

The distribution process is quite organized. The initiative which started in 2009 was launched with a field survey that extended to several areas in Sana’a by Eyoon Shaba to identify the needy families.

“We then gave them cards through which we identify them and deliver the meals to them. We give them meals according to the family size but not always we get enough meals it depends on how much food we can collect from the restaurants,” said Fuad Al-Mikhlafla the person in charge of Al-Sanina area.

All the volunteers and especially the beneficiaries are hoping that this project expands and continues not only in Ramadan. Najwa Ahmad is a ten year old girl from Al-Sunaina. “My father is mentally ill and he even beats us when there is a problem at home. We don’t have a source of income so the meals are like a gift from heaven for us. I really hope this project continues,” she said.

Yemen & al-Qaeda, the jihadist threat

In the chaotic wake of a president’s flight, extreme Islamists are boosted

The Economist

SANA’A, Aug 28 — In the sweltering summer heat, refugees are streaming out of Yemen’s dusty, fly-blown southern town of Zinjibar. Thousands have struggled, often on foot, to reach Aden, 50km (31 miles) to the south-west, fleeing from a three-week war between the Yemeni army and assorted jihadists. Civilians have been killed in raids by government aircraft, bodies litter the streets, and the town, say the refugees, has run out of food and water. But they cannot say for sure who is fighting whom—or why.

Zinjibar is the latest city to be overtaken by violence, as chaos spreads after more than four months of protests that began in the capital, Sana’a. Earlier this month President Ali Abdullah Saleh fled to exile in Saudi Arabia after he was wounded in an attack on his compound. The government, now answerable to Mr Saleh’s vice-president, says Zinjibar has fallen to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), a shadowy clutch of a few hundred militants who look for inspiration if not for orders to the organisation founded by the late Osama bin Laden. The Yemeni branch is better known in the West for one of its leaders, Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-Yemeni cleric involved in an abortive attempt to blow up an aircraft over Detroit in 2009.

AQAP has training camps in Yemen and calls in Arabic and English for attacks on American and Saudi targets and on the Yemeni government. American security people are still working secretly with their Yemeni counterparts to gather intelligence, using drones to pinpoint attacks on the guerrillas. In light of the recent surge in violence, American co-operation with Yemen’s forces has increased. American weapons are said to be targeting leading jihadists with armed drones and fighter jets.

In his struggle to stay in power, Mr Saleh often argued that AQAP would thrive in a Yemen bereft of his leadership, especially when seeking money and weapons from abroad. But he often exaggerated its power. He recently withdrew most government forces from Zinjibar, ostensibly to bring extra security to the increasingly violent cities elsewhere. But opposition members and tribal leaders say Mr Saleh deliberately gave the armed groups a chance to take over the town and that in the past he has armed militant groups, encouraging them

to attack, so that he can blame AQAP and highlight its activities.

Militant Islamists in Yemen are by no means limited to AQAP, though it is the most ideologically extreme of the Islamist groups. But AQAP is entrenched, has widened its reach and has grown in strength under Mr Saleh’s rule. In the 1980s many Yemenis joined the mujahideen in Afghanistan, returning as well-trained heroes; many of them then fought for Mr Saleh in the civil war of 1994, which ended with the north imposing unity on the south. Since the 1990s radical Islam has been boosted by schools and universities funded by Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti religious groups promoting a fierce brand of Wahhabist Islam.

This trend was sharpened by a crack-down on militants in Saudi Arabia, which caused hundreds of militants to flee to Yemen, where they found safe havens in rugged and tenuously governed areas in the centre, east and south, particularly in the provinces of Shabwa and Abyan, where poor young zealots make eager recruits. As some people in those parts have become more pious, government officials and soldiers have been increasingly despised as corrupt and violent.

North-west of Zinjibar, in Abyan province, the town of Jaar has been dominated by extremists for months. Some people there say they are happier than when they were under government control, despite crippled public services. The jihadists say they are grappling with the sewage system and trying to provide water. On June 15th a similar jihadist group captured parts of Houta, in Lahej province.

Zinjibar is still being fiercely fought over. The militants still hold the main bit of the city. It may find itself run by a mixture of jihadists, including both AQAP and criminal gangs; exclusive AQAP rule seems unlikely at present. The government has sent reinforcements but so far they have failed to retake the town.

As the economy falters and unrest threatens to descend into tribal mayhem, many Yemenis fear that angry and hungry people may join groups involved in hijacking, bank robberies and arms- and drug-smuggling, as well as jihadist outfits seeking to bring down the government and impose sharia law. American aerial attacks may kill some leading jihadists, but they always risk killing civilians too, bolstering the jihadist cause. The rise of militant Islam in Yemen is not precisely the same as the rise of al-Qaeda—but its result may be just as worrying.

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Continued from page 1

Analysis: Why Yemen remains in the dark

The lack of international certification of Yemen’s gas reserves also played a role. The second phase of the Mareb plant was supposed to produce 400 mega watts failed due to a dispute between Yemeni officials and Yemeni agents over international implementation. This project was funded by the Saudi Development Fund (with SR 375 million), the Arab Development Fund (with KD 30 million) and by Oman (with USD 15 million).

Three companies won the implementation tender of the first phase of Mareb power plant: Siemens and Yemeni businessman Hameed Al-

Ahmar. The project was to create and install the generating turbine tender worth USD 159 million. The Korean Hyundai Company and its Yemeni businessman agent Nabeel Hayel won the bid to provide and install the power supply lines from Mareb to Sana’a with USD 59 million. The last bid went to the Iranian Persian Company and its Yemeni agent Bishr Abd Al-Haq; they were to import the converting stations with USD 45 million.

The actual total capacity of the national power doesn’t exceed more than 600 Megawatt.

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YT vision statement



Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf,
(1951 - 1999)
Founder of Yemen Times

**“To make
Yemen a
good
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OUR
OPINION

The match maker

Believe it or not, one of my several hats is one of a match maker. I do it only for my friends and close circle. Because I know them, or at least pretend to I kind of have reasons to believe that I know what an ideal spouse for them would be. I also have a wide network of acquaintances so every now and then I scan my contacts looking for an eligible husband or wife for someone I know.

It should have been easy. But it is really not.

One big problem is that with many educated Yemeni women the criteria of a decent husband is quite complicated and hard to fulfill. I don't blame them for that I myself had the endless conditions for whom I would consider a suitable husband and eventually had to import one from Jordan – just kidding it was a love story no commercial deal was involved.

And while I did say their standards were high, all I meant is that the women want a good person with honorable character and who respects women. Most empowered and educated Yemeni women have tasted what it is like to be respected as woman, either because of their qualifications, money, influence or sheer self confidence. Unfortunately, majority of Yemeni women who are not independent live and die without that feeling. Their opinion is never asked for even if it is about them.

Yemen is a male dominated country and so the men hog the decision making process and the economic resources. They don't see women as an equal partner and so their attitude towards a prospective wife is not one that sits well with educated women, so they often land up single or marry non-Yemenis.

But the story also has another side to it. My male friends who have had their share of exposure usually look for a beautiful woman from a good family with at least high school education. They usually want a younger girl in her early twenties and most of the women whom I directly know who fulfill this criteria are already in their mid to late twenties.. some even in their thirties which by Yemeni standards is old.

So my search has to expand to unknown territories seeking out respectable families with eligible ladies. The problem here is two folds, one is that they usually ask for a lot of money in terms of dowry and the second is that they don't approve of the engagement period concept and the couple to be getting to know each other.

I had to visit families and see the potential bride myself and then describe her to the potential groom because they would not allow him to see her directly... If they were lenient enough they would allow him to see an old picture of her in a school uniform and I had to hold the picture in my hand because he was not to even hold the picture which had to be returned asap.

Some families allow a supervised phone conversation, which was almost always useless. I remember being with one male friend while he was supposed to talk to the girl and we prepared a list of questions which he would ask her about herself. Eventually her tongue got tied and he was so frustrated that he called everything off. I don't blame the girl, I blame her family.

Many Yemeni men get married based on inaccurate description, sometimes it works and they are happy but many times it does not and they divorce or he lands up having a second wife whom he chooses himself. Most second wives are work colleagues or university students if the husband is a professor.

I am getting the feeling that I am not cut out to being a match maker.. The whole environment is against me and it is not working the way I want it.. What is your experience?

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Yemen on the brink

By: **Antonia Dimou**
World Press

Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula seriously continues to threaten Yemen's stability, regional security and Western interests. Western security concerns focused on the impoverished Arab country, which is a neighbour of top oil exporter Saudi Arabia, after al Qaeda's Yemen-based regional wing claimed responsibility for a failed suicide bombing of a U.S.-bound plane in December 2009. Since then, al Qaeda's Yemen arm has intensified its attacks against state infrastructure in various Yemeni provinces. The attack in the southern Shabwa province on July 25 was among five raids on state targets since June, which have been attributed to the resurgent militant group.

That is why Yemen's pressing short-term and long-term problems need to be addressed immediately and comprehensively. The root causes of terrorism, appropriate methods of de-radicalizing or countering religious radicalism, and the potential for Yemen's troubles to infect its neighbors demand proper policy responses. It is evident, however, that security and economic development are mutually dependent, and meaningful political reform is necessary to sustain both.

In fact, there is an urgent need for a process of dialogue to address the critical issue of national reconciliation as well as broader political reforms. Yemen's government needs to adopt more constructive and inclusive attitudes, and decentralization of political power could alleviate many of the local grievances spawning confrontation. Personal status and business disputes are being increasingly resolved under tribal law, and not state law, and thus the restoration of the rule of law and of a strong, independent judiciary is urgent.

An outside facilitator is needed to provide a neutral forum for discussion and promote accountability. Regional and international support is absolutely critical to achieving success, and Oman or Qatar could possibly be suitable interlocutors. The dialogue process should be broad, including the ruling party, the Joint Meet-

ing Parties, the Southern Movement, the Houthis and other relevant actors.

At the same time, Yemen's oil reserves are being depleted. Approximately 70 percent of the government's revenue comes from oil, making economic diversity an urgent and critical issue if Yemen is to avoid devastating consequences, while immediate attention needs to be paid to Yemen's emerging water and energy crises. Both crises, if not managed well, have the potential to threaten Yemen's national security.

With this reality on the ground, the framework established at the London Summit of 2010 by the representatives of countries and international organizations has become a meaningful basis to address Yemen's problems. The summit reiterated commitment to support Yemen in fighting extremism, corruption, poverty, maritime piracy and African displacement, as Yemen currently hosts more than 2 million refugees from the Horn of Africa, in addition to a large number of internally displaced persons.

A follow-up meeting of donor countries in Riyadh in February was a major extension of the London Conference. The Riyadh Donor Conference was designed to gather donors to find transparent ways to disburse aid and establish mechanisms that will monitor the reform of economic institutions and practices, the improvement of the investment climate and the rapid replacement of dwindling water and energy resources.

Nine agreements were signed by the Saudi Fund for Development on the sidelines of the Donors Conference for financing several projects in Yemen at a cost of \$642 million. Saudi Arabia also agreed to extend funding for the implementation of six projects, in partial fulfillment of its pledge initially made at the first London Donors Conference of 2006 to offer \$1 billion to Yemen. Additionally, the World Bank revealed that it would offer Yemen an amount of \$480 million to finance development projects as part of the strategy of country assistance to Yemen for the years 2010-2013.

Both the London and the Riyadh Donors conferences aimed to address issues like the tackling of unemployment, water and energy, the role of the IMF, interna-

tional aid delivery and the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Yemen's high unemployment rate is critical for its stability. Given the dearth of job opportunities inside the country, the greatest obstacle towards building up Yemen's economy lies in the unwillingness of its neighbors to allow Yemenis to work in their countries. Neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia and other GCC states could gradually open their labor markets to Yemeni citizens.

Yemen's lack of water is also critical as San'a may well be the first capital to lack sufficient water for its population. This water crisis could lead to massive population shifts in the region as well as serious health implications and internal instability with unpredictable security ramifications. The construction of desalination plants in key population centers along the coast and intensive aid to the government of Yemen for a national effort to manage and conserve water are important.

Additionally, neighboring countries could support Yemen in the power sector, for example, connecting Yemen to the regional power grid and assisting construction of Yemen's power infrastructure, while the further development of the Aden Free Zone as an industrial zone that would have a separate administrative authority and appropriate regulations is critical. A special status permitting duty and quota-free shipments to the European Union, the United States and other countries would stimulate investment. This zone could also host projects such as desalination and power production plants, both of which would have an evident impact on the daily lives of the Yemeni people.

It is also important to note the vital role the IMF can play in the implementation of critically needed financial and budget reforms, both of which are fundamental to progress toward a sustainable economy and thus improving the security status. The IMF could assist the Yemeni government in tax reform, which could recover billions of dollars lost through tax evasion, energy subsidies such as reducing subsidies on diesel fuel, and water reform such as increased tariffs for high water usage.

Additionally, international develop-

ment aid needs to maximize coverage to a wide variety of actors and regions without favoring the government at the expense of opposition groups that have legitimate grievances. Aid should flow through the central government and local institutions. The Social Fund for Development provides a model for aid distribution. In all cases, the flow of aid must be carefully monitored in light of Yemen's pervasive corruption. Approved international government agencies and NGOs could manage foreign aid with transparency and accountability.

Last but not least, the GCC can play a significant role in addressing Yemen's problems, especially in the economic realm. But the GCC as an organization and its individual states are unwilling to open their doors to Yemeni expatriate laborers. They still mistrust the Yemeni government for backing Saddam's 1990 invasion and occupation of Kuwait, and they suspect that the Yemenis will bring with them the infections of Islamic extremism. Given that some GCC countries remain reluctant to give Yemen full membership in the Council, perhaps the GCC might consider granting Yemen «associate status» that would allow freer movement of labor and capital between Yemen and GCC countries. Such a designation would be a vote of confidence and encouragement, and could serve as a basis for reinvigorating the process of economic reform in Yemen.

As it is evident, there is no panacea or silver bullet solution for Yemen. Prerequisite for Yemen's success is the development of a comprehensive plan to address chronic poverty, reform economic institutions and practices, improve the investment climate, introduce national dialogue, restore order and the rule of law, and establish security. Failure to act on these issues will undermine any effort to deal with the threat from al Qaeda or Yemen's internal misery and thus will prolong regional turmoil and violence.

Antonia Dimou is an associate at the Centre for Strategic Studies of the University of Jordan and head of the Middle East and Persian Gulf Unit at the Centre for Security and Defence Analyses based in Athens.

W(h)ither Yemen?

By: **Zach Paikin**
JINSA

While it appears tensions in Yemen have lessened since President Ali Abdullah Saleh was nearly killed in an attack on his presidential compound on June 3, the United States cannot take this relative quiet for granted. Having already lost regional partners this year - notably Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon -- the loss of a working relationship with Yemen would be a severe blow to regional security and to American interests.

Yemen's importance to American security is critical, largely due to its strategic location athwart the Red Sea shipping lanes leading to and from the Suez Canal. Moreover, porous borders to Yemen's east and considerable lawlessness to its west on the African continent could allow for a collapsed Yemen to serve not only as a safe haven for terrorists - already the case in the vast, ungoverned areas of Yemen - but also as a stepping stone between Iran and large swaths of African lands from Somalia and Sudan across to Mali. A freer hand for Iran and terrorist organizations in sub-Saharan Africa would increase the threat to Europe.

Yet unlike Egypt, whose cooperation with the United States since the Sadat days has been key not only due to its management of the Suez Canal but also because of its opposition to Iran's theocratic regime and to the Muslim Brotherhood, Yemen's instability had been visible for a considerable period of time prior to its present upheaval.

First, Yemen is a mishmash of several tribes that predate the state by centuries. Second, the current Yemeni state is the result of the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, following the decline of the Soviet Union and the communist South's loss of more than half of its aid from Moscow between 1986 and 1989. A civil war broke out in 1994 between forces of the former North and South in which the North was victorious and tensions still exist between the two.

While various tribes and the secessionist Southern Mobility Movement have indeed played a role in countering President Saleh's power from time to time, however, the principal opposition elements that should be taken into account by the White House are the Houthi rebellion and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Countering the Shiite Houthi rebellion against Saleh's government has been an area of cooperation between the United States, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Although the Houthis adhere to a different sect of Shia Islam than do the ayatollahs in Iran - the former to Zaidiyya and the latter to Ithna Ashariyya (Twelver Shiism) - Saudi Arabia fears Shiite uprisings on its borders.

Indeed, in addition to the Houthi rebellion in Yemen, the Shiite uprising in Bahrain against the ruling Sunni al-Khalifa family could lead Iran to encourage Saudi Shiites - concentrated primarily in the Kingdom's Eastern Province - to rise up against Riyadh as well, as was the case during Iran's attempts to «export the [Islamic] revolution» in the 1980s.

Renewed American commitment to Yemen's security, stability and development - if done properly - would have re-

percussions beyond Yemen's borders. It would do much to repair the ailing American-Saudi relationship that has been in bad shape since President Obama was perceived to have quickly abandoned Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak amid a popular uprising.

The Saudi royal family now worries that their cooperation with the United States does not guarantee American support for friendly regimes facing popular opposition. Furthermore, addressing the Houthi issue within a comprehensive framework for Yemen would be a step backwards for Iran, which stands to make gains in the region following many of the uprisings in Arab states.

Countering AQAP in Yemen is an obvious goal of the Obama administration, which has made the war against Al-Qaeda a top priority. Unlike the Houthi rebellion, however, Saleh does not view AQAP as a major threat. If anything, the presence of AQAP - one of the most successful branches of the Al-Qaeda franchise - within Yemen's borders gives Saleh leverage over Washington. At this time, America's ability to conduct or assist operations against Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorists in Yemen depends largely on Washington's support for President Saleh's regime and its principal security needs.

So long as Iran and Al-Qaeda remain direct threats to the United States, the Houthi rebellion and AQAP will continue to work against U.S. interests and security. This remains the case regardless of who governs Yemen. Therefore, the endgame for the White House must be the creation of a situation in which the Houthi and AQAP threats can be addressed the most effectively and di-

rectly.

It is increasingly clear that President Saleh cannot play a role in Yemen's future government if the United States is ever to ensure Yemeni stability. Saleh has already reneged on the commitment he made on May 18 to step down within a month and it is expected that internal tensions will increase if he attempts to re-enter Yemen from Saudi Arabia where he is currently receiving medical treatment. This does not mean, however, that members of the current governing regime should not remain a part of the new governing coalition.

The United States should push for a broad coalition that includes - but is not limited to - members of the current governing regime. Such a coalition will be able to mitigate the influence of Islamist actors such as Al-Islah - Yemen's principal opposition party, composed of Salafists, supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and a tribal confederacy - and will preserve the basic U.S.-Yemen relationship of American-provided military assistance in exchange for Yemeni collaboration in the field of counterterrorism. Furthermore, it will allow Washington and Riyadh to focus more effectively on fighting corruption and promoting economic development in Yemen without fear of another popular uprising that threatens their security.

Tackling such issues is the key to ensuring Yemen's long-term stability and is therefore the principal way to protect the interests and security of America and its allies.

Zach Paikin is a research associate at the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs.

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Ten years after 9/11 God's uprooted warriors

In his essay, the well-known Iranian religious intellectual Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari describes the reaction to 9/11 in Iran, highlights some of the root causes of terrorism and suggests how it can meaningfully be countered

By: Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari
Qantara.de

I watched the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York on 11th September 2011 on television in Iran's Evvin Prison. Although I had a feeling I was witnessing an incredibly pivotal event, I did not grasp just how significant this event, which took place at the start of the third millennium, was, and that it would soon trigger other events and reactions that would shape global politics in the first decades of the new century.

Reactions in Iran

Naturally, responses to the events of 9/11 differed around the world. I would like to focus here specifically on the reactions in Iran. These unexpected and astonishing attacks were seen by the Iranian public as an appalling crime and a human catastrophe and were, for this reason, condemned immediately. At the time, the reformist, moderate government of Mohammad Khatami was in power; the parliament was controlled by a clear majority of reformists; culture, press and politics were all dominated by young intellectuals and defenders of civil society, who were in favour of an improvement in relations with the West and America.

The Iranian president was one of the first heads of government to condemn the 9/11 catastrophe. Ayatollah Montazeri, one of the country's most senior religious leaders, justified his condemnation of the bloodbath on the basis of religious scriptures. The Iranian parliament also condemned the attack.

After some hesitation and in vaguely worded statements, the conservatives and fundamentalists also added their voices to this condemnation. Using his own particular brand of speech, Ayatollah Khamenei, the leader of Iran's fundamentalists, also condemned the attacks.

The young people of Iran in particular very openly demonstrated their sympathy and solidarity with the American people and the families of the victims, which also included a number of Iranians. In a symbolic religious ceremony, young people took to the streets to demonstrate their sympathy, dressed in black and carrying candles. In these circumstances, even if there was any small extremist, anti-Western group that delighted in the terrorist attacks on America, they were

not able to show their thoughts and feelings publicly.

Background to the Iranian reaction to 9/11

There are specific historical, cultural and religious reasons for these reactions in Iran and I would like to examine these in more detail now.

By nature, Iranian people do not incline to extremism. If one looks at the 3,000 years of Iranian history and compares and contrasts Iran with its neighbours, this Iranian characteristic is particularly apparent. From the start to the finish of the Sassanid Dynasty, the ancient Iranian religions of the Persian Empire rejected violence and called on their followers to show love and moderation. Zarathustra, Mani and Mazdak contributed much to the dissemination of these principles. The peaceful co-existence of a variety of peoples within the Persian Empire reinforced the spirit of tolerance and acceptance of others.

The Shiite branch of Islam was the second factor that played an effective role in this regard. Although Islam is the most political of the major religions as a result of the Prophet's ten-year rule in Medina in the seventh century, this religion is still fundamentally built on peace and co-existence. Throughout the course of history, the behaviour of Muslims remained inherently tolerant despite their early wars of conquest and internal conflicts. The links between the Shiite religion and Iranian mysticism contributed to this development. Moreover, the spread of philosophical thought in Shiite society further strengthened the inclination to moderation and peaceableness in Iran.

Another factor is the profound knowledge of Western modernism and civilisation. Even though Iranians became acquainted with Western culture later than Muslims in the Middle East and India, they were all the more open to the achievements of the modern world and accepted them more quickly. This is why it is no coincidence that the constitutional revolution of 1906, which led to the establishment of a modern, political order, was the first victorious, political-religious movement in the Middle East. This movement was of such significance that the renowned Egyptian reformer Rashid Rida welcomed it and recommended that the ulama at Al-Azhar emulate the Shiite clerics.

Islam's tradition of peace

Another relevant factor is that Islam as such, regardless of how it may be interpreted, cannot endorse the killing of innocent people under any circumstances. There is no Islamic text that backs up such an action. Yes, there were wars that were waged under the banner of jihad in the early years of Islam, and yes, the Koran called the faithful to jihad in the form of political and military resistance to enemies and warmongers. However, this jihad was intended firstly as a resistance to armed men and soldiers, not to citizens in their houses and homes. Secondly, the war adhered to specific mandatory laws that had to be observed. For example, the Koran states quite explicitly that "if they (the enemy) incline to peace, incline thou also to it" (8.61). Even the fear of an enemy ruse does not justify the refusal of an offer of peace. If a simple soldier, for whatever reason, offers protection to the enemy during a time of war, his Muslim commander must keep this promise and respect his decision. This religious commandment is a clear effort to keep peace and avoid war.

What is even more important is that it instructs the mujaheddin to leave women, children, old people, monks and the followers of other religions – in short, civilians – in peace during all military campaigns and not to prevent them from going about their agricultural business. The Islamic rule of *musta'man* (people who are granted security) protects the life and limb of all people and all those of other faiths for always. The Koran quite explicitly states: "Whosoever killeth a human being, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind" (5.32).

After all, even traditional, unprogressive Islam has rules for *dar al-harb* (the house of war) and *dar as-salam* (the house of peace). These rules cannot simply be broken under any old pretext. It is not clear on what religious pretext Muslim fundamentalists and terrorists lay bombs, carry out suicide bomb attacks and kill innocent, uninvolved people. For them, there are no limits to murder. They indiscriminately kill people in their mosques, homes and churches. If they would at least reveal the theoretical principles on which they base their behaviour, then we would know the religious sources they use to justify their actions. Because of the unfounded behaviour of terrorists who are ascribed to Islam, almost all Muslims in the world reject these actions; the terrorists are anathematised by the Sunni and Shiite ulama.

In Iran, young people, intellectuals and leaders of the political struggle – whether religious or areligious – have long since turned their back on the notion of violence and revolution. They endeavour to reach their democratic goals by civil and peaceful means. The reform



"It seems to me," writes Yousefi Eshkevari, "that the error inherent in the West's analysis of the situation in general and the error made by politicians in particular is that they subjectively seek the causes of fundamentalism and terrorism in Islam and in religious teachings. They use verses of the Koran and passages from traditional texts that have been handed down from generation to generation and the Sharia – all taken out of context – to back up their arguments against the terrorists."

efforts of the last decade, especially those of the Green Movement in the past two years, are perfect examples of this behaviour.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that a small group of Iranian Muslims adhere to extremist and violent ideas. However, it is also clear that these people are associated with the ruling regime, are committing acts of violence with its material and moral support and would not shy away from committing crimes. Although they are Shiites, they resemble Sunni fundamentalists in the Arab world and are influenced by terrorist movements in neighbouring countries. For this reason, they are justifiably referred to in Iran as "Shiite Taliban" and "Shiite al-Qaeda".

The roots of terrorism

Much has been said and written about this new phenomenon and the possibilities of repelling it. However, as long as the social and political causes of this phenomenon are not acknowledged and investigated, we will never know what form defence measures should take, which in turn means that all strategies will fail. The ten-year military struggle against the Taliban and al-Qaeda and the general war on terrorism in the East and the West have not borne fruit. NATO practically admits that it has not reached its objectives in Afghanistan in the fight against the Taliban. The maintenance of the status quo is viewed as a success. Gradually, the realisation is dawning that modern weapons and traditional armies cannot inflict any damage on terrorist ideologies.

It seems to me that the error inherent in the West's analysis of the situation in general and the error made by politicians in particular is that they subjectively seek the causes of fundamentalism and terrorism in Islam and in religious teachings. They use verses of the Koran and passages from traditional texts that have been handed down from generation to generation and the Sharia – all taken out of context – to back up their arguments against the terrorists. When they come across verses in the Koran that deal with jihad, they suggest that these passages should be deleted from the text

without delay. If we follow this train of thought to its conclusion, the solution to the problem lies in the publication of millions of Korans without jihad verses. After all, so the reasoning, if the Muslims were to accept this, one would have dealt with the root of the problem and put a stop to the jihadists.

Social factors

However, if we look more closely, it quickly becomes apparent that this destructive phenomenon is first and foremost a social problem caused by a series of historical, social and economic factors. It will continue to exist as long as the factors that cause it continue to exist. Naturally, subjective and cultural factors that can be traced back to religion play an important role in the emergence of Islamist terrorism and extremism. These factors must also be acknowledged and combated. However, the only way to do this is to realise that it is a social and political problem that can be traced back to objective factors.

We can, of course, continue to use old means to combat terrorism and to view any change in priorities as a mistake. This would ultimately lead to defeat. However, we must understand that fundamentalists around the world – especially the groups that use violence and carry out terrorist suicide bomb attacks – are outside the control of traditional religious institutions and authorities such as mosques and recognised legal scholars. These fundamentalists do not recognise the latter's fatwas and believe that these religious leaders have allied themselves with the Western enemy or are, at best, remaining silent on their conservative beliefs in the face of foreign dominance and the enemies of Islam, which means that they should be considered traitors.

They even claim that these religious scholars have renounced their religion and must be punished as infidels (the group that assassinated the former Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, also adhered to this belief). It is no coincidence that right from the beginning until the present day (from the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hasan al-Banna in Alexandria in 1928 to the establishment of al-Qaeda by Osama bin Laden), none of the leaders and founders of extremist

and terrorist groups have been clerics; many of them have even held university degrees from Western universities.

For example, Shukri Mustafa, leader of Takfir wal-Hijra, studied engineering, while Abbas Madani, leader of al-Amal al-Islami in Algeria, held a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Oxford. Most young people who commit acts of terrorism in the West (including the nineteen terrorists involved in the 9/11 attacks) either come from the West or were trained in the West and have no organisational or spiritual links to traditional religious institutes. If, once in a while, a low-ranking cleric comes to our attention, preaching extremism in a mosque, he is an exception that proves the rule.

Religion as a smokescreen

For this reason, I would like to stress that extremist groups that preach and perpetrate violence are not listening to the teachings of religion and the instructions of religious leaders. They are, in fact, much more under the influence of their social environment and family upbringing. Religion is a smokescreen for all other ideas, which are fed from other sources with particular political intent. I am not saying that these people are not Muslims; many of them are undoubtedly fanatical followers of their religion.

What I am saying is that in particular the young people among them do not have a profound knowledge of their religion and are influenced by certain social factors, which means that political groups can take advantage of their ignorance and fanaticism to their own unlawful, political ends. However, this does not mean that we should not properly investigate religious teachings and traditional dogmas. It is my opinion that a number of important factors influence this kind of Islamic fundamentalism – which is itself a modern phenomenon – in a particularly sustainable manner:

Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari is a Shiite cleric who was imprisoned in Iran for his liberal, democratic views. He has translated texts by the Egyptian reformist thinker Hamid Abuzaïd into Farsi. He is one of Iran's so-called "religious intellectuals".

Europe's small steps and giant leaps

By: Jean Pisani-Ferry
Project Syndicate

The world was expecting Eurobonds to come out of last week's Franco-German summit; instead, the eurozone will get economic governance. According to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the great leap forward to the creation of Eurobonds would perhaps be the culmination of that process, but for the moment small steps remain the order of the day. The question, obviously, is whether or not these small steps serve any purpose.

To answer this, we need to go back a little in time. Until this summer, the sovereign-debt crisis was confined to three small countries – Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Spain had succeeded in limiting the spread between its interest rates and those of Germany to about two percentage points.

By mid-July, however, the cost of borrowing for Spain and Italy was nearing four points, and France's borrowing conditions were rapidly deteriorating. The specter of a full-blown crisis was starting to haunt markets. But the eurozone was not equipped to deal with this. The European Financial Stability Facility, established in 2010, had a lending capacity of a little more than €300 billion – ample for the peripheral countries, but too little to help even Spain alone. Disaster beckoned.

On July 21, European leaders attempted – belatedly – to redress this

vulnerability by increasing the EFSF's capacity to allow it to counter the increased Spanish and Italian risk. And, while the EFSF is not equipped to confront simultaneous crises in Spain and Italy, it has now been authorized to prevent such crises – or will be once national parliaments ratify the agreement reached on July 21 – by intervening on secondary debt markets to reduce interest-rate spreads on national bonds. In the meantime, the European Central Bank is intervening in the EFSF's stead, and quite successfully so far: market tensions have eased markedly since the ECB began buying bonds on August 8.

This response is based on the hypothesis that, unlike the Greece crisis, which is a genuine case of insolvency, the Spanish and Italian crises are mainly attributable to self-fulfilling speculation. Here, markets are guided by groundless fears, which are nonetheless perilous because they have a negative impact on borrowing conditions.

In such cases, limited and credible intervention should suffice to flip the trend, but there is no guarantee. And, if intervention fails, even boosting the fund to €1 trillion or €1.5 trillion would be inadequate, because there would be a crippling domino effect: a Spanish crisis would affect Italy, an Italian crisis would hit France, and a French crisis would leave Germany as virtually the sole guarantor of an unbearable debt burden.

Issuing Eurobonds would mean replacing the current eurozone strategy of "every man for himself" with one based



on the principle "all for one and one for all," which would enable joint borrowing by euro countries. Each member country would benefit from the guarantee of all its partners, and only the aggregate situation of the eurozone – which is significantly better than that of the United States, Japan, or the United Kingdom – would matter.

The idea is attractive, but it must be recognized that a joint guarantee implies that each of the participating countries will give their partners access to their own taxpayers, who may be required to stand in for a defaulting borrower. This arrangement is unthinkable without an extremely robust counterpart – for example, prior scrutiny of national budgets. In concrete terms, a country may have to choose between repealing a finance bill adopted by its parliament but rejected by its eurozone partners and losing the joint guarantee.

Decisions of this nature cannot be left to a committee of technocrats or a conclave of ministers. They can be taken only by a body with democratic legitimacy analogous to that of a national parliament. In other words, issuing

Eurobonds entails setting up a federal system of government, one recognized as such by Europe's states and peoples.

Merkel and Sarkozy, no doubt, find this prospect highly unattractive. But their proposal may in practice boil down to a two-part response. In the short term, bolstering European governance by appointing EU President Hermann Van Rompuy as a permanent chairman of the eurozone conveys a signal about the zone's cohesion that is designed to calm markets and support the strategy adopted on July 21. But if this proves inadequate and a more ambitious approach is needed, the existence of a governance structure, or at least the beginnings of one, would form the basis of more elaborate institutional machinery.

With luck, the first part of the response will be enough, because it is far from certain that the second would be politically acceptable. But the decision lies only partly with governments themselves. Since the outbreak of this crisis, they have repeatedly been forced by events to push European integration further than they had initially envisaged. It may well be that these small steps for the eurozone lead in the not-too-distant future to a giant leap for Europe.

Jean Pisani-Ferry is the director of Bruegel, an international economic think-tank, a professor of economics at Paris-Dauphine University, and serves as a member of the Economic Analysis Committee under France's prime minister.

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Fahd Al-Omairi



Fahd Al-Omairi, third from right

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

Since the beginning of Yemen's revolution, lawyer Fahd Al-Omairi from Taiz governorate was one of many revolutionaries who struggled to establish Liberty Square in Taiz.

Al-Omairi contributed his own time to forming revolution's committees during establishment of the Liberty Square and he was able to convince people from rural areas to join the revolution, according to some of his friends.

For two months, Al-Omairi was in charge of the Liberty Square in Taiz. He made concert-

ed efforts to motivate people and revolutionaries to stay steadfast. During that time, the revolution started to gather momentum.

The gained momentum of the revolution in Taiz led Al-Omairi, with a group of youth, to hold many mass demonstrations and marches, demanding President Saleh step down.

"What we did is nothing. There are other people who sacrificed their lives for the revolution, freedom and dignity," he said. "Unfortunately, peaceful people in our peaceful governorate are exposed to killing and violence frequently because of their demands for president's ouster."

Al-Omairi spoke painfully

about Taiz's current bad conditions, indicating that there is systematic violence against Taiz's locals and their houses because of their strong stances on the regime. "They [the regime] want to depress those kind people to prevent them from holding demonstrations and marches,"

"We sleep every day on the sounds of bullets and wake up on the sounds of shelling," he said. "Everyone here doesn't rule out that he would receive indiscriminate bullet in any time."

Al-Omairi said that the recent price hikes done by the regime have exhausted people who are already impoverished. He said that the regime intends to create crises to people to punish them. "That's why we seek to overthrow this corrupt regime,"

Speaking about the Taiz's effective role in the revolution, he said: "Taiz is known for its revolutionary history and educated people. Taiz always inspires other governorates to make revolution against injustice and corruption."

Over the last seven months, Al-Omairi received many threats and difficulties as he participates in the revolution effectively every day.

He was imprisoned, kidnapped and threatened repeatedly by police officers and unknown people.

The National Security, according to Al-Omairi, tried to cause rifts between the revolutionaries with the aim of aborting the revolution and they succeeded relatively in creating some trouble to us. "Later, we could heal the rifts between us and could prevent the National Security from penetrating our revolution,"

The most complicated problem of the revolution, according to Al-Omairi, is absence of harmony between independent youth and partisan ones which lead to delay the revolution.

One of the most difficult and painful scenes in Al-Omairi's

life is the scene of burning the Liberty Square in Taiz by the security and loyalists to President Saleh. "I didn't expect at all that the regime will make such brutal attack. The smell of the dead bodies was acrid and the scenes of bloody murder were distressing."

"I will never forget when my relative and my close friend Hamad Abdurraqueeb was shot dead by those vicious killers," he said sorrowfully. "I will never forget when one of my friends was asking me to help him after he was shot. He was asking me to bring doctor to him but I couldn't."

Among these sad moments, Al-Omairi remembers many happy moments and scenes like youth's determination despite the difficulties they've faced.

"One of the unforgettable moments in my life is my days in prison with some of youth.



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One day, soldiers in the prison refused to provide us with water and we started chanting against the regime and they immediately gave us water and food," he recalled.

Remembering some moments of the revolution, he said: "It was unbelievable that some youth return again to protest against the regime after inhaling poisonous tear gases by security. They returned quickly and enthusiastically after being fine,"

Participation of Taiz's women in the revolution was remarkable, according to Al-Omairi. "Their participation was effective and important. They've participated keenly in all demonstrations and marches,"

"Women in Taiz proved that

they were heroine. They participated in different activities and provided different services," he said. "They were tossing food and water from their home's windows into the revolutionaries. They were providing the injured revolutionaries with the first aid voluntarily."

Al-Omairi with many revolutionaries is determined to stay peaceful. "Unfortunately, the regime wants to drag us into fierce confrontations but we will continue our peaceful struggle."

He called for the opposition political parties to stop taking over the change and liberty squares in all governorates. "They shouldn't prevent the youth from taking decisions related to the revolution."



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