

# Fragile Agreements with the Houthis and the Failure of Peace Initiatives in Yemen



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## Summary

The paper concluded that the Houthis resort to agreements when they are exposed to pressure that threatens the group's existence, in case of a shift in leadership, or an urgent need for an agreement to protect group members and secure the flow of weapons supplies. The group utilizes systematic terrorism and spreading fear, tribal systems, and political evasion. It also manipulates time to garner such agreements, even though it soon renounces them. It uses excessive force and pushes all its armed capabilities to achieve the goal for which it violates an agreement. It also thrives on conflicting interpretations of the articles of agreements to evade them, and employs the Iranian tactic of procrastination.

The paper provides data on the agreements entered into by the Houthis during the period (2004-2021) and the group's behavior during negotiations and towards initiatives during the period (2011-2022). Data confirm the hypothesis that the Houthis quickly turn against any agreement that does not help achieve their goals of domination and control of the country as a whole.

The behavior of the Houthis during consultations indicates that they aim to ensure scoring a complete victory and obtaining a suspended third in any transitional government while only formally implementing the relevant articles of an agreement. This was clearly demonstrated in the "Peace and Partnership Agreement" and the "Stockholm Agreement." As it is clear that Iran has become a major influence on the decision-making circles of the Houthi group, the Muscat background consultations in 2021 indicate the scope of such influence. Moreover, the presence of Iranian experts on the margins of the Geneva consultations in 2015 to provide advice to the Houthis was part of that influence.

The Houthis manipulate regional and international events in their battles and in the manner they implement agreements. The Houthis also take advantage of the lack of understanding by the United Nations and the international community to impose their agenda and proceed with their "political evasion" with impunity. This was clearly evident during the Houthi movement from Saada to Sana'a, in the crisis of the Safer tanker, and in the implementation of the Hodeidah Agreement.

The paper refers to three phases experienced by the group in relation to the agreements. During these phase, it changed its behavior towards those agreements. The first phase dates back to the six wars, when the Houthis used multiple tactics to adapt to the transformation that the group was experiencing due to preparations for a new leadership. The Houthis also exploited the agreements in order to survive the attacks of the army and the tribes loyal to it, and to secure sources of arms supplies.

The Houthis used the fragile political situation and the conflicts between the opposition and the authorities as a means to perpetuate their existence as a rebel group under pressure. During that phase, the Houthis exploited the discontents of the local population against the authorities to recruit more fighters. Houthis also used the agreements at that stage to build barricades, dig trenches, and recruit more fighters from other provinces. Naturally, signs of rebellion surfaced in areas near Sana'a. Then, the Houthis attacked Saudi Arabia in order to assure the Iranians that they were confronting their regional opponent, and to secure the sympathy of the local population by conveying the feeling that they were under attack!

During the second phase (2011-2014), the group used various tactics ranging from signing "non-aggression" agreements with the tribes, especially before the fall of Sana'a, to isolating the powerful tribes as an initial step before striking them hard when they could receive no help from other tribes.

This stage also shows the Houthi exploitation of the events of 2011 to control and isolate Saada. During the next two years, the Houthi group secured the flow of weapons from Mudi port in Hajjah to Saada, and took advantage of the democratic openness during that period to recruit, presenting itself as a victim of the regime. It also manipulated the events to obtain weapons from Iran. During that time, the government seized the ship Jihan 1, which was on its way from Iran to the Houthis.

This stage was characterized by the Houthis' elusiveness, and their failure to refer to the main goals. The group repeatedly stressed that its goal was not authority, the government, the state, or the tribe. It gradually modified its goals. It began its attack under the pretext that they were only confronting foreign Salafis in Dammaj, then the tribes that threatened them. The next target was "Al-Ahmar family" rather than Hashid tribe. In their attack to take over Amran Governorate, the Houthi stated that their goal was to change of the governor and the leadership of the 310th Armored Brigade and not the Yemeni Islah Party or the tribes of Amran.



Houthis also signed many agreements in Amarn, and most of these agreements were based on these justifications, but soon the Houthis broke these agreements with tribes and began to attack their areas quickly.

Most of the agreements concluded by the Houthis with the tribes refer to the "asphalt road" and that it shall not be targeted. This article granted the group's forces the ability to move from their stronghold in Saada to Amran, Sana'a, and then the rest of the provinces without being attacked.

During this stage, the Houthis benefited greatly from the network of former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, which he built during his 33-year rule. The Houthis allied themselves with Saleh who was trying to take revenge of the opposition that spearheaded the movement to topple him. The group also benefited greatly from the UN lack of understanding of the group's nature as an armed militia seeking to control the country. Houthis presented themselves as a victim of attacks and wars because they represented the Zaydi/Hashemite minority. Although the claim to represent the Zaydi minority is merely exploited for political gains.

The Houthis participated in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) to obtain international recognition of their being an essential component of the country, despite their rejection of the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism. The Houthis exploited the NDC in order to cover up their progress in areas adjacent to their strongholds, to transform Saada governorate into a province outside the control of the state, and to build a sectarian area exclusively for the group, taking advantage of the transitional phase and restructuring the armed forces to control those areas. This participation granted the Houthis interaction with and influence on the United Nations and its envoy, Jamal Benomar, who insisted on describing the progress of the Houthis in 2013-2014 as battles between armed groups! Only when the Houthi threat of taking over the capital, Sana'a, became evident did he refer to the Houthis directly.

The Houthis approved the outcomes of the NDC, which represented a Yemeni consensus, but they rejected the outcomes related to the form of the state, and used it as a justification to overthrow the government and the state in the country. Their justifications were expressed in the form of demands to change the government and to cancel the government decision to lift subsidies of oil derivatives. The group conducted sit-ins at the entrances of the capital, Sana'a, and signed mutual non-aggression agreements with the tribes, but it broke most of those agreements and penetrated into tribal areas, taking control of strategic mountains and hills.

The Houthis invaded Sana'a and reached a peace and partnership agreement, which they imposed on the political parties and the Yemeni president, but they quickly violated its provisions collectively. They wanted to run the country from behind President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and turn him into a puppet.

After taking control of Sana'a, the Houthis broke most of their agreements with the tribes, which were based on their keeping away from tribal areas. Taking advantage of the army's neutrality and their seizure of its weapons and equipment and transferring them to Saada, the Houthis launched campaigns of aggression against the tribes, controlling their areas, blowing up their homes, mosques, and infrastructure, destroying their property, displacing their families, and executing tribal leaders.

The third stage came after Operation Decisive Storm. At this stage, the Houthis employed multiple tactics to ensure their expansion in tribal areas. They reinforced this stage by concluding other agreements that guarantee the transfer of their forces from Sana'a and Saada to the battlefronts without being attacked by the tribes, in exchange for the Houthis guaranteeing that they would not enter tribal areas or entrench themselves there.

However, the Houthis violated these agreements and launched campaigns to invade and destroy of those tribal areas, killed the sheikhs of those tribes, blew up their homes, and destroyed their property, as happened with the Hajour tribes in Hajjah, the Ans tribes in Dhamar Governorate, and other tribes. The Houthis also executed a number of the leaders of those tribes, as happened in Al-Bayda.

During this stage, the Houthi group systematically abrogated the role of tribal elders and built parallel entities, including the Tribal Charter of Honor, which was initiated in 2015 through a signature campaign and was implemented in 2019, replacing all other agreements with the tribes. It justifies the group's dismissal of the tribal sheikhs they did not approve by accusing them of treason and by forcing these sheikhs to recruit more fighters. This violates previous agreements with tribal sheikhs, which stipulated that the tribes should administer their areas without Houthi interference, and stated that the tribes should not be turned into recruiting entities. In addition, the Houthis tried to force tribal leaders to pay the costs of their fronts if they refused to recruit more fighters.

During this stage, the Houthi alliance with Saleh, who was killed at the end of 2017, broke off, and the Houthis targeted Saleh's supporters and members of the Congress Party, which literally means "to get rid of them and expel them from official institutions." This move revealed the scope to which the group was ready to go in its retaliatory campaigns.

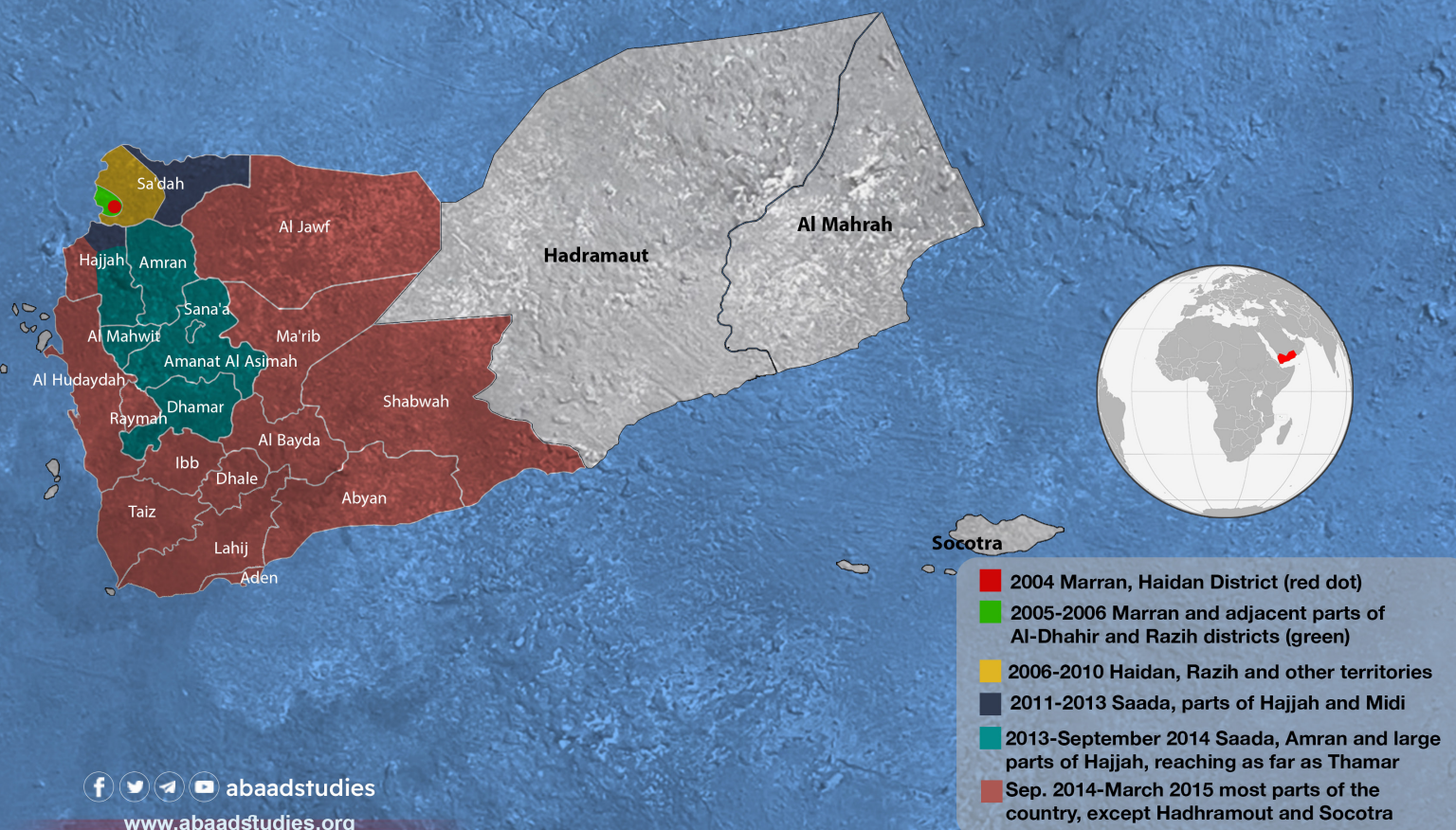


During this phase, the Houthis were engaged in rounds of negotiations and consultations that took place in Geneva, Dhahran Al-Janoub, Kuwait Stockholm, and other background consultations in Muscat. They reached two agreements, 'Dhahran Al-Janoub' and 'Stockholm', which mainly focused on subsidiary issues rather than on a comprehensive solution to end the war. Yet, the group violated all these agreements by launching missile attacks and through political evasion. These tactics usually coincide with regional and international events, and are applied when the group manages to survive the state of military pressure directed against it. The paper concludes that without military pressure on the Houthis and stripping them of power, weapons, support and external influence, the group will not take part in consultations towards making peace in Yemen or implement any agreement. Failing that, the Houthis will continue for a long time in Yemen, armed with weapons, and affecting the region, regional security, and international trade.



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### A Chronological Map of Houthi Expansion



## Foreword

The armed Houthi movement in its current form was born out of violence. It is a product of the rebellions it launched against the state since the beginning of the century. It began by marketing itself in the 1990s as a group to revive the Zaydi sect, which ruled North Yemen during the Imamate rule prior to the declaration of the republic in 1962. With the rise of the group's rebellion in 2004, many jurists of the Zaydi sect rejected the association of the armed group with the sect.

The armed Houthi movement remained geographically confined to some districts in Saada Governorate until 2011, when the group took advantage of the regime preoccupation with the protests that demanded former President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down. It thrived in subsequent years, which witnessed a transitional phase under the auspices of the Arab Gulf states and the United Nations, and expanded its areas of control to the capital, Sana'a, and then other parts of the country in 2014. The movement has consolidated the influence of Iran, with which it is associated as its main supporter, while Tehran sees them as an inexpensive ally capable of applying pressure on Saudi Arabia and the other Arab Gulf states—Iran's traditional opponents.

The Houthis would not have achieved control over any areas, had it not been for the vacuum in the state, which led to societal fears. The group capitalized on such concerns to establish itself in tribal settings, especially during its alliance with former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh - their former enemy who, during his 33 years in power, created a wide network comprising tribal sheikhs and the military establishment and his desire to take revenge of his political opponents who removed him from power.

This paper argues that the Houthi utilization of violating local agreements as a political and military tool in their control of the country. It refers to some of those agreements and the motives for violating them based on local and regional contexts.

## First - The Six Wars Agreements (2004-2010)

The armed Houthi movement arose in a rebellion against the authorities. The armed group was named after its founder, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi. After his death, leadership of the group passed to his father and then to his brother, the current leader of the movement, Abdul-Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi. The transition in the leadership of the group was based on kinship, so the group was named after the family.

**Table 1: Cease-fire agreements concluded during the six wars, sponsors, and details of breaching these agreements**

| No | Year                                 | Agreement                              | Terms of the agreements   | Motives for the agreement, based on context   | Pretext/ways of violating the agreement   |
|----|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| 1  | The First War: June - September 2004 | Understandings to end of the Rebellion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General amnesty</li> <li>The militants shall surrender themselves.</li> </ul> Talks to end the crisis and forestall re-emergence   | The battles began when armed supporters of the 'Faithful Youth' killed three security men. Security forces arrest tried to arrest Hussein al-Houthi, who barricaded himself in Marran. The leader of the group was killed.      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Badr al-Din al-Houthi (Hussein's father) accused Saleh of not being serious about ending the conflict.</li> </ul> Houthis carried out operations against the authorities |
| 2  | Second war March-May 2005            | Cessation of Hostilities Agreement     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ceasefire truce</li> <li>The general amnesty announced by the President on September 25, 2005. and release of prisoners</li> <li>payment of compensation to those affected</li> <li>Ending of the "rebellion forever"<sup>1</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The disappearance of Badr al-Din al-Houthi, without knowing the reasons.</li> </ul> The Houthi need for rearrangement, with leadership dysfunction. The Houthis viewed it as a reaction. | The Houthis expanded from Marran Mountains to the north and west of .Saada  |



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| 3 | Third war:<br>November 2005<br>- January 2006 | Saada Peace Agreement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· truce for holding the presidential elections</li> <li>· The authorities to release Houthi prisoners.</li> <li>Payment of compensation to the Houthi group.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The Houthis recruit more fighters from other governorates, and contain the group supporters</li> <li>· The emergence of Abdul-Malik al-Houthi as the leader of the group and its need to organize its ranks.</li> <li>· The Houthis expanded their areas of control without being deterred by the authorities.</li> <li>· The Houthis continue digging trenches and deploying snipers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continuing skirmishes and Houthi attempts to expand north and west of Saada on the Saudi border.</li> <li>· In this war, the opposition began accusing Saleh of trying to implicate the forces commanded by Ali Mohsen Saleh in battles with the Houthis.</li> <li>· The Houthis issued a warning to the Yemeni Jews in the Kutaf district in early 2007 to leave their areas.</li> </ul>                            |
| 4 | Fourth war:<br>January-June 2007              | Qatari mediation      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Al-Houthi and other rebel leaders should move to the Qatari capital, Doha, for an indefinite period, and refrain from political and media activities against the Yemeni government. <sup>2</sup>The government should pay compensation to the Houthis</li> <li>· Qatar's commitment to reconstruction</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The Houthi need of regional recognition</li> <li>· Expanding Houthi activities</li> <li>· The Houthis need money to continue as Qatar paid the group \$18 million. <sup>3</sup></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Skirmishes continued until the signing of the Doha Agreement in February 2008. The agreement was signed by, Abdul Karim Al-Eryani representing the government, and Saleh Habra representing the Houthis.</li> <li>· A month later, the Houthis violated the agreement by killing seven policemen in an armed ambush in Saada Governorate.</li> <li>· The Houthis carried out assassinations and bombings.</li> </ul> |

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|   |  |                          |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The Houthis Obtained a sea port to smuggle weapons by sea through small ports in the coastal city of Midi. The weapons are believed to come from Iran.</li> </ul>   |
| 5 | Fifth War: March-July 2008               | Unknown local mediation  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· A truce declared by the authorities unilaterally.</li> <li>· No terms of agreement were declared.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The Houthi need for access to arms supply centers and money to expand their operations.</li> <li>· The failure of the new outposts of rebellion to achieve their objectives, though they reaches as far as Bani Huushaish, north of the capital, Sana'a, while retaining their bases in the city of Saada and the northern part of Amran governorate.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The Houthis expanded their operations to include the kidnapping of foreigners.</li> <li>· The Houthis expanded their control to include areas on the Saudi border.</li> <li>· Attacking Saudi territory. Saudi Arabia entered into confrontations with the Houthis.</li> <li>· Accusing Iran of financing and arming the Houthis to target the national security of the Arabian Peninsula; other accusations leveled against the Lebanese Hezbollah.</li> </ul> |
| 6 | The Sixth War: August 2009-February 2010 | Agreement to end the war | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Houthi commitment to cease-fire, opening roads, demining, leaving their mountain barracks, and ending entrenchment in sites and roadsides<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This agreement Resulted from tightening the noose around the Houthi rebels and besieging them in the mountainous locations,</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· attacking and taking over the city of Saada, the center of the governorate</li> <li>· Besieging the Salafi Dammaj Center.</li> </ul>  |

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| 6 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Withdrawal from districts, non-interfering in the affairs of local authorities, and returning the looted civilian and military equipment.</li> <li>· Release civilian and military detainees held by the rebels, in return for the government releasing of Houthi prisoners, including those who have been sentenced</li> <li>· commitment to refrain from attacking Saudi territory</li> </ul> | and from the sea ports, and cutting the supply lines that were believed to have reached them through the sea. <sup>5</sup> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Trying to expand control over the neighboring governorates.</li> <li>· At this point, the term 'Ansar Allah' appeared in the Houthis' description of themselves, replacing the 'Faithful Youth', as the organization so designated was not fully established by the founder of the group, Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, and most of the founders of the 'Faithful Youth' organization turned against the armed group during the six wars.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|--|--|

### Table 1 shows the following:

- The Houthis resort to agreements in cases of imminent collapse or when they need money. The Houhis were paid compensations in in the 2006 agreement and the Doha agreement. The authorities paid funds from assistance obtained by former Yemeni President, Ali Abdullah Saleh.
- The Houthis monopolized other Yemeni crises such as political disputes between the authorities and the opposition to their advantage. The Houthi rebellion in 2007-2008 was linked to the movement of secessionists in southern Yemen, which, of course, led to the breach of agreements with the official authorities.
- The Houthis used the Zaidi sect's grassroots base to mobilize and recruit more fighters and loyalists to the group. Saleh's use of tribes against the Houthis was a negative reflection on the army's image in the minds of the population, given that the Yemeni army was incapable of facing a simple rebellion.

- The Houthis turn against agreements when they get enough weapons and money to expand the rebellion, dig trenches, obtain quality weapons, and recruit more fighters.
- The attack on Saudi Arabia in the Sixth War aimed at confirming Saleh's link to the Saudis. Saleh took advantage of this development to push Saudi Arabia to fight the Houthis.

## **II. Political Agreements between the Houthi Group and Local Yemeni Forces (2011-2014)**

With the end of the six wars and the entry of political differences between the authority and the opposition (the Joint Meeting Parties) to a dead end, and the growing problems of the internal authority, including the southern movement demanding secession, the Houthis took advantage of such developments to send delegates to tribal sheikhs and remote areas to obtain support. The Houthis focused on areas with a Zaydi majority, which have families belonging to the Hashemite dynasty who claim their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad, to obtain more fighters and recruits.

During this period (2010-2011), Iran was considering more options to provide broader support to the Houthis, with the West heading to increase sanctions against Iran, which needed influence outside the Arab Gulf region to use it in the future. The strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait loomed large in Iran's perceptions, in addition to threatening the GCC states with an armed group closer to home, to pressure on the Gulf states in other files in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

The mass protests against the Saleh regime represented a favorable opportunity for the Houthis to assert their involvement in society, improve their image after the six wars and media campaigns against them by the authority, and to polarize or neutralize active youth towards the group.

Therefore, some young people turned as representatives of the Houthis in most of the sit-ins in the northern governorates. Indeed, the Houthis participated in the protests against Saleh while retaining weapons and equipment, and began to gradually violate the 2010 agreement. The Houthis regained the military sites they had handed over to the army after the announcement of the End of War Agreement. Moreover, the Houthis expanded in the adjacent Hajjah and Al-Jawf governorates. The agreements concluded by representatives of the Houthi group in 2011-2014 represented another stage of the group's development, as it proved capable of taking over the capital, Sana'a, and most of the Yemeni governorates by the beginning of March 2015.

**Table 2 presents some of those agreements, context, and the Houthis' behavior in violating them:**

| No | Year | Title of Agreement   | Governorate | Terms of Agreement   | Motives of the agreement   | Justifications and pretexts for breach   |
|----|------|--|-------------|--|--|--|
| 1  | 2011 | The agreement of the sheikhs of Al-Jawf and the Houthi group     | Al-Jawf     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· cease-fire</li> <li>· Conflict resolution.</li> <li>· A reconciliation contract between the two parties and removal of checkpoints from roads and sites. <sup>6</sup></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis failed to expand towards Al-Jawf Governorate by exploiting the popular uprising.</li> <li>- They avoided depletion of their meagre forces, while still lacking sufficient strength after the six wars and their isolation as an insurgency group since 2004.</li> </ul> | The Houthis expanded from Saada to Amran and then took control of Sana'a. The Houthis expanded in Al-Jawf Governorate, justifying this move by securing their base in Saada and reaching areas close to energy sources to obtain funds, increase the threats against the government, and expand further on the border with Saudi Arabia. |
| 2  | 2011 | The agreement between the Houthi group and the Salafis in Dammaj | Saada       | <p>The agreement between the Houthis and the Salafis in Dammaj was mediated by a tribal mediation committee headed by Hussein al-Ahmar. Terms included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ceasefire between the two sides.</li> <li>- Lifting the siege on Dammaj</li> <li>-Removing all checkpoints and barricades. <sup>7</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthi need to neutralize communities that could pose a threat to them and measure their strength, willingness of the authorities to respond to them in light of the escalation of protests against the Saleh regime</li> </ul>   | The Houthis did not provide justifications for breaching the agreement, but later invented justifications for the expulsion of the Salafis from the stronghold of the Zaidi sect.  |



|   |      |   |        |   |  |  |
|---|------|---|--------|---|--|--|
| 3 | 2012 | "Hajour Peace Agreement between the tribes of Hajour, Kushar District, and the Houthi group | Hajjah | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Peaceful coexistence</li> <li>-Adopting the principle of dialogue in solving any problems in friendly ways</li> <li>-Working together according to the national constants.</li> <li>-Refraining from imposing visions by predominance or force.</li> <li>-Stopping all manifestations of incitement, while preserving every citizen's right to political and intellectual affiliation without coercion.</li> <li>-The Houthis shall not enter the areas of the Hajour tribes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Houthi trick aimed to launch an attack to take control of those areas.</li> <li>- The Houthis' need to control the ways of transporting smuggled weapons through the port of Midi, as the opposition tribes ideologically different with the group served as a fence impeding the transfer of those weapons.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis launched a huge and surprising attack the day after the agreement was signed. <sup>8</sup></li> <li>- In early 2013, the government announced the seizure of an Iranian arms shipment that was on its way to the Houthis. <sup>9</sup></li> </ul> |
| 4 | 2013 | The Houthi-Salafi Agreement brokered by Jamal benomar                                       | Saada  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ending all clashes</li> <li>-Salafis and students of Dammaj center who are not from Saada shall leave the governorate.</li> <li>-Allowing the entry of humanitarian and medical teams</li> </ul> <p>The agreement was violated a few days later, and the Houthis again attacked Dammaj. Tension continued until the 2014 agreement.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation with the United Nations, which the Houthis monopolized later.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The ceasefire was breached by the fighters in Dammaj.</li> </ul>  |

|   |      |  |       |  |   |  |
|---|------|--|-------|--|---|--|
| 5 | 2013 | Wadi Danan Agreement: government mediation between the Houthi group and the Al-Osaimat tribes  | Amran | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Securing the roads between Saada, Amran and Sana'a.</li> <li>-Return the looted possessions to their owners.</li> <li>- Implementation of the arbitration clauses between the tribes of Adhar and Al-Osaimat</li> <li>- demobilizing militants from positions of embankments and lines of confrontations</li> <li>-Freedom of thought and belief</li> <li>- Reconstruction</li> <li>-Forming a committee to oversee the implementation all these points.<sup>10</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis/ Saleh sought to divide the Hashid tribe, the main force of their opponents, Al-Ahmar family.</li> <li>- Ensuring the safe passage of gunmen and vehicles from Saada to Amran in preparation for controlling it</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis did not provide justifications for the breach.</li> <li>- The Houthis took control of the positions of the embankments and confrontations.</li> <li>- The Houthi group imposed its hegemony in the areas of the Al-Osaimat and Adhar tribes.</li> </ul> |
| 6 | 2013 | Agreement with the tribes of Qaflat Adhar and Al-Ahmar family, through presidential mediation. | Amran | <p>Agreement articles:<sup>11</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Universal ceasefire in the valley and rural areas</li> <li>- An immediate ceasefire, and all parties remain in their current positions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neutralizing the components of the Hashid tribe from preparing to fight them in Qaflat Adhar</li> <li>-A Houthi trick to demoralize tribal fighters before launching the attack.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After signing the agreement, the Houthis did not abide by any clause of the agreement, as they stormed the areas of the Qaflah District, ignoring the peace treaty.</li> </ul>  |

|   |      |                           |         |  |   |  |
|---|------|---------------------------|---------|--|---|--|
| 7 | 2014 | Last Dammaj Agreement     | Sadaa   | <p>After months of a siege imposed by the Houthis on Dammaj, a mediation led by the authorities reached the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- end armed displays of the two parties; withdrawing of all fighters from the areas and mountains surrounding Dammaj</li> <li>- Handing Dammaj over to the army, which shall monitor the commitment of the two parties to implementation of the agreement.</li> <li>- The bodies of the killed Salafis who fought the Houthis were pulled out.</li> <li>- Salafi students except original citizens of Dammaj should leave. This led to the displacement of more than 12,000 students and their families from the religious center.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis had an opportunity to reduce the presence of Salafis in Saada Governorate, which had long been considered a major center of Zaidi sect.</li> <li>- Political power was weak at the imminent conclusion of the national dialogue in the country.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-This agreement was implemented as it was a declaration of victory for the group.</li> <li>-The Houthis regained the mountains surrounding Dammaj and imposed a force affiliated with them.</li> <li>-The Houthis did not withdraw their fighters.</li> </ul> |
| 8 | 2014 | Agreement with Dahm Tribe | Al-Jawf | <p>The tribal mediation reached:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Houthis should remove their military checkpoints from the borders of the Dahm tribes.</li> <li>-Dahm tribes should remove checkpoints and barricades.</li> <li>-Allow the Houthis to use the asphalt road.</li> </ul>   | <p>The truce was a trick to increase the number of troops, then attack.</p>   | <p>The Houthis broke the agreement, mobilized huge forces and attacked the tribes two days after the agreement was signed.<sup>13</sup></p>  |

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| 9 | 2014 | Al-Masawina Agreement between Bani Suraim tribes and the Houthi group <sup>14</sup> | Amran | <p>Articles include:<sup>15</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Securing the main asphalt road that connects Sana'a with Saada, and passes through the lands of Bani Suraim; free passage of the Houthis and their supporters</li> <li>- end the entrenchment of armed men on both sides</li> <li>- halting the advance of Houthi fighters in the lands of the Bani Suraim tribe</li> <li>- Guaranteeing the freedom of belief. <sup>16</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Houthis needed to avoid further incitement of Hashid tribes after they entered al-Khamri and blew up the house of Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, the chief sheikh of Hashid.</li> <li>-The Houthi forces need for free and safe passage from Saada to Amran and Saada without being attacked.</li> <li>-Ali Abdullah Saleh's need to confirm the division of the Hashid tribe in Amran,<sup>17</sup> as the tribal sheikhs who signed agreements with the Houthis are part of Saleh's network and those close to him.<sup>18</sup></li> <li>-The Houthis needed to strip the commander of the 310th Armored Brigade of protection from the tribes of his hometown, where Colonel Hamid al-Qushaibi belonged to the Bani Suraim tribes.</li> </ul> | <p>The Houthis brought fighters to Bani Suraim tribal areas a few months after the agreement.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>The Houthis set up checkpoints in the areas of the Bani Suraim tribes, in violation of the agreement. Battles took place between the two sides.</p> <p>-The Houthis were able to impose their control over the tribal areas later.</p> |
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| 10 | 2014 | Houthi agreement with the tribes of Hamdan  | Sana'a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ceasefire</li> <li>- Exit of all Houthi militants who came from outside Hamdan</li> <li>-Allow the Houthis to use the asphalt road</li> <li>- Raise all points and barricades erected by Houthi fighters</li> <li>- exchange of prisoner between the two parties <sup>20</sup></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Neutralizing the Hamdan tribes from fighting alongside the tribes in Amran and Arhab districts and thwarting their participation in the defense of Sana'a later</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Houthis refused to remove some checkpoints outside Hamdan..</li> <li>-The Houthis created a sit-in camp in Dhula' Hamdan,<sup>21</sup> which contributed to the takeover of Sana'a.</li> </ul>   |
| 11 | 2014 | 'The Amran Agreement' to resolve differences between tribes and the army on the one side and the Houthis on the other, brokered by a presidential committee | Amran  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A presidential committee was formed to solve problems between the Amran tribes, the 310th Armored Brigade and the Houthi group. It reached a ceasefire truce, and handed over the brigade to the Military Police on the orders of President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and Defense Minister Muhammad Nasser Ahmed.<sup>22</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Houthi failure to control the command of the 310th Armored Brigade, due to the fierce resistance of the troops and tribes.</li> <li>-The Houthis/ Saleh needed a truce as a trick to stop the government forces fire.</li> <li>-Houthis plans to control Amran</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Controlling Amran</li> <li>- As soon as the mediation committee left, the ceasefire began, and the 310th Armored Brigade forces adhered to the agreement. The Houthis launched a massive and surprising attack on the brigade camp, seized it, and killed the commander of the Brigade, Brigadier General Hamid Al-Qushaibi.</li> <li>- The Houthi group ended up taking control of Amran. <sup>23</sup></li> </ul> |



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| 12 | 2014 | 'Al-Dhafeer Agreement' between the Houthis and the tribes of the Al-Dhafeer, Bani Matar district, Sana'a | Sana'a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ceasefire.</li> <li>- Expelling all militants from outside the region from both sides,</li> <li>- Evacuating Al-Dhafeer Mountain of militants, provided that the sheikh of the area bears the responsibility of protecting the mountain and the village.<sup>24</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Securing Sana'a from the west, in case the tribes moved to prevent their control of Sana'a. West of Sana'a was a major area for Houthi camps and sit-ins before the coup.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After the disembarkation of the tribesmen from the strategic Mountain of Al-Dhafeer in implementation of the agreement, the Houthis infiltrated and took control of the mountain.</li> </ul>  |
| 13 | 2014 | The "Coexistence agreement" between the Houthis and the Salafist center at Ma'abar district              | Dhamar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peaceful coexistence between the two parties</li> <li>- to end to all forms inflammatory and hostile rhetoric against the other on both sides</li> <li>- Direct communication between the two sides to deal with any emergency<sup>25</sup></li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Houthis needed to present an image to the world and Yemeni society of coexistence with other sects after taking control of Sana'a.</li> <li>- Strengthening the division of the Salafis in their strongholds, Ma'abar, Dhamar and Dammaj, Saada, and deterring the Salafis in Dhamar from avenging the afflictions enforced on the Salafis in Dammaj.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis imposed their agenda on the Salafis by force of arms, and prevented them from practicing their activities.</li> <li>- The Houthis deported dozens of Salafis from other governorates.</li> <li>- The Houthis forced the Salafis to support the war effort against the internationally recognized government.</li> </ul> |

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| 14 | 2014 | The agreement between the Houthis and the tribes of Ubaidah and Al-Ashraf | Marib  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coexistence and prevention of military conflicts</li> <li>- Commitment of Marib tribes to secure the roads for the Houthis</li> <li>-Preventing any aggression or attacks on the Houthis, whether by these tribes or by another party in their areas.</li> <li>-The Houthis shall not attack these tribes' areas <sup>26</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis' need to dismantle tribal groups that reject their presence in Marib, such as the Matareh Nakhla.</li> <li>- The Houthis needed to normalize the situation after taking control of Sana'a and fearing the tribes' revolt against the group.</li> </ul> | - The Houthis raided and bombed tribal areas with heavy weapons.                           |
| 15 | 2014 | The Houthi agreement with the political and tribal parties in Ibb         | Ibb    | terms:* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A ceasefire and the exit of militants from both sides <sup>27</sup></li> <li>- Leaving the administration of the city of Ibb under the control of the local authority and preventing armed manifestations.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The passage of the Houthi forces through Ibb to Radaa' in Al-Bayda governorate to subdue it.</li> <li>- Normalization of the situation after taking control of the capital, Sana'a in September 2014</li> </ul>  | - The Houthis raided and bombed tribal areas with heavy weapons.                           |
| 16 | 2014 | The Houthi agreement with political and tribal parties in Ibb             | Sana'a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is the second agreement after an agreement concluded in February 2014. Articles* included:</li> <li>- ceasefire</li> </ul>  | - The agreement was concluded in December 2014 when the Houthis needed to tighten their control over Sana'a.  | - The Houthis did not abide by the agreement and immediately took control of tribal areas. |

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|  |  |  |  | <div>- Allowing the Houthis to use the asphalt road to deploy their forces without being intercepted</div> <div>- Non-aggression by the Houthis against the tribes.</div> | <div>with who were party to the agreement were loyal to the Islah party and the Houthis feared that they would revolt against the group.</div> | <div>- The Houthis launched a campaign of arrests of tribesmen.</div> <div>- The Houthis blew up homes, mosques and the Quran centers .<sup>28</sup></div> |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|

There is no published agreement clarifying the terms of the agreement. The terms mentioned here are based on media reports.

Table 2 shows the followings:

- The Houthis took advantage of the transitional period to achieve their goals, as most state institutions were suffering from a conflict between Saleh loyalists and those loyal to the uprising. Political power was divided equally between the Congress party led by Saleh and the political opposition that supported the demonstrators.
- Most of the terms of the agreements include "peaceful coexistence, and the main road," which indicates that the Houthi group was aware that its intellectual and political ideology was rejected by the Yemeni people. Otherwise, why should the peaceful coexistence clause be included at all when there were no different ethnicities or races in Yemen? In addition, the group focused on the ‘black line’ (the asphalt road), which means opening of the main road that connects the main cities, passing through densely populated areas.
- Between 2011 and 2013, the Houthi group used the agreements to secure its stronghold in Saada and to secure the flow of weapons and money from abroad through the port of Midi to Saada. At the same time, it violated them and imposed its hegemony by armed force, destroying the infrastructure of those tribes and stripping them of their power, so that the Houthis could not be intercepted or confronted.

- While Iran increased its support for the Houthis during that period, in addition to the high costs it was spending in Syria in terms of troops and money, some Gulf countries were, in turn, supporting the armed groups opposed to Bashar al-Assad. Riyadh was working tirelessly to obstruct an Iranian nuclear agreement with the West before Iran stopped expanding beyond its borders, especially with the enthusiasm of the United States at that time - the Barack Obama administration - to reach an agreement.
- The Houthis benefited from the army and security's disavowal of their responsibilities in confronting the Houthis, and the transitional authority's transformation into a mediator between the Houthis as a rebel group and local communities.
- The presidential mediation committees gave an official character to the Houthi movement and expansion. The military establishment did not interfere except in rare cases, mostly through rebellion on the part of military leaders, who they were reprimanded by the president and the Ministry of Defense. With the authority's refusal to protect society, most of the tribes were unable to confront the Houthis' military arsenal, so they resorted to agreements to save their areas. Tribal fighters dispersed and evacuated their military positions, so the Houthis would attack and seize them. This happened in Hamdan and Bani Matar.
- The Houthis resort to agreements to dismantle the unity of the tribes that reject their presence and spread differences between them. The Houthis used the Saleh network to obtain contradictory positions from those tribes, as happened with the Hashid tribes in Amran governorate during the invasion and control of the governorate. The Houthis deliberately used customs and tribal systems to their advantage, so that they could then turn against the agreements with the disintegration and displacement of risks. The Houthis cleverly used agreements with the political parties and tribes in the other governorates after taking control of Sana'a to ensure their influence and dominance.

- The political and military positions of the Houthis during that period (2011-2014) were based on the emergency transformations in state institutions and changes in the transitional period. The Houthis were the most extreme party opposing any peaceful transition, as they declared their opposition to the Gulf Initiative signed by Saleh and the opposition on November 23, 2011 to the delegation of Saleh's power to vice-president, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. They also thwarted holding presidential elections in February 2012 in most of Saada. In March 2012, the Houthis escalated their combat operations to control the land. This year marked peak of their battles, in which they tried to control Midi port in Hajjah, besiege a Salafi institute in Dammaj, north of Saada, and reach the center of Al-Jawf Governorate in the east. They also refused to lift the sit-in camps in Sana'a, but turned the places of peaceful sit-ins into armed sit-ins.
- During this period, President Hadi tried to start restructuring the military institution, but violence escalated by the Houthis and their supporter, Saleh, to prevent the transition, which led the Security Council to issue in June 2012 Resolution 2051 threatening sanctions against those who undermine the transitional period. The military movements of the Houthis called President Hadi in September 2012 to direct accusations against Iran of fueling violence in Yemen.<sup>29</sup> The Houthis benefited from the restructuring of the armed forces in the same year by removing the military leaders they were facing, including General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar (former Yemeni Vice-President). Those close to Saleh rushed to engage with the Houthis and help them within the framework of an alliance with Ali Abdullah Saleh, who decided to take revenge on the forces that removed him from power, and the Houthis were the most extreme at this stage.
- The Houthis were keen to reassure the parties and authorities in Sana'a and the United Nations that their wars with "forces of the Yemeni army" and "tribesmen" in several governorates in Al-Jawf "Hajjah", "Amran" and "Saada" between (2012- until July/ July 2014) do not pose a threat to the central government in Sana'a, political parties or tribes. Al-Houthi presented those wars as revenge only against the tribes and personalities that supported and participated in the six wars against the group.



## The United Nations and accusations of neglecting the Houthis (2011-2014)

During the period between (2011-2014), the role of the United Nations regarding the Houthis emerged. The UN envoy to Yemen, Jamal Benomar, was managing most of the political affairs in the country and periodically reporting to the UN Security Council. The role of the United Nations regarding the Houthis was questioned by many of the Yemeni elite. In fact, the Houthi group was able to mislead the Yemeni political forces with the behavior of their expansion and reassurance to the parties that they were not targeting them as stated above.

The position of the United Nations emerged on two main issues: the National Dialogue Conference and the Peace and Partnership Agreement. Considering that the Gulf Initiative and its Executive Mechanism is a Gulf effort, the responsibility of the United Nations was to implement it. The Houthis did not approve of the initiative, just as the Houthis at that period were considered a rebel group.

### A. The National Dialogue Conference: the Houthi view of power and participation

Contrary to the above agreements that were concluded between the Houthis and an entity or entities, their participation in the National Dialogue Conference emanating from the Gulf initiative and its executive mechanism shows the armed group's vision and behavior toward the authority and political parties.

In December 2011, while the Houthis were expanding in Saada and the neighboring Al-Jawf governorate, the UN envoy at the time, Jamal Benomar, visited Saada governorate and met with the leader of the Houthis, Abdul-Malik Al Houthi. After his meeting with the Houthi leader, Benomer stated that the meeting "raised the possibility of ending their armed struggle, The Houthis need to practice politics." <sup>30</sup>

The Houthis refused to participate in the national dialogue despite Benomar's visit, but he later managed to convince them,<sup>31</sup> with no stipulations for their weapons or their transformation into a political party. Hadi accused Benomar of pressuring him by involving the Houthis without laying down their arms.<sup>32</sup> The Yemeni parties did not participate in distributing the shares of the Dialogue Conference. UN envoy, Jamal Benomar, assumed the task of distributing the participation quotas in the conference to the Yemeni political components.<sup>33</sup>

The Houthis agreed to attend the consultations and were granted 35 seats out of 565, which is a very large number for a specific group, as the Islah Party, the largest Yemeni party opposed to Saleh, won 50 seats. Saleh's General People's Congress party won 112 seats. Representatives of the Houthi group participated in the NDC committees for a period of ten months at a time when they were expanding on the ground in Saada and the neighboring governorates such as Hajjah and Al-Jawf, as indicated in Table 2.

The NDC completed its agendas in January 2014 and the Houthis rejected the form of a federal state with its six regions, although their representative, Dr. Ahmed Sharaf al-Din,<sup>34</sup> agreed to it. The territories document put Midi port away from the control of the province of Saada, which angered the Houthis, who had been fighting since 2012 in order to secure access to it.

Although the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference represented a success for the Yemenis, negotiators, the Gulf initiative and the United Nations, its timing in the regional environment was bad, as it was considered a victory for the 2011 uprising that toppled the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Therefore, it was considered a victory for the Arab Spring, a matter that raised great sensitivity in the region and the Middle East, especially after the Egyptian military establishment regained power with Gulf support.

The Houthi agreement with Ali Abdullah Saleh to reject the "form of the state" - despite the fact that the Congress party agreed to this in advance in the national dialogue –a justification for further Houthi expansion while regional actors and the international community turned a blind eye to Houthi behavior.

The United Nations and its envoy were partly responsible for such developments. Benomar focused on two main issues: a) an immediate shift to the transitional phase, regardless of the current events, regardless of the Houthis' continued expansion since the start of the national dialogue sessions, the continued flow of Iranian weapons from abroad, and the Houthi purchase of more weapons. b) Thwarting the attempts of the family of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh from staying in and returning to power, and considering Saleh's alliance with the Houthis a condemnation of Saleh rather than of both. This helped the Houthis improve their image before the international community, despite their rejection of the Gulf initiative, the presidential elections, and their retraction of their approval of the outcomes of the national dialogue. This led the Houthis to move forward until they took control of the capital, Sana'a, and prompted the United Nations to announce the 'Peace and Partnership Agreement'.

Benomar's reference to the Houthis in his reports to the international organization in 2013-2014 did not match the magnitude of the danger that was being prepared.<sup>35</sup> He neglected - or may have intended - the UN envoy to provide an accurate 'characterization' of the Houthi-Saleh movements, using expressions that did not state clearly that the Houthis were facing government forces,<sup>36</sup> controlling areas and preventing state institutions from carrying out their tasks. This remained the case until Benomar announced in June 2014 - two weeks before the fall of the city of Amran - that the confrontations were taking place between "armed groups" and the Houthis. The Houthis were referred to for the first time as being behind the events in the governorate. Yet, at the same time, Benomar makes it clear that the fighting was not with the army, but between rival armed factions, which sparked much criticism.<sup>37</sup>

## B) The Peace and Partnership Agreement and the Movenpick Dialogue

After the fall of the city of Amran, the Houthis strengthened their presence in the vicinity of the capital, Sana'a, and neutralized the tribes by agreements - as shown in Table 2. This became evident after the national accord government lifted subsidies of oil derivatives on July 30, 2014. The Houthis took advantage of this decision to besiege the capital in the same way they did in Amran.

Accordingly, camps of Houthi militants were erected at most of the entrances to Sana'a, and the gathering and sit-in inside them. Instead of using the language of the United Nations and the international community more firmly, Benomar led a mediation between the transitional President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the Houthis to ease tension until early September 2014. Many negotiations were held with the Houthis, which always ended with Houthi rejection of agreement.

The Houthis continued to deploy their fighters to the outskirts of the capital. It was clear that the Houthis were preparing for a broader battle. Sana'a actually fell after weak resistance by the forces of the First Armored Division led by the president's advisor at the time, Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, and tribesmen loyal to the Islah Party.

While battles were raging on, the UN envoy was making efforts to strike an agreement. Benomar met with the leader of the Houthis in Saada to discuss the agreement, and said that his discussions with the group's leader were "positive and constructive."<sup>38</sup> " On the eve of the fall of the capital (September 21, 2014), the Peace and Partnership Agreement was announced.<sup>39</sup>

The agreement legalized the Houthi presence with the consent of the Yemeni parties that signed the agreement. It strengthened the Houthi control over state institutions in the following weeks and their expansion in other governorates. Table 2 indicates the expansion of the Houthis and their agreements after the Houthis took control of the capital, and how these agreements were violated to serve the movement of Houthi militants to bring down the Yemeni districts in a domino succession.

Although the Peace and Partnership Agreement benefited the Houthis, legitimized their behavior during the previous years, and presented them as a recognized political party even though they were an armed group, the Houthis almost reneged on every clause of the agreement in the subsequent weeks, including the Movenpick Dialogue. The Houthis continued to expand their control over other governorates. It was clear that political components were under severe pressure and tension. Table 3 details the Houthi violation of some provisions of the Peace and Partnership Agreement.

| Agreement clause   | سلوك النقض  |
|--|---|
| The Yemeni president shall hold comprehensive and transparent consultations with all the components represented in the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference immediately after the signing of this agreement, with the aim of forming a meritocratic government within a maximum period of one month. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis managed these consultations, known as the Movenpick Consultations (October 2014 to March 21, 2015), with Benomar declaring their failure and leaving Sana'a.<sup>40</sup></li> <li>- The Houthis arrested negotiators representing parties engaged in the consultations, and silenced others. Houthi supervisors continued to control the scene outside the meeting room.</li> </ul>   |
| Components shall actively participate in these consultations, and shall be represented in the executive bodies at the central and governorate levels to ensure effectiveness and national partnership.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis concentrated on controlling the rest of the governorates and their executive bodies.</li> <li>- The Houthis imposed recruitment of the group's affiliates in government agencies and institutions.</li> </ul>  |
| Within three days of signing the Peace and Partnership Agreement, the President of the Republic shall appoint political advisors from the Houthis and the Peaceful Southern Movement.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis managed to impose an advisor, "Saleh Al-Sammad".</li> <li>- Instead of an advisory role, the Houthis imposed their presence to run state apparatus from behind the scenes.<sup>41</sup></li> <li>- Houthi pressure on Hadi to issue republican decrees that include the appointment of a vice-president from the group.</li> <li>- Imposing the recruitment of members of the group in a number of senior executive positions</li> </ul> |

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| <p>The membership of the National Commission shall be reviewed within a period not exceeding 15 days to ensure a fair representation of the components.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis imposed the re-formation of the National Authority to monitor the implementation of the outcomes of the national dialogue, and demanded the appointment of 17 members of the group to this body so that they could own the blocking third.</li> <li>- This prompted Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his prime minister to resign. Instead of the Houthis reversing their decisions and saving the agreement, the group issued the constitutional declaration that “included the dissolution of parliament, the formation of a transitional national council, and a presidential council ... to run the transitional period.”<sup>42</sup> The Houthis placed the country's president and prime minister under house arrest.</li> </ul> |
| <p>The political advisors of the President of the Republic shall set criteria for candidates for positions in the new government.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis imposed their nominees in the government and in the ministerial portfolios.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>The parties shall undertake to remove all elements of political and security tension in order to resolve any conflict through dialogue and to enable the state to exercise its powers.<br/>All acts of violence must stopped immediately by all parties in the capital, Sana'a, and its surroundings (the military supplement)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis continued to expand in and around Sana'a and to maintain security points.</li> <li>- The Houthis launched campaigns of arrests of opponents, and targeted demonstrations against the group with live bullets in Sana'a and other governorates.</li> <li>- The Houthis took control of state institutions, and in February 2015 announced the establishment of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee, which swallowed up and controlled state institutions.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>It is necessary to extend the authority of the state and restore its control over all national territory in accordance with the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. (military supplement)</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Houthis expanded their control to the rest of the governorates. (see Table 2)</li> <li>- They closed the province of Saada and tightened procedures of civilian entry to the governorate.</li> </ul>  |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| Immediate termination of all hostilities and an immediate ceasefire in Al-Jawf and Marib. (military supplement)  | - Ceasefire was declared, but the Houthis launched attacks on tribal sites and areas, after neutralizing army sites and camps that were preparing to confront the Houthis |
| The state shall be committed to protecting the citizens of Al-Bayda from the danger of Al-Qaeda, providing them with the necessary support and standing by them in the face of the threat of Al-Qaeda and terrorism. | - The Houthis were able to use the army forces to control most of the areas of Al-Bayda, based on agreements with the tribes. (see Table 2: Al Humayqan Agreement)        |

**Table 3**

### III. Houthi agreements and behavior towards peace, April 2015- December 2021

On March 26, 2015, Saudi Arabia announced a Saudi-led coalition of several countries to confront the armed Houthi group and its ally Ali Abdullah Saleh, with the aim of restoring the legitimate government to power. The decision to wage a regional war in support of the internationally recognized government was shocking to the Houthis, who had consolidated their control over the capital, Sana'a.

The six-year period, 2015-2021, witnessed a new phase of Houthi policy towards agreements and peace in Yemen. This new approach was informed by the following: a) the need for more tribal fighters, to defend what they had gained during the previous years and the Houthi feeling that the tribes, with whom the Houthis broke agreements, would take revenge. b) Loss of the recognition granted to them under the Peace and Partnership Agreement. c) Houthis full control of power and state institutions. d) The refusal of the Gulf states to deal with them, except for the Sultanate of Oman, which remained neutral in the war.

Sultanate of Oman, which remained neutral in the war.

During this period, the Houthis sought to renew most of the agreements they had broken and reach new ones, which were also later reneged. A new pattern of agreements and dictates imposed by the Houthis on the tribes appeared. The Houthis followed a fluctuating behavior towards peace in Yemen in their consultations with the internationally recognized government. Table 4 shows some of the agreements entered into by the Houthis, which confirm the hypothesis on which the study is based that the Houthis monopolized agreements to advance their military expansion and impose their political hegemony. When agreements conflict with this goal or expire, the Houthis violate them.

| No. | Year | Agreement              | Governorate       | Terms of the agreement   | Motives for the agreements  | Houthi Violations of the agreement  |
|-----|------|------------------------|-------------------|--|---|---|
| 1   | 2015 | Tribal Honor Agreement | Most governorates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disclaiming those who stand in the side of the Yemeni government and the Arab coalition.</li> <li>- Legal penalties for anyone who supports the coalition. Social isolation of the tribes that stand with the legitimate government backed by the Arab coalition.</li> <li>- The principle of collective tribal funds was imposed, through which tribes were forced to participate in fighting on the side of the Houthis.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The sheikhs of large, even small, tribes refused to fight alongside the Houthis against the coalition, and rejected Houthi requests to mobilize fighters on behalf of their tribes to fight. They do not control the individuals who go to fight for the Houthis without referring to the tribe.</li> <li>-Allowing the passage of their forces to the battlefronts without the objection of the tribes.</li> </ul> | <p>Although the document was signed in October 2015, the Houthi group did not formally adopt it until 2019.<sup>43</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Houthis established parallel tribal leaders to ignite differences within the tribes and prevent their unification against the group. These leaders mobilized fighters and competed with the current tribal sheikhs who rejected the Houthis. The Houthis built an entity parallel to the "Yemen Tribes" council, and called it the Tribal Cohesion Council. In the 10<sup>th</sup> Ramadan 2017 document, the Houthis threatened to replace them with other tribal sheikhs<sup>44</sup></li> </ul> |

|   |      |  |        |   |   |  |
|---|------|--|--------|---|---|--|
|   |      |  |        | <p>- The document is considered a permanent code of honor in peace and war and is valid in every circumstance and time.</p> <p>- Formation of a joint committee to draw up a list of shame in which persons deserving of sanctions are named.</p>   |   | <p>-The Houthis consider it a "fortification of the internal front"<sup>45</sup> by preventing any movement of the tribes against the armed group. With the escalation of the Houthis in the governorates of Al-Bayda, Marib and Al-Jawf at the beginning of 2020, the group announced that it would use those who refused to fight in its ranks - among the tribesmen - as "human shields".<sup>46</sup></p>  |
| 2 | 2016 | Agreement to establish the Supreme Political Council between the Houthi group and late President Ali Saleh | Sana'a | <p>Terms of the agreement* included:</p> <p>-The establishment of a government and a presidential council for the Houthi alliance and the General People's Congress party loyal to Saleh.</p> <p>Activating the Yemeni parliament after the Houthis dissolved it in early February 2015.<sup>47</sup></p> | <p>-The Houthi group needed to end the coalition's and the government's hopes of a possible coup by Saleh against the Houthis.</p> <p>-The Houthis, as an armed group, needed a political cover to exercise power.</p> <p>-The Houthis needed a puppet parliament to legitimize its decisions before the international community.</p> | <p>-The Houthis accused Saleh of shifting his allegiance to the Arab coalition.</p> <p>Instead of being partners in managing power in Sana'a, the Houthis accused their allies of being a "fifth columns" and spies.</p> <p>-The agreement is based on partnership, but the Houthis used the agreement to undermine the authority of the Congress Party, and to use the capacity of party members in state institutions to train their members.</p> <p>- The Houthis penetrated heavily into state institutions, built a parallel system and expelled many Saleh party cadres.</p> |

|   |      |   |           |  |   |   |
|---|------|---|-----------|--|---|---|
|   |      |   |           |  |   | <p>-President Saleh was killed by the Houthi group at the end of 2017 after fierce clashes in Sana'a.</p> <p>-The Houthis took control of the Supreme Political Council, including the presidency of the council, which was rotational.</p> |
| 3 | 2017 | Al Awadh tribes agreement with the Houthis                | Al-Bayda  | <p>It includes many points, most notably :<sup>48</sup></p> <p>-withdrawal of the Houthi militants from the borders of the Al-Awadh region, in exchange for the withdrawal of the tribesmen from government buildings in the center of the Radman district.</p> <p>-Appointment of a new director of security for the directorate,</p> <p>-Al Radman and Al Awad tribesmen secured the district.</p> | <p>-The Houthis were preparing to attack President Saleh, and the Sheikh of the Awadh tribes, Yasser al-Awadhi, is one of Saleh's most prominent aides.</p> <p>-The Houthis feared that the tribes would mobilize fighters for Saleh.</p> | <p>-Violation of the agreement in 2020 by the Houthi control of the district and the bombing of the homes of the tribal sheikhs who sided with Sheikh Yasser Al-Awadhi</p>  |
| 4 | 2019 | agreement of the Houthi group with the tribes of Al-Hasha | Al-Dhali' | <p>-withdrawal of armed tribesmen and the Houthi group to their former positions.</p>  | <p>-The Houthis needed to secure their areas in neighboring Taiz governorate.</p> <p>-The Houthi need for their forces to pass towards the south of the country.</p>  | <p>The Houthis attempted to control the strategic areas from which the tribes withdrew.</p>   |

|   |      |  |           |   |  |   |
|---|------|--|-----------|---|--|---|
| 5 | 2020 | Agreement between the Houthi group and the tribes of Bousha in Mahlia District, Ma'rib | Marib     | Text of the agreement:<br>-Allow the Houthis to pass through the main asphalt road.<br>-No attacks on the tribe's lands. <sup>49</sup>  | -The Houthis were preparing for an attack to reach the oil-rich Marib.<br>-They needed to agree with the tribes not to attack them.  | -The Houthis did not provide a justification for entering the areas of the Buasha tribes<br>-After the Houthis took control of most of the Mahlia district, they entered the tribe's territory to impose their hegemony.  |
| 6 | 2020 | Agreement with Al-Awadh tribes   | Al-Bayda  | Agreement text*:<br>The Houthis and the tribes agreed to hand over the killers of a woman. Expulsion of the Houthi supervisors who came from Saada and outside the Awad tribes.                                   | -The areas of Al-Awadh tribe remained outside the control of the Houthis. Tribal sheikhs continued to administer those areas. The Houthis wanted to control those areas.<br>-The Houthis needed Al Awad areas in order to reach the Marib governorate. | The Houthis accused Sheikh Yasser Al-Awadhi and the Al-Asbahi family of hiding up an al-Qaeda member, and demanded that Yasser Al-Awadhi hand him over and that the Al-Asbahi family should resort to the judiciary, thus violating the agreement and returning to escalate and storm the area.<br>-The Houthis bombed the tribe's areas. |
| 7 | 2021 | Opening Al-Dhali' Road agreement   | Al-Dhali' | It was agreed with the military axis in Al-Dhali' to open Al-Dhali' road for the passage of goods and to facilitate the movement in the Aden-Sana'a road for the passage of goods after three years of stumbling. | Facilitating the transportation of goods between Aden and Sana'a, and the residents of neighboring districts in the governorate by passing through the asphalt road.   | The Houthis refused to implement the agreement.   |

|   |      |                     |          |  |   |   |
|---|------|---------------------|----------|--|---|---|
|   |      |                     |          | However, Al-Houthi broke that agreement and obstructed the facilitation of movement and soon abandoned that agreement, which is the second agreement broken by the Houthis in relation to this road.   |   |   |
| 8 | 2021 | Safer Tanker crisis | Hodeidah | <p>The Safer crisis witnessed the signing and breach of more than one agreement, the most recent of which were agreements concluded in 2020 and 2021 for urgent maintenance of the oil tanker anchored off the coast of Hodeidah, with a tonnage of more than 1,100,000 barrels of crude oil. Most of those agreements focus on the following items*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Allowing a UN team to visit the tanker, assess damage and make repairs. A UN team visited in 2019, inspected the tanker and reported that it was a time bomb that would explode or leak soon.</li> <li>- Unloading oil from the tanker.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International pressure and holding the Houthis responsible in the event of an environmental disaster in the Red Sea.</li> <li>-The Houthis wanted to use the tanker as a bomb if the Houthi opponents decided to attack Hodeidah.</li> </ul> | <p>The Houthis violated the agreements several times. In October 2020, the Houthis retracted at the last minute from signing the agreement, claiming that the UN did not understand their observations.</p> <p>-In November 2020, an urgent maintenance agreement and a comprehensive evaluation of the Safer Floating Tank was signed between the Houthis and the United Nations, and the Houthis announced their readiness and welcome to a United Nations team of experts for this maintenance. Then the Houthis refused to allow the UN team's visit.</p> |

\* The table does not discuss military truces, because this is subject to military considerations that are not the subject of this study.

\*\* The table does not discuss most of the internal tribal agreements related to the war that the Houthis broke. We will refer to that in the analysis of the above information.

### From Table 4, the following points may be made:

- Except for the agreements with the Yemeni tribes above, during that period the Houthis signed other agreements with a number of tribes, mostly in the north of the country. These agreements stipulate that the tribes shall desist from fighting the Houthis and shall allow them to use the asphalt road, in return for allowing the tribes to run their territories which shall not be used by the Houthis in their expansion and entrenchment.<sup>50</sup> They are the same as the main principles of the Houthi agreements during the period 2011-2014, but the Houthis have violated those agreements:
- The Houthi incursion on Hajour in northern Hajjah governorate in 2019 is one of those incidents in which the Houthis broke the agreement. The Houthis requested to enter Hajour and take control of the mountains in their areas. When the tribal leaders refused and tried to remind the group of the agreement, the Houthis seized those mountains by force and stationed themselves in them. Clashes erupted between the two parties that ended with the killing of dozens and the Houthis taking control of those areas.
- The Houthi alliance with Ali Abdullah Saleh and his tribal network dried up because of his strength and his party, and then the Houthis prepared to break this alliance. This is the behavior of the group even with their agreements with the tribes, as they think of the justifications and methods of violating the agreement before they signing it.
- When the Houthis felt the threats posed by the war, they announced the "Tribal Charter of Honor" and invited the people - the masses - to sign it without presenting it in the name of the group. The document was promoted by the Saleh party during its alliance with the Houthis.





Because the armed group avoided inciting the tribes during the war, to choosing to co-opt them in favor of the group, it built parallel institutions for those tribes, and used the threat in 2017 to send a message to tribal leaders loyal to Saleh of the extent of the damage they would receive in the event of non-compliance with the charter. The Houthis did not adopt the implementation of this charter until in 2019, weeks before the start of their battles to control al-Jawf and Marib. This charter led the tribes to stay away from supporting the tribes of Marib and al-Jawf during their war with the Houthis

- Dismantling the tribes opposed to the group and those tribes the areas of which the Houthis wanted to subdue, either by introducing new sheikhs, by the Houthis provoking rebellions, or provoking disputes among brothers or cousins over the leadership of the tribe. For example, Al-Houthi managed to cause a major rift within Al Awadh tribe, which led to the support of the Houthis by a number of Al-Awadhi's kinsmen against Sheikh Yasser Al-Awadhi. Yasser's uprising against the Houthis lasted only a few days before it was put down by the Houthis in June 2020, despite the support received by Yasser Al-Awadhi from the National Army and the Arab Coalition .<sup>51</sup>

## Houthi agreements and consultations outside Yemen (2015-2021)

This stage witnessed agreements and consultations abroad in which the Houthi group took part. These include an agreement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and consultations with the internationally recognized government abroad.

These talks highlighted the Houthis' rejection of all peace attempts and the use of military truces and negotiations sponsored by the international community to strengthen its military position, such as the Dhahran Al-Janoub Agreement, the Kuwait consultations, and the Stockholm Agreement.



### **a) Dhahran Al-Janoub Agreement**

In March 2016, an unannounced truce was approved regarding the border strip in the northwestern regions for Yemen, and the southern regions for Saudi Arabia, which later evolved into an agreement (April 2016) that included a permanent ceasefire, the Houthi demining of the area, the formation of joint monitoring committees, and the exchange of prisoners and detainees. Although the Houthis began presenting a delusional image of removing mines from the borders and expressing a willingness to open the al-Tiwal port, the group quickly retreated after weeks of heavy bombardment of Saudi Arabia at a time when the truce was still in effect and was considered the longest military truce in a specific area. Things were going well until the bombing continued, and the Houthis announced their refusal to send their representatives to the monitoring committees to discuss in Riyadh, as stipulated in the agreement.

### **B. Kuwait Consultations (April and August 2016)**

The talks continued in Kuwait under the auspices of the State of Kuwait and the United Nations envoy (2016), which consisted of two rounds separated by a two-week Eid holiday. Each party presented its vision for a political solution. The vision of the Houthi group and the General People's Congress (President Saleh's wing) at the time stipulated: first, the formation of a consensual executive authority to take over state institutions from all parties, and to follow up on the reconstruction.

The formation of a consensual security committee whose main tasks are:

- first, to supervise the withdrawal from all parties while ensuring the fight against al-Qaeda and ISIS, the delivery of heavy weapons, and any other tasks agreed upon.
- Second, the resumption of political dialogue.
- Third, the humanitarian aspect, which included the file of prisoners, detainees and missing persons, and the lifting of the siege in all its forms.

However, the Houthi group thwarted the dialogue, and this was confirmed by the United Nations envoy to Yemen at the time, Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed: “The Houthis failed to reach a consensual solution in the negotiations hosted by Kuwait,” doubting that they had an actual will to end the war.

The international image of the Houthis about their lack of seriousness about peace has risen, especially after several rounds of negotiations. Many officials indicated the presence of an Iranian imprint<sup>52</sup> in the way the Houthis deal with these consultations by reluctance to turn up for the talks, refraining from discussing important decisions, and trying to obtain Gains that secure a better military position for the group. The Houthis also began depleting cash reserves in foreign currencies deposited in foreign banks in America and Europe after they had depleted the foreign currencies they had, taking advantage of the state of consultations and the government's lack of political escalation to make the consultations succeed.<sup>53</sup>

## **C. The Stockholm Agreement (2018)**

On December 13, 2018, the Yemeni government and the Houthis reached a political agreement consisting of three main axes: an agreement on the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa, and an executive mechanism on activating the agreement on the exchange of detainees, and announcing understandings about Taiz<sup>54</sup>.

### **1) Hodeidah Agreement**

The agreement was considered the most important achievement of the UN envoy, Martin Griffiths, and the most prominent rapprochement between the parties since the beginning of the war.<sup>55</sup> No previous agreement was signed under the auspices of the United Nations - in which international pressure was used to ensure its success, but the implementation of the agreement did not achieve the desired results.

The agreement succeeded in halting a major military operation by the government forces and their allies backed by the Arab coalition to liberate the main port of Hodeidah, and with the internationally recognized government’s control of it, it would have had influence over the Houthis that would push them to enter into consultations to end the war.

Although the agreement was in favor of the Houthis, the group did not implement the other conditions in the Hodeidah Agreement. Table 5 shows the terms of the agreement and how the Houthis dealt with them.

| Terms of the agreement               | Houthi infringements   |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Complete and comprehensive ceasefire | <div>-The coalition and the legitimate government stopped all military operations in the south of Hodeidah Governorate, even though their forces were on the outskirts of the city from the east. The Houthis continued firing rockets, missiles, and artillery at government forces' positions and to launch attacks on those sites.</div> <div>-The Houthis also accused their opponents of violating the ceasefire.</div> <div>-Evidence presented to the United Nations indicates that the Houthis are blatantly violating United Nations Resolution 2451 and the "Stockholm Agreement" and Hodeidah Agreement, which means that the Houthis are not ready to abide by any international resolution that does not declare their complete victory over the legitimate government.</div> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>The agreement stipulates that the Houthis shall withdraw from the city and the port within 14 days, and remove any obstacles that prevent local institutions from performing their functions.</p> | <p>The Houthis refused to withdraw from the two ports and the city and continued to control it. This was an indication of the failure of the agreement.</p>   |
| <p>The militias shall withdraw from the ports of Hodeidah, Saleef and Ras Issa to the north of the Sana'a road, in a first phase within two weeks.</p>   | <p>The Houthis did not withdraw from the ports. On the contrary, these ports were used to target international shipping and Saudi oil ports, either with smart marine missiles, or with explosive suicide boats</p>   |
| <p>The local authorities and security forces shall supervise the city in accordance with Yemeni laws.</p>  | <p>-The Houthis refused to hand over the city to the local authority before September 2014 - the last local authority before the war - and insisted on the control of their affiliates, including the security forces that were recruited after 2015.</p> <p>-At the end of December 2018, the Houthis announced their withdrawal from the port of Hodeidah and handing it over to the local Coast Guard forces, but it turned out that it was a trick by the Houthis, as the soldiers were members of the group who wore Coast Guard uniforms. Patrick Cammaert, head of the United Nations Mission for the Implementation of the Hodeidah Agreement (UNHOMA), refused this and stipulated a prior agreement with government and UN representatives.<sup>57</sup></p> <p>He tendered his resignation weeks later.</p> <p>-The Houthis announced again in May 2019 the withdrawal from the ports. But Michael Lollesgaard, the new head of the mission, addressed the Houthis by saying, "You have not withdrawn an inch from the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa." <sup>58</sup></p> |
| <p>The Redeployment Coordination Committee (of the United Nations) oversees and monitors the redeployment, as well as the demining process in Hodeidah city and port.</p>                            | <p>The committee did not supervise any redeployment, and the Houthis repeatedly boycotted consultation sessions with the United Nations.</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| All revenues from the ports of Hodeidah, Saleef and Ras Issa are deposited in the Central Bank of Yemen through its branch located in Hodeidah to contribute to the payment of salaries of civil servants in Hodeidah Governorate and all over Yemen. | The Houthis put the revenues in the central bank, but they were not handed over to the employees' salaries. Rather, the Houthis looted them, and the revenues of oil derivatives from the port of Hodeidah reached more than 35 billion riyals (\$58 million). <sup>59</sup><br>-Martin Griffiths confirmed the Houthis' withdrawal of funds, saying, "The Houthi group unilaterally withdrew the collected funds" <sup>60</sup> without mentioning the amount. |
| Hodeidah shall be a humanitarian passage.   | The United Nations said that the Houthis rejected an agreement to open a humanitarian passage between Hodeidah and Sana'a for providing assistance. <sup>61</sup>   |

**Table 5**

**Several issues can be pointed out, which enabled the Houthis to manipulate the agreement:**

- The Houthis used the agreement to prevent any progress in implementation, as the mechanism and terminology of that agreement were not clear, which made the Houthi group interpret it according to what is appropriate for the group.
- International pressure to prevent the attack on the city of Hodeidah, prompted the Houthis to hold on to the city and the port and not implement the agreement because the attack stopped in June 2018, which was several months before the negotiations.
- While violence decreased in Hodeidah during the year following the agreement - despite the civilian deaths from Houthi attacks - but this was mainly due to the control of coalition-backed forces.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, the Houthis intensified and stimulated violence in the governorates of Hajjah, Lahaj, Al Dhali', Al Jawf and Marib. The United Nations turned a blind eye to the Houthi attacks and their escalation while it continued to be optimistic that the Hodeidah Agreement would lead to a comprehensive agreement.<sup>63</sup>



## **2) Taiz Understandings:**

The understandings stipulated five main points,<sup>64</sup> which include lifting the siege on Taiz city, which has been besieged by the Houthis since 2016 from all directions. No meeting took place as was mentioned by the agreement. Despite the formation of committees from both sides, the Houthis repeatedly refused to hold the meetings.

## **3) The exchange of prisoners and detainees:**

The agreement stipulated the exchange all prisoners and detainees for all, and despite the fact that the file is very humanitarian and concerns both parties, it failed to achieve progress in implementing the agreement. The United Nations formed committees to exchange prisoners and detainees, and the two sides exchanged lists that included 15,000 detainees and prisoners, and the Houthis were repeatedly accused of obstructing the implementation of the agreement.<sup>65</sup> The last prisoner exchange in the Yemen war took place in October 2020, when both sides released 1,056 prisoners.

## **Houthi's rejection of initiatives (2020-2022)**

The Houthis rejected many international initiatives, including those of the United Nations. We will focus here on the last three initiatives: the Joint Declaration (2020), the Saudi Peace Initiative to resolve the crisis in Yemen (2021), and the Gulf Cooperation Council call for inter-Yemeni consultations (2022).

## **1) The Joint Declaration:**

Early in 2020, the UN envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, announced the joint declaration, and stipulated many important issues, most notably: humanitarian, political, and economic issues within the framework of three sub-proposals, which are represented in the following: A nationwide ceasefire, UN-led Ceasefire Monitoring Team, arranging resource sharing, and the resumption of peace negotiations.<sup>66</sup>



The initiative included other humanitarian issues represented in the following: the issue of prisoners, salaries, airports, and ports, and an executive mechanism for opening and operating Sana'a International Airport.<sup>67</sup> The Yemeni government and the coalition accepted that initiative. The Houthis rejected it. In mid-2021, in his last briefing as an international envoy to Yemen, Griffiths confirmed that the Houthis reject a ceasefire and insist on “a separate agreement on the ports of Hodeidah and Sana’a airport as a prerequisite for a ceasefire and launching the political process.”<sup>68</sup>

## **2) The Saudi initiative and the United Nations initiative:**

On March 23, 2021, Saudi Arabia announced an initiative for peace in Yemen. It included: a ceasefire across the country under the supervision of the United Nations, and the start of consultations between the Yemeni parties to reach a political solution to the crisis under the auspices of the United Nations. The references of UN Security Council Resolution 2216, the Gulf Initiative and its executive mechanism, and the outcomes of the comprehensive Yemeni national dialogue. The initiative gave many political gains to the Houthis, including: a ceasefire, the opening of Sana’a airport to some international and regional destinations, and permission to import food and fuel.<sup>69</sup> However, the Houthis rejected the ceasefire proposed by Saudi Arabia, and stipulated that airports and seaports be fully and unconditionally opened.<sup>70</sup> The Saudi ceasefire initiative intersects with an initiative presented by the United Nations and the American envoy to Yemen, Timothy Lenderking and has international support and backing. The Houthis refused even mediation led by the Sultanate of Oman, the only country that allowed the Houthis to have an office in its territory.

The background consultations in Muscat on an initiative developed by the United Nations were more advanced. Many well-informed Western diplomats said that they had obtained initial approval from the Houthis regarding an initiative submitted for a ceasefire in Yemen, starting with stopping the "Houthi attack" on Marib,

in exchange for lifting the ban on Sana'a airport, allowing imports to enter the Houthi-controlled ports (Hodeidah and Saleef) in the west of the country, then a comprehensive ceasefire for several weeks, followed by sitting at the negotiating table with the Yemeni government. However, after several days, Linderking and Griffiths left home, declaring the failure of intensive consultations that have continued since April. The Houthis refused even to meet the two men alongside Saudi officials.

At one point in those indirect talks, Western diplomats were indicating that they had reached an agreement on nearly 90% of the issues on the table,<sup>71</sup> including the full opening of ports in Houthi areas and Sana'a airport, which would lead to a ceasefire. The talks in Oman were led by Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdussalam, who lives in Muscat and has been assigned as the lead negotiator.

Griffiths tried to hide his disappointment at the conclusion of those talks, saying, "Unfortunately, we are not in the place we would like to reach an agreement."<sup>72</sup> When the Houthis came close to agreeing to accept the agreement, they came back and rejected the offer. The refusal comes back after the Houthi negotiators consulted in Muscat with the group's "military wing"<sup>73</sup> who confirmed that the escalating attack towards Marib, if successful, would change the calculations of the negotiations, although for the Houthis it became difficult to obtain after several months of resuming the advance towards the city. On April 28, 2021, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met Mohammed Abdussalam in Muscat. Dr. Zarif affirmed Tehran's position in support of a ceasefire and a return to the negotiating table to end the war. Yemen is considered a file run by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (Quds Force) and not Iranian diplomacy, as a leaked audio file of "Zarif" himself proved in an interview with Soleimani about Yemen on open fronts against Saudi Arabia.<sup>75</sup>

The extent of Iranian control over the group has emerged prominently during most of the previous consultations. In the consultations in Muscat, the inability of the Houthi negotiators to make choices appeared prominently, as they agreed to a draft agreement and then retracted, and communicated with officials in the Revolutionary Guards. These contacts continued even more than a week after the failure of the consultations, including the communication of "Mohammed Abdulsalam" with "Ali Velayati", the advisor to the Supreme Leader in Iran.<sup>76</sup>

It seems that Iran was counting on the Houthis' refusal to reach that agreement by pressuring Saudi Arabia in secret consultations in Baghdad that began at the same period and were high-level for the first time since 2016.<sup>77</sup> The Yemeni file was at the top of those files in the negotiation as a Saudi need and an Iranian pressure card in exchange for Saudi concessions in the files of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, and the return of diplomatic relations.<sup>78</sup>

### 3) The Gulf Cooperation Council initiative:

In March 2022, the Gulf Cooperation Council presented an initiative to hold inter-Yemeni consultations in Riyadh.<sup>79</sup> The Houthi group declined to accept the invitation<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>(81)</sup>It attacked Saudi Arabia with many missiles and drones weeks after the Houthis attacked Emirati facilities as well as the US Al Dhafra air base. Although the presence of a GCC initiative greatly helps Yemen, with the presence of the Houthi guarantor represented by the Sultanate of Oman.



## IV. Results

**The paper concludes that there are three main stages of the Houthi agreements and their forms. Those stages adapt to the group's military status and achieving its dominance and control:**

- 1) during the six wars (2004-2010)
- 2) after the events of 2011 even after the fall of Sana'a.
- 3) Following the operations of the Arab coalition.

**The study indicates the behavior of the Houthis in the agreements with the tribes: The study shows that the Houthis behavior in agreements with the tribes is characterized by the following:**

- The Houthis used armistice agreements with the government prior to 2011 during transitions within the group's leadership, to obtain funds, build trenches, barricades, and fortifications, recruit, obtain weapons, and expand their presence.
- The Houthis used the agreements and their knowledge of the tribe's customs to: secure the passage of their forces and men from the tribe's lands; Neutralizing and dismantling the tribes to make it easier for them to defeat the tribes militarily
- The Houthis are using other Yemeni crises such as political differences between the authority and the opposition to their advantage.
- The Houthis break agreements when they feel powerless and then break the agreement, when the needed to reinforce their hegemony.
- The Houthis expanded in the areas near the Haidan District to give greater influence and publicity to their rebellion, which led to the attack on Saudi Arabia in 2009.
- The group uses various tactics of non-aggression agreements with the tribes, especially before the fall of Sana'a, in order to isolate the powerful tribes to strike them hard after neutralizing the other tribes with the agreements.
- It explains the Houthis' exploitation of the events of 2011 to control and isolate Saada. During the next two years, it secured the arrival of weapons from the port of Midi in Hajjah to Saada. It took advantage of the democratic openness in that period to recruit and present itself as being harmed by the regime.

The Houthis also took advantage of the events of 2011 to obtain weapons from Iran, as the government seized the Jihan 1, which was on its way from Iran to the Houthis.

- Most of the agreements concluded by the Houthis with the tribes refer to the 'asphalt road' which shall not be attacked. This clause gave the group's forces the ability to move from its stronghold in Saada to any of Amran and Sana'a and then the rest of the governorates without being attacked.

- During their field advances, the Houthis employed the tactic of evasion, and did not refer to the main objectives. They repeatedly stressed that their goal was not the authority, the government, the state, or the tribe until it is gradually isolating its objectives. Where at the beginning of their war they were saying that they are only facing foreign Salafis in Dammaj, then the tribes that threaten them, then that the target is the Al-Ahmar family and not the Hashid tribe, etc. Most of these agreements were based on these justifications, but then the Houthis tended to break those agreements and attack the tribal areas.

- When the Houthis could turn against their agreements that facilitated their goals, after taking control of Sana'a, the Houthis broke most of their agreements with the tribes that were based on their non-entry into the tribal areas. Those tribes. Taking advantage of the army's neutrality and their control over its weapons and equipment, they were transferred to Saada.

- The Houthis strengthened their agreements with local communities when they were fighting. These agreements guaranteed the deployment of their forces from Sana'a and Saada to the battle fronts without aggression from the tribes, and the Houthis guarantee the tribes not to enter their lands and entrench themselves in it. However, the Houthis broke these agreements and launched campaigns to invade and destroy the tribal areas, kill their sheikhs, blow up their homes, and destroy their property, as happened with the Hajour tribes in Hajjah, and the Ans tribes in Dhamar Governorate. The Houthis executed tribal leaders, as in al-Bayda, to ensure their unrivalled dominance and to send messages to other tribes not to confront Houthi breaches of agreements.



# Houthi's approach against the agreements from 2004 to 2021



**The Houthis have not adhered to most of the agreements and truces since the group was established in 2004**

## Why do the Houthis resort to agreements?

When they feel that they are collapsing

When they are in need for Money

When they need to rebuild the group and the emergence of new leaders

When they are in need for military repositioning, obtaining reinforcements, and rearmament

When they need to secure the passage of their forces into the tribal areas

When they need to build their influence on the political and tribal parties in Yemen

When needed to secure their strongholds in Saada and other governorates

When there is a need to dismantle the unity of the tribes that reject them and to pounce on them gradually

## How does the Houthis break their agreements?

Invasion and bombing

Controlling of tribal areas, bombing of homes, mosques, killing their major opponents.

Executions of their opponents and tribal sheikhs who signed agreements with them

Exclusion of their partners, then Imprisoning, torturing and killing them.

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## With political parties and the United Nations:

- The Houthis benefited greatly from the network of Ali Abdullah Saleh (former Yemeni president), which he formed during his 33-year rule. The Houthis allied themselves with Saleh, who was trying to take revenge on the opposition that contributed to his removal from power.
- The group benefits greatly from the UN and the international community's lack of understanding of the group's nature as an armed militia seeking to control the country. The Houthi group often presents itself as a victim of attacks and wars because it represents the Zaidi/Hashemite minority, although these are claims to obtain political gains, and to justify their retention of weapons. The Houthis also used the behavior of refusing to meet with UN envoys.
- The Houthis used participation in the national dialogue to obtain international recognition as an essential component of the country, despite their rejection of the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism. The Houthis also used this issue to cover up their progress in the areas adjacent to their strongholds, transforming Saada governorate into a governorate outside the control of the state and building a purely sectarian area for the group, taking advantage of the transitional phase and restructuring the armed forces to control those areas.
- Participation ensured interaction and influence on the United Nations and its envoy, Jamal Benomar, who continued to describe the progress of the Houthis between 2013-2014 as battles between armed groups. Only when there was a danger that the Houthis would overthrow Sana'a did Benomar refer to the Houthis directly.
- The Houthis agreed to the Yemeni consensus, but quickly turned against it, as they agreed on the outcomes of the national dialogue, which represents a Yemeni consensus, but they turned against it and rejected the outcomes of the dialogue regarding the "form of the state."
- The Houthis use demanding justifications for targeting. The justification for the invasion of Sana'a was to change the government and stop the government's decision to lift subsidies on oil derivatives.

The group held a sit-down at the entrances to the capital, Sana'a, and signed agreements with the tribes not to attack, but it broke most of those agreements and penetrated into the tribal areas and took control of the strategic mountains and hills.

- The Houthis are also turning against the agreements that they proposed and forced the parties to sign. The Houthis invaded Sana'a and reached the Peace and Partnership Agreement, which they imposed on the political parties and the Yemeni president, but they quickly broke its terms as they wanted to turn President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi into a puppet through whom they sought to rule Yemen.

- The Houthis turn against their allies after they have used them to further their goals. The Houthis killed their ally, Ali Abdullah Saleh, in late 2017, after they managed to control the power and the state and used his tribal network, then severely targeted his supporters in their areas of control.

- The Houthis resort to military agreements and truces when they feel threatened, and then return to bombing and targeting, violating any agreements, including the Dhahran Al-Janoub Agreement.

- Iran controls the Houthi decisions and consultations, turning them into a barter tool with other regional files, as happened in the Saudi initiative and the Muscat consultations. Iran provides the Houthis with quality weapons such as drones, ballistic missiles, unmanned boats, and naval missiles that threaten navigation.

- The Houthis see that it is impossible to reach a political solution that guarantees the existence of all parties without their possession of the blocking third. The group wants to run the state from behind any government, and they refuse to assume responsibilities.

- The Houthis use threatening international navigation and targeting commercial vessels, including the tanker, Safer, to pressure the international community.

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