

Debunking Alt-Media's Doublethink on Yemen

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

Global Research, February 01, 2018

[Oriental Review](#) 31 January 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Terrorism](#),
[US NATO War Agenda](#)

Many in the Alt-Media Community aren't aware of the doublethink that pervades the Iranian-influenced discourse on Yemen, and a critical analysis of the three most prominent examples of this in practice could assist Tehran in avoiding unnecessary narrative shortcomings and ultimately optimizing its regional message.

The Alt-Media Community is a diverse network of multipolar-minded activists and analysts, but sometimes its prevailing narratives on certain topics are guided more by shortsighted state-directed cues than objective and comprehensive understandings of highly complex issues. One of the most relevant examples of this in practice has to do with the War on Yemen, which itself is a multisided civil-international conflict that is popularly framed – whether rightly or wrongly – as a proxy war between Iranian-aligned Shiite Houthi militants and the Saudi-backed international coalition fighting to re-impose the authority of the exiled Sunni President. As a result, a narrative bifurcation has set in whereby Houthi supporters look to Iranian media for guidance while their opponents seek out Saudi and other coalition sources, with both sides sometimes blindly adhering to whatever their “patron state” says or suggests on any given issue.

There has already been exemplary work done by many investigative journalists [exposing](#) the contradictions prevalent in the Saudi narrative on Yemen, but almost nothing has been said in the Alt-Media Community about its Iranian counterpart, partly because Tehran is openly aligned with Moscow and Beijing – the two most powerful engines of the [Multipolar World Order](#) – and it's therefore seen as “politically incorrect” and even “taboo” to say anything that could even timidly raise questions about the Islamic Republic's narrative shortcomings in the War on Yemen. That's not at all to suggest that Iran's reporting on Saudi war crimes is “fake news” or “propaganda”, but just to say that a critical analysis of the overall storyline is direly needed for outside observers who aspire to grasp a deeper understanding of the latest fast-moving developments that have occurred in this battlefield, particularly those in South Yemen.

The three most popular Alt-Media talking points will be debunked below in illustrating the inconsistent nature of Iran's depiction of several interconnected regional themes related to Yemen. The purpose behind this analysis is to draw attention to the “forbidden knowledge” that's usually hidden from the Alt-Media audience when discussing this topic due to it being “inconvenient” to the narrative at hand, which is ultimately to promote everything that has to do with the Houthis and their original plans to conquer all of Yemen while denigrating all those who stand opposed to them. Starting with the slaughter of the most “sacred cow” of all, here are the three most glaring examples of Alt-Media doublethink on Yemen:

Saudi Arabia Hates All Shiites...Despite Backing Them During The North Yemen Civil War

It's popular nowadays for people to casually assert that Saudi Arabia hates all Shiites, and there's indeed an overwhelming mountain of evidence proving that Riyadh [suppresses](#) its own confessional minority within its borders and has backed Takfiri death squads targeting its sectarian counterparts all throughout the world, but the fact of the matter is that this violent opposition to them isn't "universal" and based on some dogmatic "principle". The intent of the following isn't to excuse Saudi Arabia's actions but to explain them, and in advance response to triggered critics, this isn't "apologia" either.



Saudi Arabia, contrary to everything that the average Alt-Media denizen has been conditioned to think, actually [provided significant support](#) to the Shiite-Zaidi **King Muhammad Al-Badr** of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom during what is popularly called the "North Yemen Civil War". Without getting too deep into its specifics, a Republican coup inspired by Arab Nationalist leader Nasser overthrew the monarchy in 1962, and the resultant fighting between that faction and the monarchist one continued until 1970 and essentially became an Egyptian-Saudi proxy war.

To be sure, Saudi Arabia was supporting the King for monarchist political reasons, not sectarian religious ones, but this instance is proof that the Wahhabi Kingdom had indeed backed an openly Shiite cause to restore the historical Zaidi monarchy in Yemen. Ironically, the confessional descendants of these same forces would later rebel against Saudi-supported "Republican" Presidents [Saleh](#) and Hadi during the Houthi insurgency, the first of which was also a "[fellow](#)" Shiite-Zaidi.

To address the elephant in the room, it's impossible to deny that Saudi Arabia has been suspicious of Shiites ever since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution and oftentimes initiated violence against them out for no reason at all other than the paranoia that might one day behave as "fifth columnists" for spreading Iran's new political system, though there's an explanation - but certainly **not ever any excuse** - for why it does this.

Iran [regularly rejected ceasefires](#) with Iraq during their infamous war in the 1980s even after it had already pushed the invaders out of its territory because it [wanted](#) to overthrow Saddam Hussein and export the Islamic Revolution abroad, and while it was certainly Iran's right to pursue the total defeat of its hated nemesis to the extent that the USSR earlier did against the Nazis, it nevertheless has to accept the regional consequences that this failed initiative had for its reputation in instilling an obsessive fear in its rivals.

To be clear, Iran's efforts to completely eliminate the Western- (and to a certain extent, even Soviet-) backed threat that Saddam Hussein's Iraq posed to the Islamic Revolution **does not in any way whatsoever** "justify" the targeted killing of Shiites by Saudi Arabia or its allied proxy forces, but it did spark the pathological paranoia that the Monarchy has since had towards this group in fearing that they might be "fifth columnists". Having said that, Saudi Arabia doesn't hate all Shiites since it supported them in the North Yemen Civil War and at various times enjoyed excellent relations with former President Saleh.

Syrian Socialism And Secularism Is Good, But Its South Yemeni Version Is Bad

Another prominent contradiction in the Iranian-affiliated Alt-Media narrative about the Mideast is the support of socialism and secularism in Syria while denying the South Yemenis

these very same rights. President Assad's Baath Party never practiced dogmatic socialist "puritanism", but is still considered in general terms to have more closely embraced that socio-economic model than the neoliberal one.



This is celebrated by Alt-Media individuals who identify with the Iranian perspective on regional affairs, and it's much more preferable for them to see a socialist-secular state in Syria than the dystopian Sunni dictatorship that President Assad's opponents have brutally tried to create over the past 7 years. The explanation for this stance in spite of Iran's own historic encouragement for Islamic Revolutions abroad is that they respect the Syrian people's democratic will in this regard, which is admirable.

The problem, however, is that the democratic will of the South Yemeni people who are fighting to rebuild their formerly independent socialist and secular state is being ignored by these very same forces who would rather have the Houthis take over the entirety of the country even though the Southerners don't want them there.

The situation in the South of the country is complex and it's better for the reader to refer to the author's [latest work](#) on the matter (and its hyperlinks) if they want to learn more about it, but the point is that there's a visible double standard being expressed when it comes to support for Syria and South Yemen despite the two states fighting for the same thing - socialism and secularism. The Houthis aren't openly in favor of an Islamic Republic and are allied to the late President Saleh's secular General People's Congress, but Southerners still fear that the more pious Northerners will try to impose their comparatively stricter socio-religious standards on them.

On the one hand, the Iranian-influenced Alt-Media Community stands in full support of the democratic will of the Syrian people who are fighting to protect their way of life, yet is against the exact same manifestation of these principles by the South Yemenis who apparently "don't know what's good for them". The narrative on Yemen is therefore overly simplistic and fails to account for the immense historical and socio-cultural differences between the country's constituent halves, to say nothing of being hypocritical when compared to what these same voices say about Syria.

Bahrainis Should Revolt, But The South Yemenis Shouldn't Dare Try

Channeling the themes introduced in the above-mentioned point, Iran and its international Alt-Media supporters believe in the righteousness of the Bahraini Revolt but condemn the South Yemenis for doing the same. In both cases, a dissatisfied majority population is ruled over by an authoritarian minority, with the difference being that the Bahraini King is Sunni while the former authorities in South Yemen prior to the success of this week's revolution were Northerners.



The narrative goes that the Bahraini people are fighting for freedom and will be truly independent if they overthrow their monarchy, while the South Yemenis are behaving as proxy agents of the UAE and simply trading one occupation for another. That, however, isn't necessarily true and is actually quite misleading, since it would be natural for confessional-political reasons for a post-revolutionary Bahrain to ally itself with its much more powerful Iranian neighbor, the same as the South Yemenis would naturally reward their UAE allies for

the assistance that they provided during their recent struggle.

It can't be known for sure, but it might be the case that a sectarian double standard is being applied whereby Shiite revolutionary causes that are more in line with Iran's interests and closer to its own borders are framed as progressive developments that could herald in an unprecedented era of independence for those involved, while Sunni ones further afield are dismissed as geopolitical ruses by its foes and subsequently discredited as smokescreens for swapping one oppressor with another.

This perspective is problematic not just for rhetorical reasons, but because it seems to contradict [Article 154 of the Iranian Constitution](#), which says among other things that Iran "supports the struggles of the oppressed for their rights against the oppressors anywhere in the world". The Shiite Bahraini majority views itself as being under the oppressive control of a dictatorial Sunni Monarchy heavily influenced by the Wahhabi Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the same as the Shiite-Zaidi Houthis had serious concerns about Sunni President Hadi's abuses against their community and his alliance with Riyadh.

At the same time, however, Iran ignores the South Yemenis' democratic desire to break free of Northern occupation and rebuild their socialist-secular state, again drawing into question whether this is because Tehran doesn't equate their cause as being as righteous as the other two's or if it's simply because of geopolitical-sectarian reasons that stand at variance with the inspirational principle outlined in its own constitution. Along the same vein, Iran has made similar mistakes before when it was on what the Alt-Media Community mostly believes to be the wrong side in [Bosnia](#) and [Libya](#).

Concluding Thoughts

Information warfare is a complex art that is never perfectly practiced but always aspires to weave as comprehensively consistent of a narrative as a possible, though this is becoming all the more difficult because of the target audience's exposure to a multitude of related issues nowadays due to social media and the related revolution in information-communication technologies. The case of Yemen is a perfect example of these challenges when it comes to the interests of a state actor and its affiliated Alt-Media Community, since they've already invested so much time and effort in framing the Houthis' cause in a certain way that it's almost impossible for them to apply the same standards towards other issues such as those in Syria and Bahrain without appearing hypocritical.

That said, a refined infowar-activist approach could be developed that takes the time to address the narrative differences between the aforementioned topics of study, even if it does so superficially or embraces the Machiavellian mantra that "interests, not principles, are what matter most" and that these evolve depending on circumstances. Many people, though, prefer to live in an idealized bubble and refuse to accept the contemporary Neo-Realist paradigm of International Relations that the author earlier described as the "[19th-Century Great Power Chessboard](#)". Iran, just like all other Great Powers, prioritizes its interactions with its similarly categorized peers at the perceived expense of smaller- and medium-sized states in order to promote its interests and maintain the Balance of Power or tip the scales to its favor, hence the discrepancy between its backing and condemnation of various regional causes.

Every significant actor in this geostrategic game plays by these same rules, though only [Trump the "Kraken"](#) openly says so, and even that's a calculated move in pursuit of his

country's self-interests in deliberately upsetting the international order to what he and his team hope will ultimately be America's benefit via the [weaponization of chaos theory](#). Iran is no different than everyone else, but it was the focus of this analysis because of the growing global importance of the War on Yemen – especially after South Yemen's Revolution – and the dominating influence that Tehran exerts on the Alt-Media narrative in this regard. As a concluding call to action, any triggered readers should conduct their own studies and examine the shortcomings of other multipolar Great Powers' infowars-activism across the world so as to inspire them to improve their tactics and ultimately optimize their messaging.

*

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare.

All images in this article are from the author.

The original source of this article is [Oriental Review](#)
Copyright © [Andrew Korybko](#), [Oriental Review](#), 2018

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Andrew Korybko](#)

About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca