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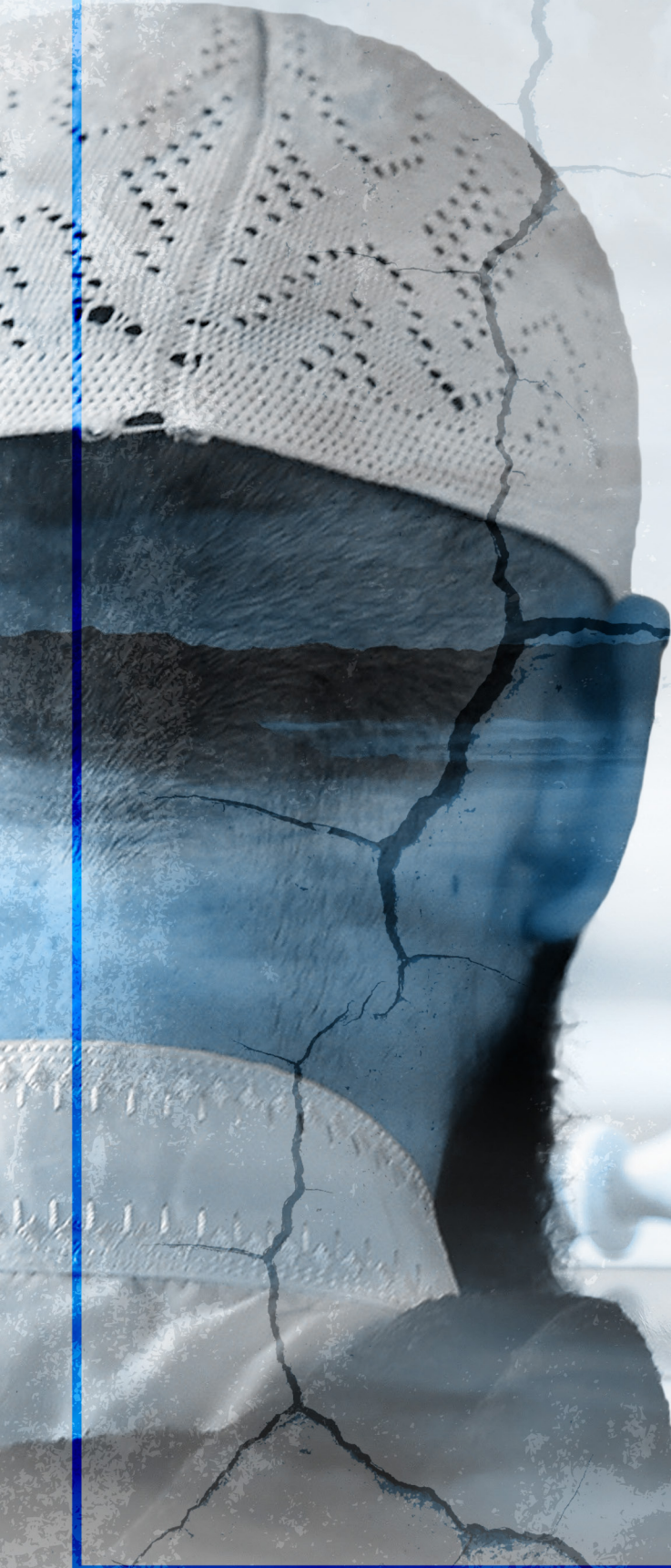


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# **SALAFIS IN YEMEN: FROM DAAWA TO POLITICAL ACTIVISM & DIVISION**





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# Salafis in Yemen: From Daawa to Political activism & Division

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Division or fragmentation is considered as the dominant feature of Salafism in Yemen since its emergence in the early 80s as a preaching movement, which was launched from “Dar Al-Hadith” religious center in “Sa’ada” and was founded by Sheikh “Muqbil bin Hadi Al-Wade’e” who’s seen as the spiritual father of Salafi movement in Yemen. This move that came with a Saudi support, and a blessing from the Yemeni regime at that time; Was aimed to be a nucleus for containing the Zaydi sect, but it later fueled conflicts with existing religious identities or beliefs within Yemeni local communities, and its activity was not limited to containing Zaydis only, but extended to Shafi’ism, Sufism, and other Islamic trends, including other Islamic trends that are associated with the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

During a short period - not more than two decades - Yemeni Salafism, especially after the year 2000, fragmented into many religious, political and military trends/currents, especially since 2011; As a result of the political and military events that Yemen experienced during what was known as the “Arab Spring revolutions”, as well as after the declaration of war on Yemen in early 2015, and what followed of effects it had on Salafist movements with all their orientations, and made them a key player on the political, military and social levels after their role was limited to religious aspects.

As a result of the political and military events that stormed Yemen, Salafism witnessed divisions and disparities in theses, where part of the group was satisfied with social and religious activity, others turned toward partisan work, and some joined the extremist militant ideology, as there is no longer anything that unites them except the claim of representing the Salafist call (Dawaa), while its manifold practices indicate otherwise.

This paper sheds light on the emergence of the Salafist movement in Yemen, its most prominent symbols, schools, currents, intellectual orientations, the transformations it witnessed and the challenges it faces.

Salafism began in the «Abbasid period» as an intellectual phenomenon, where many factors contributed in its emergence, perhaps most prominent

of which was the intellectual influence. As for the linguistic use of the term “Salafiyya”, it clearly refers to the “Al-Salaf Al-Salih”, who represent the first three generations of Muslims, and the Islamic heritage has made these individuals symbols of piety <sup>[1]</sup>.

Despite many contemporary approaches that have attempted to present Salafism as an Islamic trend, especially when moving from the theoretical reality of Salafism to the practical reality, we find that Salafism as a trend has long remained one of the most mysterious and difficult Islamic currents to understand for the general public, In the sense that the ambiguity relates to understanding it formatively and practically on explanatory models part that analyze and deconstruct the Salafi state, its capabilities for action, and religious, social and political influence.

## Salafism in Yemen

Salafism - especially in Yemen - is one of the topics for which it is not possible to find a comprehensive definition for, or to find a comprehensive identity card that you can provide a detailed picture to. Mainly Because of the great diversity that starts from thoughts and intellectual reference, passing through schools, groups and Salafist organizations, as well as the orientations and differences of these groups as well as the type of their movement in the field between religious, political and military aspects. All that along with their association, financing and relations with the Yemeni interior key players and abroad powers. To sum up this point, it can be said that the opinions about Salafism in Yemen can be summarized in two directions :

**First** : Those who says that Salafism in Yemen has roots in Yemeni history that extends back to almost 500 years, and has many historical leaders, such as “Ibrahim Al-Wazir”, “Al-Muqbli” and “Ibn Al-Amir Al-San’ani”, and that this Salafism is of a religious nature with an intellectual reference. It proceeds from the “science of Hadiths” narrated from the Messenger of Allah and that this Salafism does not belong to one Islamic sector or a school of thought, yet it is distinguished by its focus on belief and jurisprudence. The followers of Salafism prefer to be called : “Ahl Al-Sunnah Wal-Jamaa’ah” or “Ahl Al-Hadith”. Their enemies always describe them as «Wahhabis», in reference to the ideological influence exercised by «Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab» on this trend, and the role of the contemporary Saudi kingdom in its structuring. In fact, Salafism is based on various other references, so Wahhabism appears to be one of its derivatives, but it constitutes a label that is generally rejected by those who are considered to be its true followers <sup>[2]</sup>.

**Second** : It says the exact opposite, as it refers that the first emergence of religious Salafism in Yemen was in the early 80s of, at the hands of Sheikh “Muqbil bin Hadi Al-Wadi’i” who is considered the spiritual father of the Salafi movement in this country. During more than twenty years, “Al-Wadi’i” worked to build a network of Salafi institutions inside Yemen

through “Dar Al-Hadith” center which was established in Dammaj area, southeast of the city of Saada, as a nucleus for containing the Zaidi sect. From there, all the Salafi schools spread in many places in Yemen came out<sup>[3]</sup>.

Over the past decades, the Salafist network founded by “Al-Wadi’I” with Saudi regime support, and the blessing of Yemeni regime at the time, this network has had a role that cannot be ignored in the conflicts with existing religious identities or beliefs within Yemeni local communities, and its activity was not limited to containing Zaydis only, but also extended to Shafi’is and Sufism. And other Islamic trends within Yemen, including Islamic sectors associated with the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

Not so long after its foundation, Yemeni Salafism, especially after the year 2000, fragmented into many religious, political and military currents, but the major surge that Salafism experienced in Yemen was represented by two major events, the first one was : the political and military changes that Yemen witnessed during the 2011, or what was known as the “Arab Spring revolutions”. As for the second event : it is after the war on Yemen in March 2015 and its impact on the Salafi currents with all their orientations.

## Historical causes for establishing Salafism in Yemen

From the early stages of forming the Islamic schools of thought, Yemeni society has settled ideologically on belonging mainly to two schools of thought, first one is : the “Zaydi” sect founded by Imam “Zaid bin Ali bin Al Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib”. As for the second doctrine : it is the “Shafi’I” school of thought, which was founded by Imam “Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi’I”. In fact, the two doctrines/trends do not meet the Wahhabi Salafi methods nor its theses.

Other than what is said above, history states that Yemen was ruled for more than 1200 years by Zaidi imams, and Zaidi sect was the first Islamic sect of the Yemeni state at that period, and despite that, it did not seek to eliminate the followers of “Shafi’I” sect nor to confiscate their rights. On

the contrary, Yemen has not witnessed any sectarian conflict throughout Islamic history despite the many conflicts that took place between many of the statelets that were established from time to time in some regions of Yemen - especially the central and southern areas that was the base of Shafi'i school adherents - and between the Zaydi imams, but this coexisting sectarian scene in Yemen changed dramatically from the early fifties of the twentieth century with the influence of many reasons that we can summarize in the following :

## Religious Causes

After the Sept. 26th, 1962 revolution, Yemen turned into a battleground between the revolutionaries supported by Egypt and the Imam supported by Saudi Arabia, in a conflict continued until Egypt was defeated in the 1967 war with the Israeli enemy, and Egypt's final withdrawal from Yemen, which provided Saudi Arabia with the opportunity to guarantee solo and absolute domination in the Yemeni arena.

Saudi intervention in Yemen was not limited to political aspect, but was accompanied by a sectarian change to convert Yemenis from the Zaydi and Shafi'i sects to the Wahhabi Salafi sect. During the period (1967 - 1974), Saudi Arabia laid the first, long-term, building block for change in the Yemeni structure, in cooperation with the religious current that implied the «Muslim Brotherhood» and their strong tribal alliance. "Abd Al-Malik Al-Tayeb", one of the most prominent leaders of this movement, was appointed as an Education Minister. What followed that was a successive changes in the school books, which was and still is Egyptian. The matter developed into the issuance of a religious education law, to re-activate the "General Authority for (Religious) Scientific Institutes", as a parallel framework for education in 1974, after it was frozen for 10 years. The law was adopted by Judge "Abdullah Al-Hajari", one of the prominent leaders in the tribal/religious alliance, who was appointed Prime Minister in the same year. This appointment was based on a message from the head

of Saudi intelligence at the time, «Kamal Adham» to President «Abdul Rahman Al-Iryani»<sup>[4]</sup>.

The (Religious) scientific institutes played a key role in spreading the Wahhabi-Salafi doctrine, as their curricula were entirely Salafi and Wahhabi. As for the Yemeni regime, in addition to being dominated by Saudi agenda, it had its own interests in sectarian change in Yemen. The regime agreed with Saudi Arabia to feel the fear of the Zaydi sect and its return to the arena, especially as it is a revolutionary doctrine; Therefore, the successive regimes that ruled Yemen colluded with Saudi Arabia in spreading Salafi Wahhabism, fighting those belonging to the Zaidi sect in particular, and supporting religious currents hostile to them, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis.

## Political Causes

After the Yemeni reconciliation between the «Republicans» and «Royals» in 1970, under Saudi auspices, all Yemeni forces had to engage in the Saudi agenda, first of which was to confront what the Kingdom calls «the communist threat in southern Yemen,» which forced the nascent political leadership in Yemen to go along with it. To confront what it calls the “communists,” Saudi Arabia relied on religious and tribal forces in northern Yemen. It (Saudi) adopted the financing and support strategy of the “Islamic Front” formed by the Islamists of the north and the Sana’a regime at the time; To fight the leftist «National Democratic Front» backed by Aden regime. On the Islamic front, great merits were built for the Islamists who led the fighting battlefronts. They were (later) appointed to high-ranking security and political government positions.

## Historical sequence of Salafism in Yemen

Many political, economic and religious reasons contributed to the spread of the Saudi Salafi Wahhabi Dawaa (Call). During a short period, we find



that the Wahhabi call was able to transcend its geographical surroundings and its limited environment, and reached most Islamic countries, through two main causes. first: the Hajj (Pilgrimage) season, to which Muslims come from all over the world, during which they had their first contact with the Wahhabi sect. As for the second stage, it is the stage of Saudi preaching of the Wahhabi-Salafi sect, through the spread of Islamic centers of Wahhabi reference - funded by Gulf states and wealthy figures - in various parts of the Islamic world, even in Europe and the United States of America.

The Saudi state sought to introduce the Wahhabi sect and instill it among all segments of Yemeni society, through two strategies.

First strategy: Yemenis residing on Saudi territory, by targeting many Yemeni students who Saudi was keen to admit them in its schools and universities with Wahhabi-Salafi curricula, or by targeting Yemeni expatriates and attracting them to the Wahhabi sect, then after a period of learning they turn into preachers and return to their regions and are given a monthly salary in return.

Second strategy: Mainly by targeting Yemenis inside Yemen, through its expansion in building religious centers and schools with the Wahhabi curriculum, as is the case in institutes funded by Saudi Arabia in the early 70s in agreement with the Yemeni regime at the time, with the aim of targeting Zaydi regions, especially in the north (Saada, Sana'a, and areas around them), which amounted to more than 400 institutes.

This Wahhabi-Salafi spread would not have passed without any reactions from Yemeni religious forces and sects, led by the Zaydi sect, and this was confirmed by the researcher, «Ahmed Musa Badawi», in his talk about the effects of Wahhabi-Salafi evangelization on the religious social level. The emergence of the Wahhabi Salafist in Yemen has raised the fears of Zaidi sect, on the grounds that the points of contention between Zaydism and Wahhabi Salafism are fundamental, while the points of contention between Shafi'is and Wahhabism are secondary, and here fear generated among the followers of Zaidi sect of losing religious identity, along with

fear from reactions of resistance to this Wahhabi tide, which could develop from an ideological conflict to an extended social and political conflict, which is what actually happened, before the emergence of Al-Qaeda in Yemen, when “Muqbil Al-Wadi’i” founded in 1981, Dar Al-Hadith in Dammaj area in Saada governorate, which is historically described as Zaidi stronghold <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **The founding father of Salafism in Yemen**

Sheikh “Muqbil bin Hadi Al-Wadi’I” (1933 - 2001) is considered the first founder of Salafism in Yemen. He was born in Saada Governorate, Dammaj region. He belonged to the Zaydi sect by virtue of his birth in a purely Zaydi environment. At the beginning of his youth, he traveled to Saudi Arabia for the purpose of a job hunting.

“Al-Wadi’I” says in his books: that he was influenced by some preachers and religious figures, so he preferred to go to study at the Al-Haram Makkie Institute until he completed secondary school, then he moved to the “Islamic University” and studied at the Faculty of Da`wah and Fundamentals of Religion regularly, and at the Faculty of Sharia by affiliation, and then continued his studies there until he obtained a master’s degree in the specialization of hadith scenes, and while “Al-Wadi’I” was preparing for his master’s degree, he was arrested in Saudi Arabia on charges of writing letters to “Juhayman Al-Otaibi”, and was imprisoned for three months, then Saudi Arabia decided to get rid of him. He returns to Saudi Arabia and returned to Yemen and worked to spread the Wahhabi sect by establishing a religious school in Sa’ada. Immediately after his return to Yemen, he established a Salafi school in Dammaj under the name “Dar al-Hadith” in 1400AH and since the first days of the establishment of that school He enjoyed absolute Saudi support and protection from the Yemeni regime at the time.

Member of the Supreme Committee of the Salafi Rashad Party, “Muhammad Taher Ana’am”, explained to Majal Forum: that “Sheikh Al-

Wadi'I", who was expelled from Saudi Arabia on charges of participating in the "Juhayman Al-Otaibi events" in 1979-1980-, investigations proved that he was not a participant in Military activities with «Juhayman» and his group in the incident of storming Makkah.

According to "Ana'am", this deportation led to the annoyance and anger of Sheikh "Al-Wadi'I", who remained hostile to the Saudi regime for most of his life in Yemen, and had been attacking the Saudi regime in his books and tapes for more than 30 years... indicating that Saudi Arabia did not support "Al-Wadi'I" to open his center in Sa'ada. Yet, he was getting money from some Saudi and Yemeni merchants and businessmen in Saudi Arabia, behind the Saudi regime.

"Al-Wadi'i's" and his school embodies the clearest picture of the Wahhabi Salafist model that Saudi Arabia worked to spread in many Arab and Islamic countries. Which is a compromising model of the ruling systems, where the advocacy Salafism - sometimes called the scientific Salafism or traditional Salafism - represented in Yemen by the followers of "Muqbil Hadi Al-Wadi'i", is focusing on issues such as purifying the faith from polytheism impurities, heresies and superstitions, and they always believe that they are the only surviving group, and do not have any links with the various Islamic sects - Ancient and modern - but the relations of adversarial and difference. Nevertheless, they live safely under any ruling regime, because of their positions of rejecting political modernity in all its forms. The establishment of parties and parliaments, or associations to defend rights, or organizing marches and demonstrations opposing the ruling regime, are all entities and activities that are prohibited by Sharia from the Salafi point of view, and are considered to be in conflict with the ruler in his right to rule, and this is the most that any ruling regime desires<sup>[6]</sup>.

## Sheikh «Moqbel Al-Wadii's» intellectual approach

In his intellectual methodology, “Al-Wadi’i” was ruled by a strict forbidding mentality. On the ideological aspect, he was governed by issues of polytheism and misguidance. As for the developments of the era, such as democracy, for example, he viewed them as blasphemy, and he saw sanctity in political parties and the establishment of any organization or associations, he deals with everything from “Haram Or Halal” view.

We find, for example, that he decrees (issues Fatwa) of the prohibition of many things of normal nature that any sane person can say are among the things that we should not even mention in Islam, such as defining customs in clothing and food and so on, as in his book “Thunderbolts in the Prohibition of Spoons”!

As for the position of “Al-Wadi’i’s” Salafism towards Islamic sects, he believed that Salafism was the only surviving sect, to the exclusion of other groups that he saw as misguided, innovated, deviant and rogue Islamic sects.

### Al-Wadii's Salafi Schools:

- The School of Sheikh «Yahya Al-Hajouri», one of “Al-Wadi’i” students who took over the administration of “Dar Al-Hadith” in Sa’ada after its founder passed away. In March 2019, Sheikh “Al-Hajouri” established a Salafist center inside the city of Ma’rib, after returning from Saudi Arabia, where he had resided since his departure from Saada in 2013, following the war that erupted between the Salafists of Dammaj under his leadership and “Ansar Allah” in Saada, which ended with an agreement stipulating the expulsion of foreign Salafis from Saada.

- “Abu Al-Hassan Al-Sulaymani Al-Masry” school in Ma’rib. Sheikh “Al-Sulaimani” is considered the first founder of the Salafist presence in Ma’rib Governorate, where he arrived in Yemen in 1400AH, and worked as a teacher in “Khawlan Al-Tayal” area (Bani Bahloul), then traveled to Ma’rib. His first visit to the founder of Salafism in Yemen «Muqbil Al-

Wadi'i» was in 1406AH.

- The School of Sheikh «Mohammed Al-Imam» center in «Maabar City» in Dhamar Governorate, and he is still preaching in the «Al-Noor Mosque» until now.

## Salafist trends/currents in Yemen

Salafism is considered as one of the most fragmented and divided Islamic trends, where many reasons have contributed in the making of this fragmented reality, most prominent of which are:

**First reason :** Internal, mainly due to the strict Salafist ideology and belief, which stems in its relationship with the others from polytheism, apostasy and infidelity, making it difficult for it to understand the difference even with its believers and those who belong to it.

**Second reason :** External, which is that Salafism cannot live and survive except under a state or a political entity. Thus, it lacks independence, which has imposed on it a multiplicity of loyalty, hostility, approach and belief. All this is to be evident and clear in the Salafi reality in Yemen, where Salafism is divided into three main trends or currents.

### First Salafi trend : “Religiously” Scientific Salafism

Scholarly Salafism or “Preaching Salafism” - sometimes known as “Traditional Salafism” - They call themselves the Salafi Dawaa or the followers of the Salafi approach. This current of Salafis is a peaceful faction that carries a religious scientific advocacy thesis that is essentially preaching; To teach people about Islam, and consider themselves scholars and students of knowledge from the Sunni Islam. The advocates of scientific Salafism focus on seeking knowledge to achieve the doctrine of monotheism and the denial of polytheism, and one of the most important Salafist groups that tried to apply that approach is the group of Sheikh “Muqbil Al-Wadi'i”<sup>[7]</sup>.

## Second trend : Neo-Salafism/Political Salafism

Salafist movement in Yemen was not able to continue in one trend/stream. The movement did not fold its first decade of (1980 - 1990) until a dispute arose between the founder of Salafism in Yemen, Sheikh “Muqbil Al-Wadi’I” and some of his students who tried to convert from the movement’s advocacy method but not from the original thought, orientation or creed. That dispute led to the emergence of what is known as the (organised Salafist movement or Political Salafism), the advocates of this new current established the (Yemeni Hikmah Charitable Society), and its most prominent founders were (Abdul Majeed Al-Raimi, Muhammad Musa Al-Ameri, Muhammad Al-Hadda, Abdullah bin Ghalib Al-Hemyari, Abdul Aziz Al-Duba’ee, Ahmed bin Hassan Al-Moallem, Aqil Al-Maqtari, Abdul-Qadir Al-Shaibani, Ahmed Mawadah, and Muhammad Al-Mahdi<sup>[8]</sup>).

The Salafi mentality of Sheikh “Muqbil Al-Wadi’i” could not stand any rebellion or direction contrary to it, as relations got strained between the leaders of the new trend and their Sheikh who began to warn against them, accusing them of : opportunism, stealing the Dawaa, partisan work, and walking on the footprints of the Muslim Brotherhood movement <sup>[9]</sup>.

Two years later, an internal dispute occurred within the framework of the «Hikmah Society» itself, leading to a separation of some of its founders and their affiliation under a new framework called (Al-Ehsan Charitable Society) Led by Sheikh “Abdullah Al-Yazidi” and others. Some researchers attribute the dispute within the corridors of the “Yemeni Hikmah Society” and the split of the “Al-Ehsan Society” from it to the attempts of some to link it with Saudi Arabia and loyalty to the Kingdom.

This prompted the personalities who supported the option of strengthening relations with Saudi Arabia to establish “Al-Ehsan Association”, which was launched from Hadhramaut Governorate in 1991, yet Saudi Arabia continued to support both Hikmah and Ehsan associations.

These divisions in the Salafi movement led to the emergence of a new current alongside the traditional current, this current differs in that it takes political participation as a ladder to achieve its political goals,

provided that it adheres to the correct Salafi approach. By establishing associations, this trend appeared in an organized manner and its work became institutional, and even took part of the local parties' system in terms of order and hierarchy<sup>[10]</sup>.

Researchers refer Salafi differences to the political and social situation after the “Yemeni unity” and the declaration of political pluralism, in addition to the different positions of the Salafist poles on local and regional events and developments, and the state of intellectual and political polarization they imposed. While Sheikh “Al-Waadi’I” did not show any significant interaction with the new variables, most of his students - on the contrary - showed a positive interaction with these variables, and this is what led to the expansion of the dispute between the Sheikh and his students<sup>[11]</sup>.

### **Third trend : Combatant Salafism**

It is basically a violent intensification of the teachings of Wahhabi Salafist beliefs and a summons to the “overlooked” and “Ignored” radical stock in Wahhabism, in its symbolic and material dimensions. It (Wahhabism) leans on the perceptions of its conceptual apparatus, and on the dimensions of its belief configuration, in formulating its objectionable discourse, and it tries to represent it, reproduce its ideas and install them literally in the spaces of the present moment, considering that it alone embodies the true, pure and absolute Islam in its first simplicity as it is shown in the texts of the Book (The holy Quran) and the Sunnah (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad).

### **Salafi movement first division :**

In the early nineties, Salafism in Yemen witnessed its first division and fragmentation from the main current represented by the Salafism of «Muqbil Al-Wadai'i», regarding this, the researcher specialized in Islamic groups in Yemen, Mr. «Ahmed Muhammad Al-Deghshi» says: «The

split between Salafism that accepts partisanship and the one that reject it occurred after a decade from the foundation, i.e. in 1991, when some of Sheikh “Al-Wadi’i’s” students and supporters - who have come to live in cities - noticed the social movement and the difficult conditions people lived under, the importance of administration and politics, and the extent of the charitable work impact, which helps attracting people to Salafism. So, they began establishing the “Yemeni Hikmah Charitable Society” that was followed two years later by the “Al-Ehsan Charitable Association”, which was considered as a call to partisanship and a departure from the Dawaa (call) of the Salaf and Ahl Al-Sunnah that does not allow that in “Al-Waadi’I” views. From there, he launched a campaign against them accusing them of every flaw, leading to a complete separation between the founders of the two associations and “Al-Waadi’I” along with those who remained loyal to him. Afterwards there was a major schism among his followers after his death, which was contributed to a large extent by the intervention of Sheikh «Rabi’ bin Hadi Al-Mad-khali» from Saudi Arabia”.

For over two decades, Wahhabi Salafism maintained its unity, not through form, but through the single reference that was manifested in the personality of Sheikh “Moqbel”, and in the Dammaj Center, which is the first center of Wahhabi Salafism in Yemen, and during that period the Salafi groups remained closed on themselves. During their scientific career, Salafi groups (in the psychological sense of science) did not play any significant developmental role. During more than a quarter of a century, she spent all her energies and huge money on writing books and recording pulpit sermons that, like other religious currents, restore the exhumation of graves with jurisprudential fatwas and volumes: the rulings on tooth brushing, childbirth, and clothing<sup>[12]</sup>.

But the dangerous turn of Salafism came after the legacy of the founder Sheikh Al-Waadi’i, as Salafi positions are in a state of sharp divisions; This resulted in the emergence of several schools, which facilitates the limit of estrangement and atonement.



## Differences between Salafi trends/currents

All Salafi currents, whether preaching Salafism, political Salafism, or Jihadi Salafism, have a common denominator which is the same “belief”, and each of the three currents takes on the other current things related to the method of implementation or the so-called strategy. For example, the Salafis see preachers as their competitors who do not follow the correct method of implementation; Hence, Dawaa Salafism distinguishes between the Salafi belief and the Salafi method, and considers that a Muslim - in order to be a Salafist - must adhere to a sound methodology, as well as correct beliefs. Salafi preachers also reject the objectionable approach, which involves the practice of violence, as is the case in the political and jihadist currents, as an unprecedented religious innovation in the Prophetic approach and the consensus of the Companions of prophet Mohammed or the (Sahabah) as they call them. Salafi preachers view the contentious politics of the conflicting Salafist currents as Western products linked to the French and American revolutions or Marxism<sup>[13]</sup>.

For its part, the political current takes over the preaching trend what they call the “ignorance of the elders and leaders of the Salafist preaching in many contemporary things, especially in political side”, and from this we can understand, that the difference between the two currents is not in the Salafi doctrine, but rather that the preaching Salafism did not realize the context in which it the creed is supposed to be implemented in<sup>[14]</sup>.

As a result, contradictions were evident between the positions of the three currents. While the preaching Salafism insisted on preaching about the Day of Resurrection, how to pray, and the like, politicians with Salafi origins criticized the corrupt regimes in the Islamic world, popular oppression, the Israelis occupying Muslim lands, and the Americans who seek To control the Islamic world, the rifts between the two currents deepened very quickly after the insistence of the da'wa scholars to stay out of politics.

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Day of Resurrection, how to pray, and these sort of matters, politicians with Salafist origins criticized corrupt regimes in the Muslim world, popular oppression, Israelis occupying Muslim lands, and Americans seeking to control the Muslim world, and the rifts between the two currents deepened very quickly after the insistence of daawa scholars to stay away from politics.

As for Combatant/militant Salafism, we find that the “takfiris” are intellectually close to the political trend men, and at the same time they agree with the political current regarding the «limited understanding of Daawa men in the modern context». However, the difference is not about doctrine, but about strategy; The jihadists believe that preaching Salafism are familiar with Islam, but they are ignorant of the contemporary situation, or they hide the truth from the people, and for jihadists such as “Bin Laden” and “Al-Zarqawi,” the preaching Salafists are the preachers of the sultans, or the scholars of the rulers in jihadist logic, and even Here, the dispute is not related to the doctrine, but rather to the unwillingness of the preachers of Salafism to put this belief into practice, by practically “addressing the injustice of the regimes and their American masters” [15].

## 2011 Protests and Salafi Movements

During the popular protests in 2011 against the former Yemeni President Saleh, the traditional and new Salafist currents were rejecting the Muslim Brotherhood’s attempts to polarize them against the regime. When the traditional current was known for its religious commitment to rejecting demonstration and partisanship, the new current, in turn, was trying to be neutral in matters that discuss the situation of the head of state, even if it gained some political experience.

After the departure of «Ali Abdullah Saleh» under the «Gulf Initiative», a group of Salafi leaders established the «Salafi Rashad Party» in 2012, which later became its president, «Mohammed al-Amiri» - a leader in the «Al-Ehsan Charitable Society», which belongs to the new trend - and its

general secretary, «Abdul-Wahhab Al-Humayqani», as the first Salafi party in Yemen, and in 2014 the «Selm and Tanmiah Party» was established, which is an extension of the «Al-Hikma Charitable Society».

Although Al-Rashad and Al-Selm parties belong to the new trend, their formation for separate entities was due to the conflicting path of the two associations from which the two parties started, in issues of linking with Gulf supporters, although they both received support from “Hadi government” and from “Saudi Arabia”. “Rashad Party” participated At the National Dialogue Conference in 2013. Although his performance appeared lukewarm; Because of his lack of experience, yet this participation was the first point of convergence between the new Salafist movement and the Muslim Brotherhood in political work, although discrepancies emerged regarding their positions towards Saleh regime.

## Decisive Storm and Salafi Movements

The launch of the so-called «Decisive Storm» represented the most dangerous turning point in the history of Yemeni Salafism, as it was divided into three main trends. The first: Supporting the war on Yemen, second: against it, and the third: He preferred isolation and not getting involved in the subject at all.

The war and military intervention led by Saudi Arabia imposed its effects on Salafi movements active in Yemen, as this constituted a pivotal moment in their history and even in the context of their development and future, as most Salafi groups lost their previous social spontaneity and acquired complex organizational frameworks, closer to closed jihadist organizations. These groups saw that the involvement of Saudi Arabia, the regional representative of the Sunnis against Iran, the regional representative of the Shia, and the ally of the Houthi group, gives its war against the Houthis a religious legitimacy to defend the Sunni majority<sup>[16]</sup>.

## UAE conflict against Salafists

The assassination of Sheikh «Abdul-Rahman bin Omar Al-Adani» in February 2016 was the biggest blow to the Yemeni Salafist movement stationed in the south, due to his attitudes and his rejection to the intervention of the UAE man, and the commander of the UAE backed security belt forces, “bin Brik” and his actions in the south, but that strike was not the only one, although it differed in kind and size, all strikes completely met one final result and outcome: death at the hands of an unknown gunmen.

The series of assassinations did not stop at sheikhs and Salafist figures who were opposed to the Emirates or even those who were close to it, where 13 Salafist figures were assassinated since 2016, but went beyond it to reach associations, organizations and even militias, the most prominent of which are the “Al-Ehsan” and “Al-Hekmah” associations, which the «Security Belt» forces arrested several leaders linked to them, after the UAE and Saudi Arabia put them on the list of «terrorist organizations», along with the UAE’s most powerful former ally, Sheikh «Adel Abdo Farea», nicknamed «Abu Al-Abbas»; In preparation for the rise of his deputy, «Adel Al-Azi», the Salafi most responsive to the implementation of the UAE’s agenda in Taiz Governorate.

On the other hand, the performance of the Salafi fighting groups prompted the intervening countries to try polarizing them politically, as Saudi Arabia saw in these groups an alternative candidate for its traditional ally, the Islah Party (Muslim Brotherhood), and more disciplined than the Yemeni political parties affiliated with the Coalition to defend the so-called “legitimate authority”; This is due to the modesty of its political demands and aspirations in contrast to the severity of its dedication and loyalty based on religious considerations. The UAE, which entered the war in Yemen without a local ally, was keen, in turn, and worked in every possible way for the Salafist fighting groups to join the confrontation cities under its political umbrella<sup>[17]</sup>.

The policy of the regional parties interfering in Yemen towards local

Yemeni forces and Salafi groups has produced a map of new Yemeni political forces, led by some Salafi groups. Each Salafist group differs from the other only according to the Yemeni geography and its proximity or distance from the Emirati center of gravity in Yemen, and this was reflected in their different political positions and jurisprudential principles that justify their political positioning, as well as the intense political competition between them<sup>[18]</sup>.

## After Decisive Storm

“Laurent Bonnevoy”, a researcher at the International Research Center at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, focused in a seminar organized by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, on the political developments and the subsequent war in Yemen, after the launch of “Decisive Storm”, which had a role in re-arranging priority and positions within differences ranging between Ideology and identity in its various forms and definitions, and after the Storm of Decisive, “Bonnevoy” distinguished between four types of Salafists in Yemen:

**First:** The institutionalized current: Represented by «Hani Bin Brik» movement in southern Yemen, which is considered one of the most prominent allies with Decisive Storm, and adopts separatist tendencies.

**Second:** The jihadist movement: Represented by “Abu al-Abbas”, one of the students of “Al-Wadi’I” in Dammaj, and he leads a faction against the Houthis in Taiz city.

**Third:** The partisan criticism movement: Represented by “Yahya Al-Hajouri”, a supporter of the traditional movement. Despite his conservative positions in terms of engaging in politics, he has a clear and previous hostile stance towards the Houthis. What made him support Decisive Storm.

**Fourth:** The trend of marginalization: The most prominent of them is «Abdul-Wahhab Al-Humayqani», who was listed on the United States of America’s list of terrorism.

On the other hand, «Muhammad Taher Anam» believes that Sheikh «Muqbil Al-Wadi» group split after his death into three streams:

- 1- Sheikh “Yahya al-Hajouri” movement, who remained in Dammaj Center in Saada, then moved to Juba Center in Marib.
- 2- Sheikh «Mohammed Al-Imam» movement, centered in «Maabar» in Dhamar Governorate.
- 3- “Abu Hassan Al-Masri” group, whose centered outside “Marib City” in the “Fortress of Al-Jalal” area in the “Obaida tribe”.

«Anaam» indicates that the current of Sheikh «Yahya Al-Hajouri» - who does not like to talk about politics very much - includes «Hani Bin Brik» and «Abu Al-Abbas», both of whom are loyal to the UAE, while the Sheikh «Mohammed Al-Imam» current - who opposes the war and orders his followers in all governorates, including Taiz and Aden, not to fight – includes Sheikh «Al-Adani» who was assassinated in Aden, and there is a third current, the «Hikma Movement» and a fourth, the «Ehsan Movement», both of which don't have a clear participation in the war.

«Anaam» confirms that Saudi Arabia did not support «Al-Ehsan» and «Al-Hikma» associations, but rather the support was provided by personalities from Saudi Arabia and abroad individually, and later the support of the «Ehsan Association» came more from «Qatar». So Al-Ehsan Association was linked to Qatar, while the Hikma Association was closely associated with Kuwait and get most support from the Islamic Heritage Revival Association in Kuwait, which is a Salafi association.

### **Problems facing Salafi Groups:**

Salafism is one of the most closed Islamic currents, and the most current drowning in the past and revering it. Rather, many Salafist currents claim that the reality of Yemen can only be reformed according to the model that was used by the predecessors. This intellectual orientation has a great impact on the reality of Salafism, as it has made it absent from reality and from the historical development of mankind and the

different eras and times, and the necessities and challenges imposed by each time. Perhaps the most important causes of the intellectual problem of Salafism are dispersion, tyrannical creed, the difference of references, and the connection with the Saudi regime, in addition to the problems of financing and exploitation.

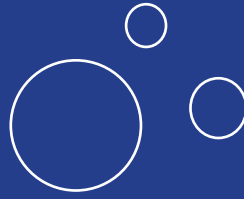
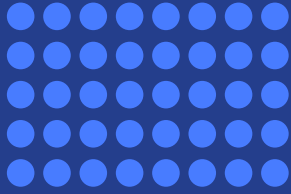
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