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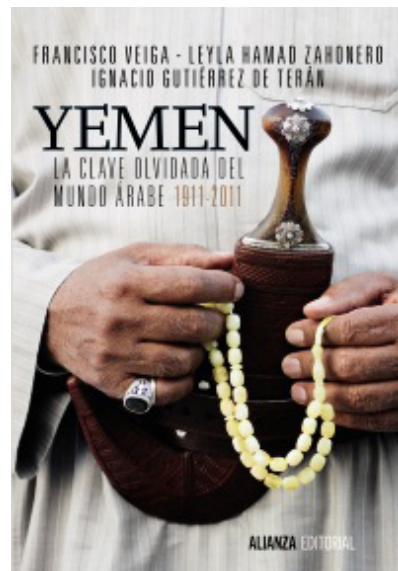
REVIEW

OF THE BOOK: YEMEN. THE FORGOTTEN KEY WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD: 1911-2011

Authors: Francisco Veiga, Leyla Hamad and Ignacio Gutiérrez de Terán; preface by Javier Hergueta.

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On April 2012 I had the chance to participate in organizing a lecture in the Yemen Diplomatic School called Yemen in Eurasia given by the spanish academic Francisco Veiga. I can perfectly remember how all the author's reasoning revolved around supporting the idea of Yemen as an integral part of Eurasia,

due to being located at a central point that allows cultural, trade and other kind of connections between both african and asian continents as well as the Asia with the western world. There is no doubt that this lecture marked the intellectual birth of the book that is being reviewed on the following paragraphs. But, the way in which we were force to interrupt the expected subsequent talk with the Authorities in Yemen particularly resonates in my memory since we needed to be hastily escorted out of that building after listening to the weapons clacking and somehow also some RPG 's sound coming from the nearby streets.

At that time Yemen had avoided entering a Civil war and was following the path to the national reconciliation and the economic, social and political transition based upon the roadmap established by the International Council for Cooperation in the Gulf (ICCG) a process that gave grounds for great optimism at the very beginning but that after two years and a half it still remains unfinished. This allied to the lack of international attention specially derived from both the media and the western countries which are focused on the hard task of being a counterpart of the Islamic State extension in Syria and Iraq.

It is certainly not the first time that headlines or analysis cast a shadow over Yemen, or that it is set aside but historians. It hasn't been paramount enough the fact that the country's is filled in with paradigmatic overtones in order to understand how certain dynamics occur in the rest of Arab countries. In regards to that Yemen continues being the forgotten key within the rest of Arab countries, even though its soil has been the laboratory of all wars waged between men and ideas, sometimes financed and supported by external actors. Like those that confronted during the sixties the Monarchy's Traditionalism and Religious Legitimacy supporters and the Nasserite Republicanism promoters.

With the goal of filling this gap within historiography Vega, Hammad and Gutierrez de Terán set out a monograph about the recent History in Yemen that covers its last century of existence, in other words from the period when Yahya Imam established the agreement with the Ottoman Empire in 1911 which marked the beginning of the ultimate transition to the independent mutawakili kingdom proclamation up to the start of the so-called Arab Spring (2011) in its local Yemeni version. All through this long journey, its different authors try presenting an "Optical lens through which contemporary history in the Arab World can be seen in a more precise way".

The whole text is divided into two blocks that have an intersection point that meets in the unification that occurred on May 22nd 1990 between Yemen Arab Republic (North) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South); which was a rushed escape forward related to the urgency bought by the "Arab New Order" characterized by the controlling presence of USA troops in the Middle East. From a cross-sectional view the book presents two main cores: the traditional geostrategic dimension within the country and the influence of some historic dynamics when creating the troublesome and rambling political map in current Yemen.

This allows the possibility of reducing the Spanish academic existing research gap about Yemen. The knowledge about Yemen is quite scarce when focusing on the number of publications or surveys that tackle the Yemeni topic and study it extensively and with the necessary academic rigour. But despite everything that has happened in the last years and considering that the Yemeni was a model that was highly considered to inspire a solution to the crisis in Syria yet most contributions belong to both journalism and blogosphere spheres.

Along with the inclusion of a big glossary that contains concepts and terms that are currently in use in the Yemeni tribal vocabulary it presents abundant bibliography which is gathered around topics such as external relations, the war against Al-Qaeda and the social and economic evolution in Yemen among others. In addition to that it includes a selection of colour maps (with an ethnic-religious distribution, the use of the land, and the conflict between huskies, etc.) that complete visually speaking the contents of the piece. Therefore providing an added value to the document that was previously conceived not only as informational to an unskilled audience but as a basic work referral for future Yemenologists.

One can conclude that *Yemen. The forgotten key to the Arab World: 1911-2011* which is the result of a sharp academic investigation exercise highly documented and with plenty of details. This is all expected due to the value of the experts team that have participated in it: Francisco Veiga, expert analyst on International affairs and the author of several books; Ignacio Gutiérrez Terán one of the most prestigious Arabists in the Spanish Academy who besides his youth he owns many publications and translations; and Leyla Hamad, Arab and Islamic studies doctorate who is without question the best connoisseur of the culture and tribal Yemeni right after spending the last years on the soil in order to carry out the doctoral thesis.

“If you don’t know Yemen you don’t know the Arab World”

Fred Halliday.

