



The Politics of Resources in Yemen: Beyond the Sectarian Framing of Conflict

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Wednesday 27th June, 9.30-12.30

ABSTRACT:

Conventional approaches to the Yemeni conflict which broke out in March 2015 tend to place emphasis on its sectarian character at both national and regional levels. This approach has in turn informed the international framing of the conflict. From this perspective, the conflict in Yemen sees the Shia Houthi movement as locked in combat with Sunni Muslim antagonists. At the regional level, the conflict is read as another expression of the rivalry between Sunni Saudi Arabia and its Shia opponent, Iran. However, such a framing is misleading on a number of levels. It misreads the complexity and shifting nature of the alliances that are in opposition to one another in the course of the conflict in Yemen. It greatly overstates the extent to which the conflict is shaped by sectarianism in the first instance. Finally, it misses the extent to which the conflict stems from disputes over scarce resources, natural, political and economic. This lecture will explore the Yemeni conflict with a view to teasing out its multidimensional nature in order to contest the simplicities of a purely sectarian framing of events in the country.

Readings:

Atiaf Alwazir (2015) *'The Yemeni Uprising: A Product of Twenty Years of Grassroots Mobilization'* in Amal Ghazal and Jens Hanssen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Middle Eastern and North African History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maria-Louise Clausen (2015), *'Understanding the Crisis in Yemen: Evaluating Competing Narratives'*, *The International Spectator*, 50 (3): 16-29.

Thomas Juneau (2016), *'Iran's policy towards the Houthis in Yemen: a limited return on a modest investment'*, *International Affairs*, 92 (3): 647-663.

Peter Salisbury and Jane Kinnimont (2013), *Yemen: Corruption, Capital Flight and Global Drivers of Conflict*, London: Chatham House, available at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/194239>.