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2. Shiite imamites (Twelvers) – 12 imams-descendants of Ali, one of the main directions of Shiism, the most moderate in religious and political views.
3. Marib is a province in Yemen, located 173 km northeast of the capital of Yemen, Sana'a.
4. Hadhramaut is a province located in the eastern part of Yemen.
5. The Supreme Revolutionary Committee is a temporary government body formed after the Houthis came to power. On August 15, 2016, the Supreme Revolutionary Committee partially transferred power to the Supreme Political Council.
6. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is an elite military-political formation of Iran, established in 1979 and made up of the supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini.

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VASILY OSTANIN-GOLOVNIA. THE SHIA MINORITY IN SAUDI ARABIA: THE CURRENT SITUATION

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Abstract. The article deals with the situation of the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia. The relevance of studying the problem of interfaith relations in Saudi Arabia is due to the specifics of the development of domestic and foreign policy of the kingdom. Sunni-Shia relations influence the political dynamics of the Middle East both at the country level and at the level of interstate relations. The author pays special attention to the

historical aspect, analyzing the roots of the Shia-Wahhabi conflict and the position of the Shia community in the social and political system of Saudi Arabia. The current situation is considered in the context of the development of Iranian-Saudi relations, ongoing regional processes, as well as transformations of the political course and internal reforms of Saudi Arabia.

The situation of the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia is of great interest both from the point of view of political development and interfaith relations within the kingdom itself, and in the context of regional and international processes. It is known that the emergence of Saudi statehood is largely due to the alliance concluded in the mid-18th century between Emir Muhammad ibn Saud and theologian Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, whose teachings became the “ideological basis” for the unification of the Arabian Peninsula under the rule of the Saudis. Despite the unsuccessful attempts to build the first two states, the Al Saud and Al ash-Sheikh dynasties remained faithful to each other and were able to form a kind of “ruling tandem”, where the former wielded all the political power, while the latter had the leading role in religious and theological affairs.

The ruling monarch of Saudi Arabia holds the honorary title of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (Khadim al-Haramain ash-Sharifain), the head of the Al ash-Sheikh clan holds the position of Grand Mufti, and the state status of Islam in Saudi Arabia is enshrined in law through the Basic Constitution of Authority (an-Nizam al-Asasiy li-l-Hukm) of 1992, the first article of which symbolically proclaims the Quran and Sunnah as the constitution of the kingdom [1]. More than 93 per cent of the country's population, according to estimates by the Pew Research Centre, are Muslims [2], which, taking into account the results of the 2022 KSA population census, amounts to about 29 million people out of a total of 32,175,224 people [3]. It is noteworthy that official statistics emphasize such indicators as the average age of the country's residents (29 years), the fertility rate (2.8), the average family size inside (4.8) and outside (2.7) the kingdom, the ratio of men (61.2 per cent) to women (38.8 per cent),