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JSOU Report 11-3 Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm in Context Barrett

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Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm in Context

Roby C. Barrett
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Joint Special Operations University and the Strategic Studies Department

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Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm in Context

Roby C. Barrett

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Foreword

Dr. Roby Barrett's sweeping study of Yemen's historical legacy and its current social, economic, and political systems is essential reading for all who would seek to understand the challenges to U.S. security interests in southern Arabia and reassess current U.S. strategy in light of recent turmoil there. Knowledge of the political, economic, social, and cultural context is fundamental to the development of a realistic counterinsurgency strategy based on the possible and affordable as opposed to the ideological or theoretical. Whatever the immediate or tactical outcome, Dr. Barrett argues that the ultimate outcome in Yemen is most likely not in doubt. The central theme of Dr. Barrett's monograph is that in Yemen, power is based on family, clan, and tribal relationships and not a national identity. Dr. Barrett builds the case that Yemen as a nation-state is a fiction that largely resides in the minds of Western bureaucrats and analysts. Central authority has been maintained only in balance with tribal, sectarian, and political groups that align with central leaders based on a system of patronage. He advises that throughout Yemen's history there always have been "multiple Yemens with fundamental social, cultural, and sectarian differences" and to view Yemen differently creates a "stumbling block" in the way of developing and executing coherent policy and strategy. Lines on a map do not constitute a *nation-state*.

Whoever rules Yemen today faces significant challenges beyond maintaining power by political juggling. There is an insurgency in Sa'ada Governorate by Huthi rebels, who are Zaydi Shi'a upset with government policy, but a different Zaydi clan and tribe from that of the Hashid al-Ahmars and Saleh himself. Some Huthi are ideologically motivated, others are armed groups with financial motivations, and still others are motivated to defend their land and heritage. There is also an active protest movement in the south where coastal Sunni Shafais are upset with the governance of Saleh and his Shi'a Zaydis from the interior highlands.[1] Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), a threat in Yemen, leverages Yemen's loosely governed rural areas for its training and staging activities. But AQAP is viewed far more seriously by the United States and its Western allies than by many in Sana'a government, which has been able to live and come to terms with the AQAP presence for extended periods. In addition, Saudi Arabia views Yemen's instability as a

threat that requires a strategic in-depth defense. As a result, the Kingdom has played a strong role in Yemeni affairs, principally through the patronage of northern tribes, the Sunni tribes and factions in the south and east, and various Yemeni politicians. Although problematic at times, this involvement has by and large protected both Saudi and Western interests.

From a Western perspective, the United States has an interest in countering and containing AQAP in Yemen. U.S. policy objectives toward Yemen are "to strengthen the Government of Yemen's ability to promote security and minimize the threat from violent extremists; and to bolster its capacity to provide basic services and good governance."[2] "Our … strategy seeks to address the root causes of instability and improve governance."[3] But beyond U.S. concern for AQAP, Dr. Barrett points out that the Yemenis understand full well that U.S. strategic interests in Yemen are "tangential to other political and strategic interests."

The insights provided in *Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm In Context* plus recent events in Yemen suggest that the time is ripe to reconsider U.S. approaches toward Yemen. Dr. Barrett suggests that Yemen cannot be transformed. Good governance, as Western nations would define it, is most likely unachievable. Our policy must deal with multiple Yemens with conflicting historical, political, economic, and cultural heritages. These are Yemens with identities and values hinged upon familial, clan, and tribal loyalties. Dr. Barrett, however, argues that while Yemen may be a failed state, it is not a failed society. This suggests that U.S. policy goals for addressing the root causes of instability and improving governance will have to reach beyond the central government and weak institutions to engage tribes and clans and to achieve a balance among the multiple Yemens that are in virtual continuous conflict. Dr. Barrett suggests that perhaps the only improvement possible in Yemen is a fluid equilibrium between the various groups and whoever dominates the government in Sana'a, a situation that may in fact mirror in many respects the future for other areas including Afghanistan.

Kenneth H. Poole, Ed.D.
Director, JSOU Strategic Studies Department

About the Author

Dr. Roby C. Barrett is a senior fellow with the JSOU Strategic Studies Department. He has over 30 years of government, business, and academic experience in the Middle East and Africa. Dr. Barrett is the president of a consulting firm, specializing in technology applications and systems for national defense and security. He has extensive experience in space systems, nuclear issues, police and security systems, command and control, technology development, and weapons acquisition as they relate to both U.S. and foreign governments. The current focus of his research is strategic security issues in the Persian/Arabian Gulf, including Iran and the Arabian Peninsula. He is a former Foreign Service officer in the Middle East with a strong background in the cultural and political dynamics of historical Islamic and political development. His posting and other assignments included Tunisia, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Arabian Gulf.

As a founder of the National History Center within the American Historical Association, Dr. Barrett specializes in the application of broad historical and conceptual paradigms to issues of ongoing political and military conflict and the projection of future trends. He is an adjunct scholar at the Middle East Institute (MEI) in Washington, D.C. He provides domestic and international media commentary on a range of issues from the Palestinian territories to nuclear proliferation and the challenges of Russian policy in the Middle East and North Africa. Initially trained as a Soviet and Russian specialist, Dr. Barrett brings unique insights to the regenerated competition between Russia, China, and the United States in the Middle East and Africa.

He also serves as the senior advisor to the Board of Directors of the Bilateral Arab-U.S. Chamber of Commerce, an organization whose members include major foreign and domestic petroleum companies. He is the lead panelist on Middle East and South Asian Policy. He also participates in the

Congressional Fellowship Program, American Political Science Association, and Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. He has been a featured panelist for the German Council on Foreign Relations on Middle East and Gulf Affairs. Dr. Barrett also serves as a lecturer on Gulf affairs, Iraq, and U.S. foreign policy for the Air Force Special Operations Command and in response to special requirements.

Dr. Barrett was an Eisenhower-Roberts fellow of the Eisenhower Institute in Washington D.C., a Rotary International fellow at the Russian and East European Institute at the University of Munich, and a Scottish Rite Research fellow at Oxford University. He holds a B.A. in History and Political Science from East Texas State University and an M.A. in Political Science and Russian History from Baylor University. He is a graduate of the Foreign Service Institute's intensive 2-year Arab Language and Middle East Area Studies program and the Counterterrorism Tactics course and took part in the Special Operations course. He has a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern and South Asian History from the University of Texas (UT)–Austin. Other honors include the Guittard Fellowship (Baylor), the Dora Bonham Graduate Research Grant (UT-Austin), the David Bruton Graduate Fellowship (UT-Austin), the Russian Language Scholarship (Munich), and the Falcon Award from the U.S. Air Force Academy.

As an author, Dr. Barrett's works range from books to articles on the Arab League and digital research techniques:

a. *The Greater Middle East and the Cold War: U.S. Foreign Policy under Eisenhower and Kennedy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
b. "Intervention in Iraq, 1958-1959" in *MEI Policy Briefs*, 2008
c. *The Arabian Gulf and Security Policy: The Past as Present, the Present as Future* (JSOU Press, April 2009)
d. "The Aftermath of the 1958 Revolution in Iraq" in *Ultimate Adventures with Britannia* (I. B. Tauris, 2009)
e. "Gulf Security: Policies without Context" in *MEI Bulletin*, 2010.

He is also writing two new books, one on Gulf Security in Context and the other on Oman to be published in the near future.

Dr. Barrett was a guest speaker at the Bahrain MOI Gulf Security Forum (2008), the SOF Conference at the opening of the King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center (Amman 2009), and the Bahrain SOF Conference (2010). Through deployment briefings and other forums, Dr. Barrett supported

numerous military units; five examples are the 5th Special Forces Group, 101st Airborne both in the U.S. and Iraq, Naval Special Warfare Command both in the U.S. and the Arabian Gulf, 4th Psychological Warfare Group, and 19th Special Forces Group.

His commentary has also appeared in the U.S., Latin American, European, and Middle East Press — for example, Voice of America English and Pakistan Services, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service, Canadian National Broadcasting System, BBC Arabic Service, *Gulf News*, and *The National Abu Dhabi*.

Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm in Context

In late April 2011, Yemen is a topic *de jour* for the government, beltway think tanks, and the media. Instability and questions about the fragility of the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh, his departure after 30 years of rule, and the eminent emergence of Yemen as a failed state — the "new Somalia" — have become the new fodder for the prognostications regarding Al Qaeda's next round of attacks or safe havens. Recent popular unrest in Tunisia and Egypt have ratcheted up the pressure on the Saleh government, and a press release on 23 April announced an agreement between Saleh and the opposition. Saleh has apparently agreed to step down in return for immunity for himself and those in his government for past actions. Saleh may depart, but Saleh's regime will very much remain the dominant influence if not the outright political power in Yemen. The regime will endure because it was never so much a reflection of Ali Abdullah Saleh but rather Saleh was a reflection of the Yemeni historical and political reality. Now, the opposition with many of the same names from the past — whose fathers and grandfathers opposed the Yemeni imams and military rulers, and themselves had ambitions to rule Yemen — have in fact brought Yemen to the cusp of change at the very top. However, like those who have gone before them, the opposition will likely fail to bring real change to the Yemeni political paradigm. As you read this monograph, think carefully about the present and ask yourself if perhaps it has all happened before. Perhaps at a fundamental level, Yemen is merely being Yemen and that is the problem.

> *… Saleh was a reflection of the Yemeni historical and political reality.*

Can these assertions be taken at face value, or does the deeper as well as the contemporary historical experience indicate a higher likelihood of a different outcome? At the same time, discussions in some quarters about saving Yemen

have taken on a potentially dangerous dynamic of their own. Yemenis benefiting from the current system want help in preserving their gains; those who do not benefit — probably a majority — simply want to change a regime, not a system. Yemen is precisely what Tahseen Bashir, the Egyptian diplomat, was referring to when he coined the phrase "tribes with flags."[1] But Yemen, like Afghanistan, is an area where attempts to impose outside solutions or even indigenous central authority in the form of a functioning modern nation-state have always failed.

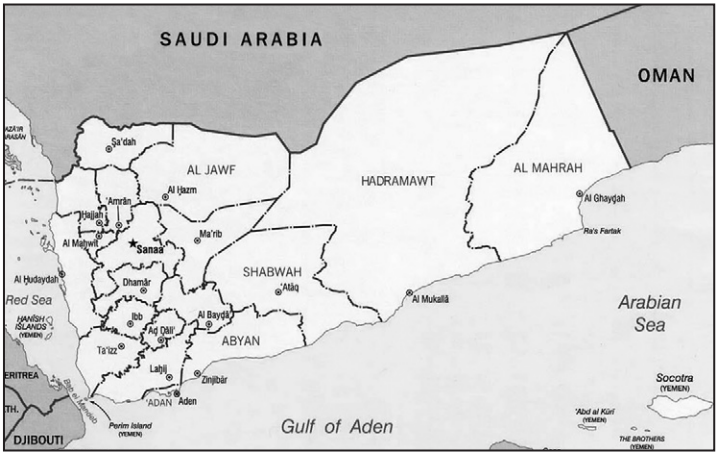

Figure 1. Yemen, showing administrative districts. Adapted from public domain maps accessed from the University of Texas at Austin Web site, www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/.

The history of the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula is littered with the bones-wasted treasure of those who became too deeply involved, believing that they could control or transform Yemen. The Ethiopians, the Byzantines, the Persian Sassanians, the Ottomans, the Portuguese, the British, and the Egyptians were the most prominent of the past 3,000 years. Competing calls for the use of soft power, hard power, or smart power are based on muddled perceptions of what Yemen has been, what it is today, and in all likelihood will be in the future.

A fundamental understanding of the deeper Yemeni context is essential and should provide a sobering reading for those advocating a larger United States (U.S.) role. At the same time, contracting central authority in Yemen may

require the U.S. to respond — protect its real strategic interest, the stability of Saudi Arabia. However, it must be done with a clear-headed understanding of Yemen's past, how that relates to Yemen's present, and the severe limitations that both place on any attempt to alter or manage its political, economic, or social landscape now or in the future.

As a cohesive political, economic, social, and cultural entity, Yemen apparently has never existed. To conceptualize policy or operational objectives based on the false premise — that is, anything other than multiple Yemens where conflicting historical, political, economic, and cultural heritages exist — is to invite policy and operational objectives that will fail. Conversely, understanding the complex context of the Yemens fosters a measured, conservative approach to methods and goals that, while far more modest, actually have some chance for success.

This study has a twofold argument:

a. Yemen has experienced all of the advantages and disadvantages of a fluctuating balance between tribe, clan, and central authority.
b. Each succeeding period of political interaction has remarkable parallels with a previous one.

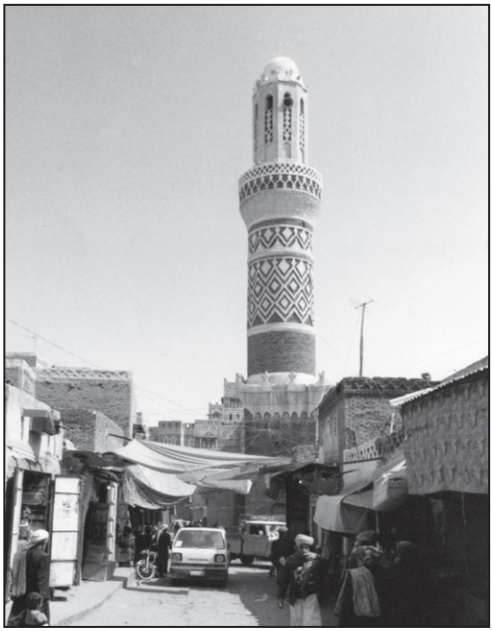

Figure 2. Being 1,400 years old, the Grand Mosque of Sana'a is considered to be the oldest mosque in the world. It was originally built on the direct order of the Prophet Muhammad himself.

Yemeni rulers have attempted to create legitimacy by borrowing elements from an imagined past. As Benedict Anderson stated in *Imagined Communities*:

> One should therefore not be much surprised if revolutionary leaderships, consciously or unconsciously, come to play lord of the manor. … such leaderships come easily to adopt the putative nationalnost [characteristics] of the older dynasts and the dynastic state.[2]

Rather than uniting and creating a nation-state, Yemen's past has exacerbated historical divides and fomented more conflict. Unlike Anderson's states that have created a widely accepted "nationalist allusion," the differences in the Yemen identity have precluded the creation of nation-state. Every ideological group, sect, tribe, clan, and sect wraps itself in its own version of Yemeni identity, leading inextricably to a recurring cycle of conflict that makes chronic instability the norm in political and economic life.

This study focuses on what Yemen is and is not. It has never been a nation-state with a civil national identity but rather has multiple political, social, and cultural identities using the same label — that is, Yemeni. Is the Republic of Yemen (ROY) in fact a failed state? The short answer is no, because one would presume that at some point it was a nation-state. This fact is the fundamental problem for those who equate the current government in Yemen with a nation-state. The Yemens, however, have not necessarily been failed societies. Max Weber, the German political scientist, argues that a modern nation-state has a "monopoly of the legitimate use of violence."[3] This aspect has never been true in Yemen and will almost certainly never be true.

Politically, economically, and culturally Yemen has functioned for three millennia as a fluid equilibrium between central authority, tribal autonomy, and differing cultural and religious allegiances. Lines created arbitrarily with a pen or by force of arms form a jurisdictional and political façade; they are largely divorced from the historical, political, economic, social, and cultural reality on the ground. Identity and political loyalty have virtually nothing to do with shared institutional nationalism but rather reflect familial, clan, tribal, and to some degree subregional identification. Those calling themselves *Yemeni* often have dramatically different interpretations of what that means. Blood and clan ties enhanced by patronage have trumped institutional civil loyalty and civil

Those calling themselves Yemeni often have dramatically different interpretations of what that means.

responsibility. The state and its institutions are simply tools through which more traditional groupings mask their corporate pursuit of power, wealth, and self perpetuation.

Arguably, Yemeni political identities are largely removed from the concept of a shared civil national consciousness. The Sunni Shafais from the Tihama region along the Red Sea and Arabian Seas were very much a part of the cosmopolitan Indian Ocean and Red Sea commercial milieu. They also shared the African political, economic, and social milieu of the Swahili cultures of East Africa. Thus talk of Somalis as a foreign element within the current Yemen dynamic reflects a fundamental historical, political, economic, and social lack of understanding of the relationships of Indian Ocean cultures and for the Yemeni and African diasporas. In similar fashion, the Sunni tribes on the fringe of the Rub al-Khali in eastern Yemen and the Hadramawt have a close affinity with not only the coastal culture but also with the Bedouin cultures in what is now Saudi Arabia. In contrast, the Zaydis of the northern highlands not only have a different sectarian heritage but also a very different social, cultural, and political outlook. The interchange of ideas that came with commercial intercourse altered their views of themselves and what they meant when they described themselves as Yemeni. Thus, identity constitutes an abstraction resulting more from geographical proximity than any sense of national unity or even shared cultural heritage.

This study will explore these complexities and is divided into seven main chapters:

a. Chapter 1 provides a snapshot of Yemen from the pre-Islam era through the advent of Islam and in the medieval period. It focuses on the nature of central authority and its relationship to the tribal structure and to external power centers. The chapter has a brief discussion of the advent of Islam and Yemeni role in the triumph of the Umayyad Caliphates in Damascus and later in Spain and second, in the emergence of Zaydi Yemen and the imamate. It also includes a brief explanation of the differences and frictions between the Sunni Shafai and "Fiver" Shi'a Zaydi traditions. These differences, although perhaps couched in different terms, are still relevant today.
b. Chapter 2 addresses Yemen in the Age of Imperialism — roughly 1500 to 1918 — and the power struggle between Ottomans and British. It underscores the frustrations and failures that outside imperialist

powers faced in attempting to mold or to control Yemen's fractured political landscape.

c. Chapter 3 covers 1918 to 1953. The end of World War I signaled fundamental change in the political dynamics of the Arabian Peninsula. Yemen was caught between the new aggressive Saudi regime of Abd-al-Aziz ibn Saud (Ibn Saud) and British interests in South Arabia. This chapter examines the rise of pan-Arab nationalism and Nasser's impact on Yemen, Aden, and the protectorates.
d. Chapter 4 explores the period of the Civil War, 1962–1970, and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) to 1979. The Yemen Civil War pitted Imam Badr, the tribes, and Saudi Arabia against the revolutionary government in Sana'a and an Egyptian expeditionary force. Yemen's contemporary security environment emerged during this period with Saudi Arabia viewing the northern tribes as a security buffer and opposing both the Nasser-backed YAR and the Soviet-backed Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The early years of the YAR are also covered.
e. Chapters 5 through 7 deal with Yemen since the rise of Ali Abdullah Saleh and the current precarious political situation arising from unification in 1990 and the Civil War of 1994. The Yemeni view of the current situation is examined as well as the increasing Saudi concern and involvement in the ROY. What do the Saudis see as their priorities regarding Yemen and how did President Ali Abdullah Saleh use, or perhaps fan, those concerns to his advantage? The chapter includes a discussion of the succession issue and the government as a family enterprise. What will also emerge is appreciation for the principle protagonists in Yemen and how they view their interests regardless of what the U.S. may think.

The conclusion, Chapter 8, explores U.S. interests and attempts to view the limited U.S. options. A cautionary tale, it suggests that deeper involvement should be evaluated carefully in light of the historical track record of others who thought they could remold Yemen.

1. Yemen, the Pre-Islamic Era to 1500

At one time or another, Yemen claimed territory from the Dhofar region in what is now Oman along the coast of the Arabian Sea to the Bab al-Mandeb and up the Red Sea coast to include Asir and Najran, now provinces in Saudi Arabia. Inland it extended from the shore of the Arabian Sea to the edge of the *Rub al-Khali* or Empty Quarter and from the Red Sea inland to Marib and Najran. Although linked, coastal and interior Yemen have always had characteristics and interests that differed sharply. Coastal Yemen, bordering the Red Sea and Arabian Sea, has historically been an integral part of the Indian Ocean community with strong commercial and cultural ties with East Africa. The Yemen highlands, which eventually emerged as Zaydi Yemen, developed as an insular mountain tribal society while the interior tribes and urban centers were more closely linked to the overland caravan routes and the desert-based city-states of the spice trade. From earliest times, these differences defined the inhabitants of what we now call Yemen and to a great extent reflect fundamental differences that continue to exist today. As a result, even a rudimentary understanding of the contemporary complexity of the Yemens requires exposure to ancient Yemen because that milieu has a real relevance to the political, economic, social, and cultural complexities of today.[4]

Pre-Islamic Political Modalities and Structures

References to Yemen or South Arabia emerged sometime in the third millennia BCE (Before the Common Era). Babylon and Egypt, both cultures with highly developed ritualized burials, established control of trade in frankincense and myrrh — aromatic gum resins — found in the Dhofar region. Outsiders dominated the trade until around the second or first millennia BCE, when migrations from the Fertile Crescent created a population with a skill base in agriculture, trade, hydrology, and metallurgy. At this point, settled areas began to emerge. In the first millennia, five so-called *kingdoms* emerged in the region. Ma'in on the edge of the Rub al-Khali and Qataban flourished simultaneously from the 10th to the 7th centuries BCE. Somewhat later the Hadramawt Kingdom centered on Shawba emerged. The Sabaean state in the 4th and 5th centuries BCE produced the highest level of trade, wealth, and prosperity in Arabia not exceeded until the 8th century.

Figure 3. An archaeological ruin in the region northeast of Marib is a reminder of the city-states of ancient Yemen.

The kingdoms were in fact city-states. They lacked the trappings of the empires of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India. They thrived because of their location on the trade routes.[5] They shared similar trading center cultures and were the only region in Arabia to enjoy agricultural self-sufficiency due to irrigation expertise based on structures like the great Marib Dam of 500 BCE. Mecca, Yathrib (Medina), Palmyra, and Petra developed as caravan cities in the southern Arabian trade network. Yemen became known as *Arabia Felix* (Happy Arabia).[6] Despite urban centers, they were also a culture dominated by familial, clan, and tribal ties. By the end of the 3rd century BCE, inscriptions on Sabaean monuments increasingly referred to the Hamdan tribal confederation and the Hashid and Bakil tribal groupings.[7] These tribal confederations still represent key elements in the fluctuating political equilibrium that exists today. Central authority was fundamentally family rule and limited by localized tribal and clan loyalties.

In the 1st century BCE, the Himyarite Kingdom — last of the pre-Islamic city-states — emerged. Its history was one of general instability interspersed with brief periods of control, all of which was exacerbated by invasions and the declining spice trade. The tribes continuously challenged each other for influence and the rulers for control. Himyarite political control expanded and contracted based on the abilities of each ruler and the tribal and external

pressure. In 24 BCE, the Romans under Aelius Gallus, the prefect of Egypt, captured Najran and pushed to within a few days march of Marib before inexplicably turning back.[8] In the 4th century CE, Himyarite kings extended their control into Arabia but were checked by the Byzantine and Sassanian empires. In the 6th century, the forced proselytizing to Judaism brought an invasion from Christian Ethiopians and their destruction. An invasion and occupation by the Sassanian Persian ruler, Chosros I, followed. In the century before the advent of Islam, southern Arabia was already a fragmented tribal society:

> The pattern of tribal divisiveness and the strongly polarized geographic and religious allegiances that characterized Yemen … were already established in its pre-Islamic period. The ancient oligarchic kingdoms, intent only on securing wealth, had never attempted to organize or control the region further than was necessary to protect commercial interests.[9]

Those characteristics have carried into the 21st century.

Another characteristic that emerged in the pre-Islamic period is worth noting: Yemen was a connector between larger, more powerful neighbors — a type of land bridge. Stability and prosperity rested on the skill of individual rulers — that is, their balancing external forces while preserving the internal political equilibrium. The biblical Queen of Sheba (Saba) needed good relations with the Israelite King Solomon. The city-states needed good relations with Rome and Egypt. Eventually, when Rome and later Byzantium bypassed southern Arabia, Himyarite prosperity and influence crumbled. The Himyarite conversion to Judaism may have been an attempt to maintain neutrality between warring Christian Byzantium and Zoroastrian Persia. Good relations forestalled invasion and political meddling and sustained prosperity.[10] Yemen's importance was based on its geographic location as opposed to its intrinsic importance — another attribute of the 21st century.

The Advent of Islam

In Yemen, the coming of Islam enhanced cultural and tribal differences and created an even more exceptionalist self-image. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632, the *Dar al-Islam* fractured into three rival groups, the Sunni, the Shi'a, and the Kharijites.[11] Yemen converted quickly to Islam, and

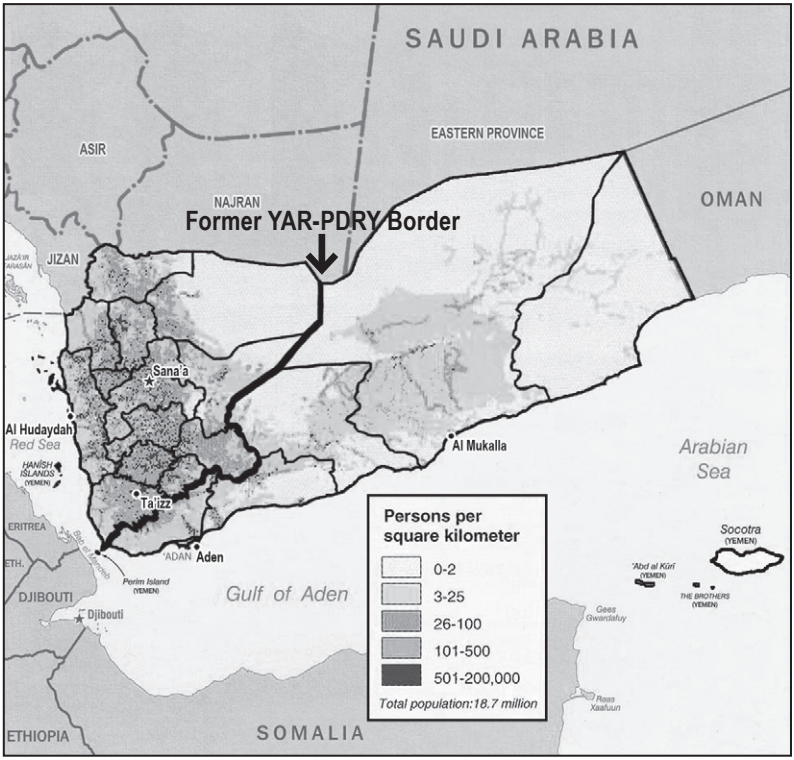

Figure 4. Yemen, showing population density (2002) and the former border between the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). Note also the Saudi Arabian provinces Jizan, Asir, and Najran. Adapted from public domain maps accessed from the University of Texas at Austin Web site, www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/.

Yemen tribal levies became the backbone of the Muslim conquest. They also took part in all of the internecine wars of the early Islamic community. The Umayyad caliph, Mu'awiya, used Yemeni tribes "long domiciled" in Syria as the backbone of the armies with which he would defeat the last Rashidun Caliph Ali. Yemeni commanders and troops played an important role in the Umayyad Sunni defeat of Ali in 661. In Spain, Yemeni commanders supported the Umayyids that fled there after the destruction of their Damascus-based Caliphate in 750, and they later supported Abd-al-Rahman III in founding a second Umayyad dynasty in Andalus.[12] Two centuries later emirs in Spain

continued to call themselves Yemeni. It was a matter of personal and family identity, not political loyalty.

Loyalties in the *umma* (Islamic community) were complicated as subdivisions appeared among the Sunni and the Shi'a. Among the Sunni, four schools of Islamic law emerged: the Hanafi, the Shafai, the Maliki, and the Hanbali. Among the Shi'a, eventually three major sects emerged:

a. The Twelvers, the most numerous, believe that the 12th imam — Hasan al-Askari — hid himself (occultated) in Samarra, Iraq in 873 and will return on judgment day.
b. The Seveners (*Ismailis*) believe that Ismail bin Jafar al-Sadiq occultated in 799. They refused to accept that Ismail had predeceased his father Jafar and refused to accept Jafar's other son Musa as the 7th imam.
c. The Fivers (*Zaydis*) resulted from a split in the family of the 4th imam Zaynu'l-Abidin. His son Zayd and another son Muhammad al-Baqir (the 5th imam) argued over several points of Islamic doctrine. Zayd's theological position was close to that of Sunni traditionalists, particularly the *Mutazilites* who fused classical thought and reason with Islamic theology. Zayd also refused to recognize predetermined designation or hereditary as a requirement to become an imam. The imam had to be a descendant of Hasan or Husayn, the sons of Ali, but that was it.[13] He argued that the descendant of Ali who was best able and most capable should lead the Shi'a community.[14] Zayd was killed in a revolt against the Umayyad Caliph Hashim in 740, but the imamate continued because it had no direct hereditary requirement. The Fiver Shi'a became known as Zaydis.

The Implications of the Rise of Zaydi Shi'ism

In Yemen, the majority of Muslims were Sunni Shafai with many practicing Sufi mystical religious rites. To achieve a oneness with God, Sufis used dance, music, and other mysticism in their worship.[15] Eventually, the Sunnis evolved into an agricultural community centered in the coastal areas and lowlands of the south and east.[16] After the death of Zayd, numerous Zaydi revolts occurred in Mesopotamia and Persia, and small short-lived Zaydi microstates emerged.

Repression finally forced the Zaydis further afield, and at the beginning of the 10th century, Imam Yahya ibn Hussein al-Rassi founded a Zaydi state in Yemen centered in Sada'a. Although "overrun on numerous occasions,"

the Zaydi imamate survived.[17] An exceptionalist Yemeni identity was further reinforced by the preexisting southern Arabian views on ethnology. They viewed themselves as descendants of al-Qahtan or Hud.

Al-Qahtan was a semi-mythical ancestor who was ethnically purer than northern Arabs who descended from Ishmael through Adnan. In Yemen, the distinction is important and can still contribute to feuds and political disputes. In recent history, the importance of the issues of ethnic heritage have been downplayed, but the fact that senior government officials periodically continue to refer to the issue indicates that the distinction still exists.[18] Thus identity in multifaceted forms became a critical element in defining legitimacy in southern Arabia.

Political, social, and cultural modalities of identity came into existence three millennia ago. The importance of identity as both an element of inclusion and exclusion continue today. The principle tribal confederations — the Hamdan that included the Hashid and Bakil — predate the coming of Islam. During the pre-Islamic period, Yemen was split not only by tribal and dynastic rivalries but also ideology. Internal strife and recurring instability was the norm. In addition, prosperity and internal stability existed as a byproduct of trade.

As middlemen, south Arabians had to balance their interests against those of larger more powerful external forces — Egyptian, Roman, Byzantine, Ethiopian, Sassanian, and others. The situation required playing more powerful neighbors against each other while living with the threat of invasion. A competent leader might manage this complexity, followed by one who could not. Issues of succession were critical to survival. The selection process became an ordeal because Zaydis distrusted any hint of familial succession. Islam actually exacerbated the ethnic, cultural, tribal, and religious divisions and by 1500, the differences had solidified. Most Shafais and Zaydis saw themselves as fundamentally different, an attribute of society that, although often encoded in different languages, endures to this day.

Yemen and the Shafai Identity

The original Islamic influence in Yemen was primarily Sunni Shafai, colored to some degree by Sufism. The best example of a Shafai-dominated political system occurred during the late Middle Ages. The Rasulid dynasty (1229–1454) controlled littoral Yemen through a strong central government. This

government was not a true nation-state, but it possessed the most sophisticated administration and bureaucracy yet seen in South Arabia. The Rasulid rulers contained the Zaydi tribes in the highlands but made no real effort to occupy the highlands. It simply was not worth it.[19] A true Indian Ocean culture based on the monsoonal trade, Rasulid Yemen benefited enormously from the most shattering event in central Asian history. In the 13th century, the Mongols swept into the Middle East, subjugating Iran and in 1258, destroyed the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. The destruction of urban areas and trading centers, and economic dislocation, transformed Rasulid Yemen into the key transit point for trade between India and the Mediterranean.

From 1279 to 1280, the Rasulids — to the consternation of local tribal rulers and merchants — conquered Dhofar and placed customs agents in all the ports from Aden to Dhofar in modern Oman. The trade produced staggering wealth. "Aden was now regarded as the emporium of Asia."[20] In

Figure 5. Above, one of hundreds of villages and inlets on the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden that thrive on fishing and smuggling and have belonged for millennia to the Indian Ocean "monsoonal trade culture" that ties the Yemeni littoral to Africa. Right, a closer look at a Red Sea dhow (traditional sailing vessel).

addition, Rasulid success spawned Shafai outposts — and even states on the African coast as well — as enclaves in India and Southeast Asia.[21] During the height of Rasulid rule, political power passed relatively smoothly from father to son. Prosperity and political stability rested on geography and good luck. The Rasulid state declined in the early 15th century when ports in the Persian Gulf siphoned off Yemeni trade and Egypt moved to monopolize Red Sea trade routes and bypass Yemen. Like the Sabaeans in the 1st century, the Rasulid dynasty collapsed when trade patterns changed. Their rule was replaced by the Tahirid dynasty whose ambitions focused on Aden proper.[22]

Rasulid prosperity and stability contrasted sharply with the Zaydi north. Each succession to the Zaydi imamate usually involved 10 or more figures representing different clans and tribes all claiming the right to rule. The Zaydi north remained immersed in tribalism with a weakened imamate. This situation merely reinforced the already stark political and cultural contrasts between the Shafai south, the Tihama, and the Zaydi north.[23] One Yemen looked inward — focused on family, tribe, clan, and personalized rule. The other functioned through institutions that had the trappings of a centralized state.

Summary

The city-states of pre-Islamic Yemen were dynastic entities that lacked the trappings of the more sophisticated river valley empires of the period. Their principle goal was not the control and administration of territory but rather the control of trade routes. As a result, what central authority that did exist frequently exercised control through alliances with the various tribes rather than through direct authority. This ancient paradigm, with its obvious limitations, continues to be an attribute of indirect political authority in Yemen.[24] The principle challenges to the authority and survival of these dynastic regimes were the tribes and powerful empires in the region. This begs the question, has anything really changed?

Even the Rasulids in the 13th century ruled as a family dynasty. Using their wealth, they co-opted rivals and paid for an administrative bureaucracy that often utilized a traditional Yemeni indirect approach to authority. While Rasulid Yemen developed some state attributes, it was still a family enterprise based on blood, clan, and tribal ties focused on controlling trade routes as well. The social and political structure was based on maintenance of equilibrium between tribe and central authority. Along the coast of the Arabian

Sea, rulers maintained their tribal and local authority as long as they did not interfere with the Rasulid customs and tax collectors. The situation encouraged Yemen's fundamental political, economic, and social divisions and perhaps more importantly, it established patterns for the distribution of political and economic power on the basis of identity that are arguably still present today.

2. Yemen and the Age of Empires, 1500 to 1918

The arrival of the Portuguese in the late 15th century introduced the first of a set of new players to the region. Then in 1517, the regional political paradigm changed. The Ottoman Emperor Selim I (1512–1520) conquered Egypt, destroying the Mamluk dynasty. The Arab rulers of the Hejaz — including the Sharif of Mecca — quickly pledged their fealty to the Ottomans, allowing Selim to take the title of "Servant and Protector of the Holy Places."[25] The Egyptians' earlier positions in coastal Yemen under the Fatamids and later the Ayyubids provided the new conquerors of Cairo a pretext for asserting Ottoman authority in the region, including Yemen. That provided the excuse; the real driver was the activities of the Portuguese, later the Dutch and the British in the Indian Ocean. As the struggle would evolve, eventually the British would replace the other Europeans and struggle with the Ottomans over a period of 400 years for influence and control.

Yemen and the Ottomans

Once again Yemen possessed critical access to the trade routes of the east. The Portuguese had crippled Mamluk Egypt by monopolizing trade with Calcutta in Bengal. Their fleet blockaded both the Persian Gulf at Hormuz and the Red Sea, forcing trade between India and Europe to use the trade route around Africa, a route that they controlled. Suleiman the Magnificent (1520 to 1566) was now on the Ottoman throne in Istanbul. Despite pressing wars with the Hapsburgs in Europe and the Shi'a Safavids in Mesopotamia, he built fleets in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. In 1538, the Red Sea expedition under Hadum Suleiman Pasha — the governor of Egypt — secured the coastal areas of Yemen, opening the trade route to India. In 1547, the Ottomans captured Sana'a.[26] Once beyond strategic coastal bases, the Ottomans soon learned that occupying Yemen simply was more trouble than it was worth.

Draconian attempts by the Ottomans to intimidate the tribes only succeeded in restoring the Zaydi imamate to prominence by providing a foreign presence against which the imams could unite the tribes.[27] In 1567, the Zaydi tribes retook Sana'a only to lose it to the Ottomans again in 1568. Despite a Turkish hearts-and-minds campaign that obtained the "allegiance" of the tribes around Sana'a, the Zaydis continued to control the mountain regions and harass the Ottoman garrisons.[28] From the mountains, the Zaydis mounted attacks at will against the Ottomans. The Ottoman expeditions

or "sweeps" were largely ineffective. By 1590, Al-Mansur Billah al-Qasim, a 20-year-old descendant of seven Zaydi imams, emerged as the resistance leader and in 1597 he was elected imam. That same year, using "Arab agents," the Ottomans with a surge of new troops temporarily broke the Zaydi rebellion only to have it reemerge in 1608, forcing a compromise truce. The agreement allowed free movement between the largely Turkish-controlled Shafai areas and the Zaydi regions. Imam Qasim took up open residence in Sana'a, and the Turks were allowed to conduct Yemen foreign policy.

In 1629, Qasim's son Muayyad Muhammad resumed the revolt against the Turks. With a deteriorating economic and political situation at home, the Turks made a cost-versus-gain analysis and withdrew from Yemen in 1636. By 1658, the Zaydi imamate had recaptured all of Yemen, which included most of the south and Dhofar in modern Oman. Much of the control was in fact indirect through the tribes. This conquest became the basis for Zaydi claims to legitimate rule over all of southern Arabia. During the next 60 years, as Zaydi influence predictably slipped, the south regained total independence due to the British extension of "protection." [29]

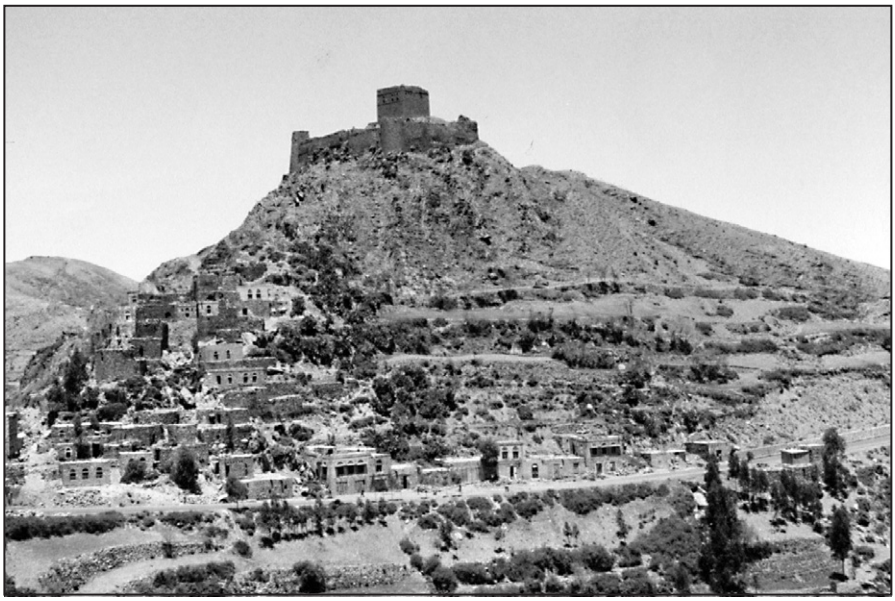

Figure 6. The old Turkish fort at Sumarah Pass, near Ibb in central Yemen, is a reminder of the historical Turkish role in Yemen as well as their role as protectors of Sunni orthodoxy against Zaydi Shi'a domination in this predominantly Shafai Sunni area.

Yemen in the British Imperial Context

At the end of the 16th century, coffee provided the catalyst for a British presence and brought another economic boom to Yemen. For the first time in centuries, Yemen actually produced something of commercial value. It attracted the seagoing powers of Holland and England. The Europeans, particularly the English, participated in the coffee trade; and the flow in specie — particularly silver — attracted Arab, English, French, and Dutch pirates bent on participating in the economic boom to the Red Sea and Arabian Sea. Just as the Ottomans were trying to establish a truce with the Qasimi imamate, a British ship called at Aden and Mocha. In 1618, the East India Company established a trading post or *factory* at Mocha. Initially, the British constituted a benign alternative to Zaydi domination. The British presence continued but by the 1720s, alternative sources had reduced the coffee trade to a fraction of what it had been.[30] With the collapse of coffee, coastal Yemen reverted to fragmented local rule and the fractious Zaydi tribal society in the north. Just as interest in Yemen reached its nadir, the first global conflict — the Seven Years' War (1756 to 1763) — broke out. At its end, the British controlled most of North America, the rich Caribbean, and finally the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, India.[31]

To protect India, the British extended their control into the Arabian Gulf, along the coast of the Arabian Sea and down the coast of Africa to the Cape Colony. London would fight innumerable wars and police actions in Africa, Arabia, and southwest Asia over the next 180 years to protect India and the trade routes.[32] "The shortest route to India from Europe was clearly that from the Mediterranean through the Middle East and the northern Indian Ocean."[33] At the same time, the three great Muslim empires — the Ottoman, the Safavid, and the Mogul — faced growing regional resistance abetted by Europeans who were intent on expanding their empires.[34] During this period, all the ruling families of the Gulf emerged.

The French invasion of Egypt led by Napoleon, which involved French commerce raiders out of Mauritius, focused on Whitehall and the British East India Company. Furthermore the rise of Saudi Arabia loosed the zealous Wahhabis from "the upper Red Sea to the very gates of Bombay." The British reasserted their influence. In 1802, a treaty was signed with the Sultan of Aden. In 1820, after an altercation over British prerogatives, Mocha was bombarded. The imam was compelled to sign a commercial treaty. British

India suppressed the Wahhabi pirates and encouraged trade between India and the Arab coast.[35] In January 1839, fearing an Egyptian occupation of Aden, the British under S. B. Haines occupied Aden.[36] Because of its eventual strategic importance, Aden became a crown colony rather than having the more common status of a protectorate.[37]

The British-Egyptian confrontation over Aden resulted from a series of events in the Najd Desert in Arabia.[38] In 1744, Muhammad bin Saud (who died in 1765) linked his fortunes to the religious reformer Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab (1703–1792) to form the first Saudi state. "Preaching and raids progressed simultaneously," quickly making the Saudi state a force to be reckoned with across the Arabian Peninsula.[39] The Saudis raided into Iraq, sacked Karbala — the Shi'a holy city, and threatened Damascus. They also threatened the imamate in Yemen. However, when they invaded the Hejaz and occupied both Mecca and Medina, their reach exceeded their grasp. The Sultan in Istanbul asked his independent viceroy in Egypt, Muhammad Ali, to end the Wahhabi menace. Between 1816 and 1818, his resourceful son Ibrahim Pasha — leading an Egyptian army — expelled the Wahhabis from the Hejaz. He also captured Diriyah and the Saudi ruler; they were sent to Istanbul and executed. It was not until 1826 that Wahhabi control in the Tihama was totally removed.[40] The developments pleased London, but Muhammad Ali's ambitions made them apprehensive about his ultimate intentions.[41] His Francophone tendencies added to the unease in London and that contributed to the British occupation of Aden in 1839.[42]

During the 19th century, the inability of the Zaydi *sayyids* to agree on an imam brought on a period referred to as *ayyam al-fasad* (days of corruption in the north). The tribes were often blamed for reasserting control and spreading tribal authority into new areas. In fact, it was a reassertion of tribal prerogatives in lands that had been nominally theirs for centuries. It occurred because central authority collapsed and the tribes moved to fill the structural political void.[43] In effect, the tribes served as a societal buffer, an institutional alternative, to failed central authority in Yemen. The time of corruption only ended with the second Ottoman reconquest and occupation of Sana'a in 1872. In 1902, a joint Anglo-Turkish Boundary Commission met to delineate the border between Ottoman and British territory. The tribes and "the difficult, mountainous terrain made progress extremely slow." Two years later in 1904, the boundary had only been delimited from the Bab al-Mandeb to a point near Qa'taba. At that point, the Ottomans and British gave up and drew a line

from Qa'taba at a 45-degree angle into the Rub al-Khali and then north to the base of the Qatari Peninsula. Yemeni rulers would understandably claim that they were not bound by an agreement made by occupying colonial powers.[44]

The Rise of the Hamid al-Din Dynasty

In 1904, Yahya Muhammad Hamid al-Din became imam and founded the last royal dynasty in Yemen. He organized a very large tribal army, besieged Sana'a, and called on the Zaydi north to repel the Turkish invaders. In 1911 in the Treaty of Da'an, the Ottomans recognized Imam Yahya's control north of Sana'a, agreeing to the following:

a. Yahya is the recognized spiritual and temporal leader of the Zaydi community.
b. Shari'a Law is the recognized legal code in the Zaydi districts.
c. Yahya appoints all governors and judges in the Zaydi districts.
d. Yahya controls taxation and is exempt from taxation for 10 years.
e. Yahya receives a yearly subsidy from the Ottomans for tribal security payments.

The Ottomans retained control of the Sunni Shafai areas, further emphasizing the differences between Zaydi and Shafai.[45] In effect, the Turks admitted that no matter how many troops were sent to Yemen and no matter how much money was spent in Yemen, they could not *win* a military victory. During World War I, the imam maintained his agreements and supported the Turks, causing the British in Aden considerable tribal problems. With the Ottoman collapse in 1918, the imam regained control of areas in the west and south with the help of former Ottoman troops that joined his service. In effect, he reestablished the balance between central authority and the tribes that had been lacking in the 19th century.[46]

State Structure and Yemen to 1918

What can we learn from this snapshot of 3,000 years? First and perhaps foremost, when taken in composite, none of the so-called kingdoms and states that have ruled in Yemen since the Sabaeans and Himyarites has been a *state* in any modern sense or even when compared to the ancient riverine empires.

> The ancient oligarchic Kingdoms, intent only on securing wealth, had never attempted to organize or control the region further than

> was necessary to protect commercial interests. With each succeeding rule the tribes were granted more local autonomy, circumscribed only when their accustomed anarchy threatened the ruling power. The Islamization of the area, which would occur in the 7th century instead of creating a larger association of allegiance, produced further factionalism without erasing the old animosities.[47]

In those few cases where central authority seemed to have the trappings of state, as in the case of Rasulid in southern Arabia, it was based on an externally generated economic prosperity — the Mongol invasion and new trading patterns. Central political authority was a temporary facade that overlaid the traditional structure of tribal or local notable rule rather than replacing it. Central authority constituted the equivalent of a temporarily more dominant tribe or clan.

In 3,000 years, Yemenis had developed an approach to identity; however, their sense of identity tended to separate by the family, clan, and tribe. Identity validation — the concept of *other* — became an art form. The entire Qahtani

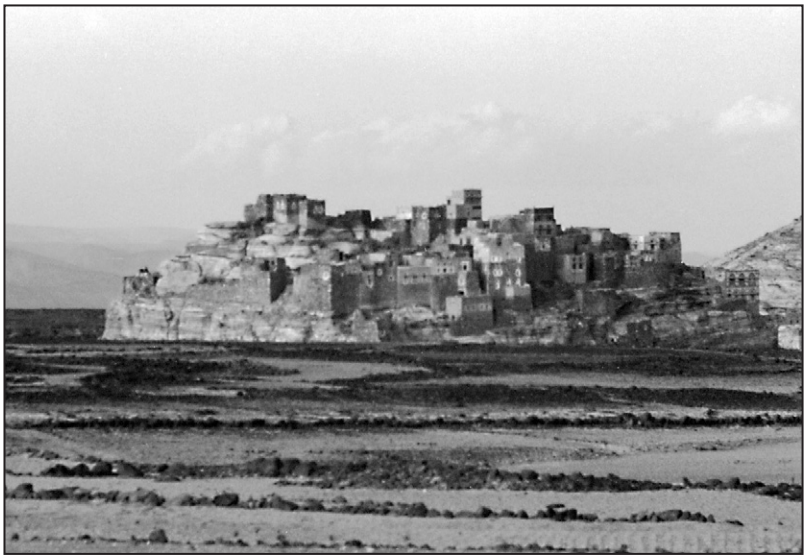

Figure 7. A mountain Zaydi village naturally fortified the tribal irregulars whose role in Yemen politics provided tribal sheikhs with the armed leverage to make and break rulers in both the imamate and republican eras.

versus Adnani argument has been a means used by Yemenis to set themselves apart from other Arabs. Then the Zaydi, Shafai, and even Ismaili sectarian differences (not to mention a very large Jewish population) further divide politics, society, and culture. The *sayyids*' line of descent from the Prophet has also been obviously important. This line of course is followed by the tribal differences — for example, between Bakil and Hashid. Whether an individual sees himself in what could be an invented genealogy is a real issue of identity. Added to this situation are the economic and educational differences that have often occurred along the Zaydi-Shafai divide, further emphasizing societal partitions. Where an individual stood with regard to external forces — for example, Ottoman, British, Egyptian, and Wahhabi — became an integral part of identity. What exists is an incredibly complex fractured political, social, and cultural landscape.

Summary

The Yemeni identity that entered the post-1918 era was anything but a national identity. Yemen was not a state by any recognizable definition, particularly a Western definition, but it was a remarkably resilient society. Despite invasions and occupations, the rise and fall of various ruling groups, economic prosperity and collapse, internal tribal and sectarian differences, the fundamental tribal and clan structure provided a unique political, social, and economic structure that endured. As this study moves forward into the 20th and 21st centuries, and then views the future within a broader historical context, the reader should seriously consider whether a societal structure that took three millennia to develop has fundamentally changed in the last century or has merely taken on new forms.

3. Yemen, Old Paradigms and New Realities

After 1918, the differences took on more definition as two officially recognized Yemens emerged. South Yemen, initially controlled by the British or British tribal allies, later became the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) or North Yemen grew out of the old imamate. The third element was the entry of Saudi Arabia in the equation. This chapter discusses the relationship between revitalized Hamid al-Din Yemen, British Aden and the protectorates, and Saudi Arabia. It ends in 1953 rather than with the revolution in 1962. In 1953, Gamal Abdul Nasser emerged as the new oracle of Arab nationalism, and Abd-al-Aziz al-Saud died, ushering in a new generation of Saudi rulers.[48] After 1953, the imamate attempted to protect itself and take advantage of the new dynamics in the Arab world using traditional Yemeni methods — cooperation, confrontation, and the tribal structure.

Political Structure and Hamid al-Din Yemen

What was Hamid al-Din Yemen? Was it a nation-state? Was it an absolute monarchy? Dresch provides a good response:

> The imamate was conducted according to its own rules, which were not those of the nation state or even of states in Europe around the time of the Renaissance. Nor do the definitions, attached to the word state as a technical term in archaeology or political science, apply readily. The state in this latter sense seems almost an epiphenomenon of Zaydi history.[49]

Central political authority emerged as a byproduct of other events and the reaction of the Zaydi tribes to them. The external threats and internal chaos opened the door for the reemergence of some type of central authority, and the only Zaydi paradigm was the imamate.

Of necessity, the imam functioned as a personal ruler who made most of the decisions himself, supported by a rudimentary judicial system.[50] Because any *sayyid* in theory could become imam, the imam's few trusted advisors were close family or loyal commoners because other Zaydi *sayyids* posed a constant threat.[51] Just as the imam retained as much personal political power as possible, subsequent republican rulers have done the same. In theory and practice, the presidency of Yemen has had three real qualifications: the

person must be a Zaydi, a military officer, and finally be capable of "dancing on the head of a snake."[52] In theory, any senior military officer can become president. The military has become the new *sayyid* class. In contemporary Yemen, it is almost unthinkable that the next president will not be a former military officer. No matter the ruler or the century in Yemen, "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown."[53] Many argue that the modern era began in 1962 as the revolution flipped a switch and "anachronistic" and "backward" Yemen changed; it did not.[54] Such a conclusion is to misunderstand Yemen both before and after the events of September 1962.

Imam Yahya ruled the imamate in a balancing act with the tribes, clans, and external players as had his predecessors. Using an established tactic for tribal rule, he established an "unparalleled degree of order in the countryside by imprisoning an enormous number of hostages."[55] The treatment of the hostages "was dependent on the current behavior of the particular tribe to which they belonged."[56] A contemporary German observer noted that the institutionalized "hostage system allowed the imam to maintain peace, order, and security."[57] In 1918, Yahya attempted to free himself from dependence on tribal levies and hire a professional army of Ottomans:

> The military establishment, which Yahya created, cannot be compared to the armies of more advanced states. . . . Even today the mountainous Yemeni terrain and the tribesmen, who are the country's most effective fighters, determine the nature of the military tactics in Yemen.[58]

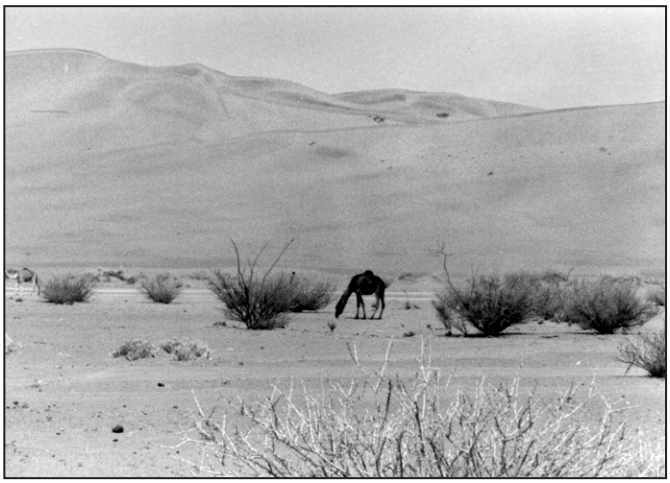

Figure 8. Sand dunes in Yemen's empty quarter.

Positions were given as a reward for loyalty to the imamate. The downside for the imam was that the army ultimately became a competing center of power.[59]

The most pressing problem for Yahya was the end of the Turkish subsidy, which he used to buy peace with the tribes. Fortunately his son Saif al-Islam Ahmad bin Yahya proved to be a competent army commander, and the new army provided leverage over the tribes. Nevertheless, Yahya almost immediately faced a series of revolts. Between 1922 and 1933, revolts north of Sana'a — in the Wadi Jawf near Marib — and then serious Shafai revolts in the Tihama against Zaydi rule threatened to create an independent state. The core resistance in the form of the Zaraniq tribe only succumbed when their capital at Bayt al-Faqih fell after a year-long campaign. The Tihaman campaign had hardly ended when another revolt in the Jawf required an extended campaign to capture Marib, an autonomous province since 1640, followed by another campaign in the northeast against the Dhu Husayn and Dhu Muhammad tribes.[60] In Yemen, this situation is what an unparalleled degree of order looks like.[61]

Yemeni-Saudi Friction: The First Round

In the northeast, Imam Yahya attempted to annex Najran, bringing him into conflict with Abd-al-Aziz al-Saud (Ibn Saud). During World War I, Ibn Saud bided his time and hoarded British-supplied arms and gold. Rather than fight the Ottomans as London and British India had hoped, Ibn Saud fought for control of Arabia after the Ottoman collapse. In 1920, he eliminated Muhammad ibn Rashid, his oldest rival in central Arabia. In 1924, Ibn Saud also defeated and deposed Sharif Hussein ibn Ali al-Hashem in the Hejaz. Then in 1926, Ibn Saud established a protectorate over the Idrisi Sultanate of Asir. This action led to clashes between Yemeni and Saudi-backed tribes. As late as 1923, and a problem for Yahya, the Idrisi harbored rival imams. Their allies included powerful sheikhs of the Hashid confederation. In addition, the Shafais preferred Sunni Idrisi rule as did Bakil tribes at odds with the imam. It was the Saudi protectorate of 1926 that pushed the Idrisi into an alliance with Yahya.[62] In 1932, Crown Prince Ahmed occupied Najran but was promptly ejected by Saudi forces. Two years of inclusive border negotiations, punctuated by Yemeni border raids and no progress on

Rather than fight the Ottomans as London and British India had hoped, Ibn Saud fought for control of Arabia after the Ottoman collapse.

Imam Yahya's claim to Asir and Najran, ensued.[63] Yahya also jailed visiting Saudi negotiators. In 1933, the Idrisi sultan fled Asir and asked for Yahya's support against Ibn Saud. Yahya also declared that Asir was "indivisibly a part of Yemen."[64]

Simultaneously, Yahya moved against tribes in the Aden protectorate. Interestingly, the entire issue of the disposition of the protectorates had sparked a debate in London over the costs and value of attempting to control the tribes in the protectorate. Some British argued that paying the tribes and rebelling sheikhs was as expensive as maintaining and equipping a police force. If the imam had responsibility for them, they would be his problems and not that of colonial Aden. This advice was rejected, and the British opted for a "forward policy" in the protectorate. To counter the British strategy, the imam fomented a series of disturbances.[65] Reluctantly, the British armed the Shafai tribes, provided air support, and sent them north toward Sana'a.[66] Yahya quickly recognized his strategic error, agreed to a settlement with the British, and signed the Treaty of Sana'a in 1934 that more or less reaffirmed the Anglo-Turkish boundary because he was now facing a two-front war.[67]

In 1934, an exasperated Ibn Saud ordered a two-pronged invasion of Yemen. The first column under Crown Prince Saud struggled in the Zaydi highlands against the forces of Crown Prince Ahmed. The second column under Prince Feisal overwhelmed opposition in the Tihama, captured the port of Hudaydah, and headed toward Sana'a. Imam Yahya called for help. The French, British, and Italians dispatched warships as a show of solidarity against Saudi expansion. Concerned about British intervention, Ibn Saud settled for the Treaty of Taif, which stipulated that Asir and Najran were Saudi territory. Relations normalized with the Yemenis nursing their territorial grudge and the Saudis "keeping an eye on and a hand in Yemeni affairs."[68]

Saudi intervention in Yemeni affairs after 1934 reflected real concerns about border security and Yemeni revanchist claims to Asir and Najran. In addition, various Yemeni tribes at odds with the imamate sought Saudi support. Yahya's departure from traditional Zaydi succession practices and attempt to establish hereditary rule became another source of internal discontent.[69] Ibn Saud shared their views because he detested Crown Prince Ahmed and suggested to Yahya that he should "persuade" Ahmad to relinquish his claims to the imamate. The issue of Ahmed aside, Ibn Saud had staked out a position consistent with that of the traditional Zaydi elites, particularly the *sayyids*.[70]

The Hamid al-Din, the Free Yemenis, and the British

Despite problems with Yahya, the British attempted to maintain good relations. The 1934 Treaty of Sana'a reduced border tensions and Aden depended on food stuffs and supplies from the north. In addition, after 1939, Aden became a critical allied transit point between theaters of operations, and the war effort came first. Then in 1944, two leaders of the newly declared Free Yemeni Party (FYP), Ahmed Muhammad Nu'man and Qadi Muhammad Mahmud al-Zubayri, sought refuge in Aden from the imam's arrest warrants. Nu'man, a Shafai — and Zubayri, a Zaydi — called for reform and the overthrow of the Imam Ahmed. The British did not want to upset the status quo with the imamate. Nonetheless, Nu'man and Zubayri were allowed to stay on the condition that neither engaged in political activities against the imamate. Ironically, the imam and even some FYP members assumed that the British financed the FYP. Facing a daily struggle to survive, the FYP in Aden knew differently. The British put an effective damper on Free Yemeni political activities until the end of 1945.[71]

The Free Yemeni leadership concluded that reforming the Hamid al-Din regime required Imam Yahya's forced removal. In 1946, a U.S. Navy medical team examined Imam Yahya, giving him only a few months to live. This diagnosis sparked furious activity among the opponents of the regime and forced the imam to compromise on a number of issues. He expanded diplomatic relations and ended Yemen's almost total isolation. He sent students abroad from the most important families for an education and brought in Egyptian teachers. He refused to step down and allow a Zaydi *sayyid* council to appoint a new imam. He wanted a hereditary Hamid al-Din succession. In opposition, Zubayri's *Barnamij al-Islah* (Reform Program) flatly called for "the elimination of the rule of Imam Yahya and his sons" but not an end to the imamate. More radical opponents ridiculed these demands as "half measures."[72]

The FYP feared that if nature were allowed to take its course, the more competent Crown Prince Ahmed would be firmly in power. The FYP inside Yemen decided to act. Zaydi *sayyid* Abdullah al-Wazir assumed leadership of the plot to remove Imam Yahya. The price for his role was to be placed ahead of Crown Prince Ahmed for the crown. The other conspirators needing money for bribes approached Ibn Saud for support. Unable to tolerate Ahmed, the Saudi monarch agreed on the condition that nothing would happen to Imam

Yahya. This proviso did not extend to Ahmed. Eliminating an irksome claimant to the Yemen throne was one thing, killing the sitting ruler was another. Ibn Saud worried that others might conclude that what had been good for the Yemeni goose might also be good for the Saudi gander. When the coup actually occurred in February 1948, Ibn Saud quickly reversed himself on the grounds that the plotters killed Yahya and were proposing a constitutional government.[73] Given Ibn Saud's age, succession — the great test of viability for the Kingdom was nearing — Ibn Saud intended that his own Crown Prince Saud would succeed him.

Another issue was looming as well. A shrewd judge of politics, Ibn Saud concluded that if Crown Prince Ahmed survived the coup, he would likely win. Ahmed was an able military commander and had been Ibn Saud's pugnacious opponent. On 17 February 1948, tribesmen assassinated Yahya outside Sana'a. Al-Wazir was proclaimed imam on the 18th. As for the Yemenis, they were hardly shocked: "in Zaydi politics assassination was a perfectly 'acceptable' means of removing one imam to make way for another; indeed, it was the norm."[74]

Unfortunately, they had no plan to eliminate Ahmed who quickly made his way to Hajja where "as governor he had been lavish in his largesse in order to prepare for contingencies such as the one he now faced." He promised the tribes that they would be allowed to sack Sana'a and other towns supporting the rebellion. Most of the fighting occurred between tribes loyal to either al-Wazir or the Crown Prince. During an outing from Sana'a on 17 February, Ahmed's forethought proved decisive. His tribes captured Sana'a and most of the conspirators in a few weeks.[75] When the Arab League dispatched a delegation to investigate the legitimacy of the regime in Sana'a, Ibn Saud — now supporting Ahmed — sidetracked them in Riyadh. Ibn Saud undermined their mission by announcing that he and King Abdullah of Transjordan recognized Ahmed. Despite their pro-FYP sympathies, the Arab League followed suit and recognized Ahmed as king and imam on 21 March followed by the British on 22 April.[76]

Had the coup succeeded, the proposed composition of al-Wazir's new regime would have been instructive. Despite the active opposition of the Shafais to the imam, the new government — the Sacred National Pact (SNP) — was to be totally dominated by the Zaydis. The serious contenders for imam were al-Wazir and Crown Prince Ahmed; the latter was obviously

in direct contravention of the rebellion's original goal. The new parliament or Majlis had 70 members of which 53 were Zaydis, and 31 of those members were *sayyids* with no important government posts for Shafais.[77] Yemen was going to remain a Zaydi-dominated state. "Yemen in 1948 evinced no qualitative change of regime, merely a change in the personalities controlling that regime and an attempt to regularize the system of government by introducing a constitution."[78]

The aftermath of the coup was just as instructive. Key leaders of the FYP were executed, exiled, or imprisoned under physically and psychologically appalling conditions. When execution was not forthcoming, a number of detainees — all Shafai — were released. Ahmad Nu'man had written to the blind Shafai Mufti of Aden Muhammad al-Bayhani, who interceded on their behalf. This action upset the still imprisoned Zaydis and became another source of division for Shafais and Zaydis. Several considerations no doubt motivated Imam Ahmed's policy. His new capital was in predominantly Shafai Taiz, and the leniency would "curry favor" with the population there. Interrogations revealed that the Shafais were not involved in the actual assassination of his father. However, even more important, the Shafais did not pose the same threat to the regime as the Zaydi leadership. In Zaydi-dominated Yemen, the Shafais lacked the legitimacy and the means to threaten the government.[79] His action also split the Zaydi and Shafai wings of the FYP. Political power was a function of Zaydi domination, and Ahmed knew it well.

Post-War Aden and the Protectorates

In British-controlled Aden and the protectorate, another Yemen was emerging that was politically, socially, and culturally different from the Zaydi north. In the immediate aftermath of the World War II, Aden was the resort for traders, which was the original intent of the British policy. Taxes were low and as long as British authority went unchallenged, government meddling was minimal. The Legislative Council of 1947 served only as an advisor. During the war and in the immediate aftermath, a series of political awakenings occurred. The FYP emerged as a focal point for opposition to the imamate. Indian Hindus and Muslims debated freely about the end of the Raj. After the war, various groups in Aden became politicized. In 1947, Muslim Indians in Aden formed the Muslim Association. The Jewish community, animated by Jews from Yemen transiting Aden on their way to Palestine, provoked anti-Jewish riots

that forced a state of emergency and the permanent stationing of British troops in Aden. This unsheathing of "the iron fist of British power" from its "usual velvet glove" put the British policies in conflict with the Arab population.[80]

Post-war inflation and an emerging working class in the administration, the port, and the refinery brought strikes and political agitation.[81] The British influence that brought about the emergence of societal elements and nascent institutions and organizations, which were more representative of economically developed societies, served to heighten the differences between the Shafai south and the Zaydi north. In northern Yemen, the Zaydis wielded the real political power; however, now the Shafais in the imamate looked over the boundary and saw Shafais dealing with the British in their own political right. In Aden and the protectorates, higher education rates, greater cross-cultural exposure, the emergence of a working class, and better internal communications created a more sophisticated, more politically aware population. It was in many ways no less fractured than that of the north, but the problems followed 20th century lines and patterns. Tribalism was still present and clan struggles continued, but new political interest groups based on labor and ideology also emerged. These differences would only sharpen the fundamental north-south differences. The stage was set for the contemporary era.

The British influence that brought about the emergence of societal elements and nascent institutions … served to heighten the differences between the Shafai south and the Zaydi north.

Summary

Putting aside the physical trappings of the imamate and examining the political and diplomatic dynamics of the period, it is a refracted image of the modern Yemen. All of the elements are there. The highly personal rule of the imam was supported by family and tribal loyalists. The army was to be a counterbalance to the power of the tribes. The closest, most trusted advisors were those totally dependent on patronage for their survival and power. For the Hamid al-Din, Saudi Arabia reemerged as a potent external factor with internal influence whose interests had to be taken into consideration. The 1933 war taught Yahya and Ahmed who pushed beyond a certain point that Saudi Arabia could prove to be the undoing of their rule. For both Yahya and

Ahmed, the south — that is, Aden and the protectorates — became a source of progressive political ideas that threatened the imamate. The conflicting desire to modernize in order to strengthen the regime and yet at the same time prevent reforms from overwhelming the status quo eventually brought in the outside influences like the Egyptians who would become the catalyst for the collapse of the imamate. The tribes' fractious feuding and resistance to intimidation were constantly a challenge to government authority; however, the support of those tribes was vital to the survival of the imamate itself. These themes, some crystal and some blurred, are a part of the Yemeni political landscape even today.

4. Setting the Stage, Yemen 1953 to 1962

This period is the age of Nasser when most analysts and observers viewed Pan-Arabism with its promise of a new tomorrow as the "wave of the future."[82] Yemen, the most isolated and backward country in the region, managed to find itself a centerpiece in this struggle between traditional societies and revolutionary ones. Most studies view the events of September 1962 as a true *revolution*, overstating what actually occurred. The revolution of 1962 was in fact more of a coup; instead of reforming and fundamentally changing the existing political, economic, and social modalities, it reinforced them. Post-1962, the new *sayyids* in army green were in control in Sana'a. The tribes were stronger and richer than they had ever been. Zaydis still controlled the government, and the government still lacked the means to control its territory. Personal rule through family, clan, and tribe was still largely the rule of the day and Yemen continued to be beset by outside influences over which it had no control. During the period 1953 to 1962, names and descriptive modalities change but the reality of politics, society, and economic well-being remain remarkably the same.

Yemen and the Rise of Nasser

In 1952, a group of military officers in Egypt, led by Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser, overthrew the monarchy and replaced it with an Arab republic dominated by the military and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). In 1954, Nasser emerged as the leader of the new Egyptian Republic. His priorities were as follows:

a. Remove the British forces from the Suez Canal zone.
b. Acquire new weapons to defend Egypt from what he saw as Israeli provocations.
c. Modernize Egypt beginning with electrification through the Nile High Dam at Aswan.

In many respects, his first international sponsor was the newly elected Eisenhower administration. Eisenhower believed that Egypt was "obviously the key" to solving the problems in Sudan, the Suez Canal issues, the Arab-Israeli dispute, and creating an anticommunist Middle East defense organization.[83] In 1954, Nasser accepted an American-brokered compromise with the British on the Canal, but never received either the modern weaponry or the economic

assistance that he believed was promised.[84] In 1955, Nasser's frustrations pushed him toward the *nonaligned movement* and resulted in his turning to the Soviet Union for arms.

In 1956, Washington withdrew support for the Aswan Dam, and Nasser reacted by nationalizing the Suez Canal. In the Suez War, the Israelis, the British, and the French invaded Egypt and attempted to topple the regime. Both the Soviet Union and the United States demanded their withdrawal, and Nasser survived. He became the hero of the Arab world. Nasser's anti-British stance was particularly appealing in Yemen. Ahmad wanted to annex Aden and the protectorate. The British were the obstacle, and Nasser looked like the perfect ally. The Egyptians were also a source for advisors and modern Soviet weapons. Ahmed had to have known risks of Nasser's appeal as illustrated by an encounter between two sons of a local *sayyid* when they met a commoner student on the street. The commoner kissed the young *sayyids*' hands but later commented, "We kiss their hands now but just wait until tomorrow." He was a *Nasserist*.[85] Nasser's 1953 manifesto called for destroying imperialism and its "stooges," ending feudalism, ending monopoly and capitalist domination over the government, bringing social justice to the masses, creating a strong national army, and creating a "sound democratic life."[86] In 1953, his philosophy of revolution focused on the "permanent revolutionary struggle" and the "eradication of feudalism."[87] Ahmed's new friend in Cairo did not have the imamate's best interests at heart.

Nasser's anti-British stance was particularly appealing in Yemen.

In Aden and the protectorate, Nasserism also had an impact. The British administrators viewed tribal leaders and ruling clans as "selfish and oppressive clogs on the wheels of progress." In 1954 the British proposed the federation of the states of the protectorate, including the Executive Council and the Legislative Council to advise the governor. The British hoped that this would eventually allow them to pick progressive new leaders and evolve the federation into a democratic government with a constitution. Like today in Iraq or Afghanistan, where the American wish was to create a stable, progressive, and democratic leadership that would lead to democracy across the region, so the British hoped to see an independent, moderate South Yemen.

South Yemen did not turn out well. An old English proverb about wishes, horses, and beggars has some applicability. Some British colonial officials

believed the independent, moderate focus was not only possible but an obligation. The British referred to it as the "dual mandate."[88]

South Yemen and the Nasserist Era

Significant changes in Aden and the protectorate occurred in 1954; the changes affected both South Yemen and the imamate. In 1951, the progressives formed the South Arabian League (SLA) and called for the unification of the two Hadramuti sultanates. The SLA wanted independence, while traditional leaders resisted because they understood that independence would compromise their own power. Nevertheless, neither wanted their political goals thwarted by a federation essentially run by the British governor-general. In addition, new ideas broadcast via the *Sawt al-Arab* from Cairo preached a nationalistic and anti-British message that resonated with the British opposition. The British attempted to counter the broadcasts, but as reported:

> Even with the best equipment, the British administration had little hope of competing with Egypt in the field of propaganda. It had no ideas to offer which could compare with Cairo's resounding appeals to Arab brotherhood and denunciations of colonialism.[89]

The British experience is a cautionary tale for foreigners who try to outpropagandize indigenous peoples that share a common culture, religion, and sense of injustice. Public diplomacy sounds good, but as the British learned, is often a waste of resources.

Far more potent were policies that encouraged natural centrifugal forces; these polices made any sort of real cooperation difficult in fractured factional and tribal-based societies.[90] The British signed the sultans of Awlaki, Awdhali, and Lahj to new treaties; however, the imam in Sana'a exploited ancient tribal and family rivalries to undermine effective implementation.[91] Opposition stopped the forward policy and then forced a retrenchment. The British administration rode out the storm, but security in the protectorate suffered. "The events of 1954–1955 effectively destroyed the long-term credibility of the British regime in the minds of acute observers," and the imam and rulers in the protectorate made it clear to colonial officials that they did not think British rule would last.[92] Instead of the forward policy being a vehicle to assure the rule of progressive pro-British leaders in an increasingly democratic political environment, meddling with half-baked Western ideas from a foreign power accelerated the British downhill slide.

The Yemens—Contrasts in Culture, Politics, and Development

In 1955, the imamate continued to be a Zaydi-dominated state. Zaydi imams had created an elaborate theological and cultural justification for Zaydi rule over the Shafais. Zaydi leaders felt the superiority and self-satisfaction of a largely "inward looking mountain" people who had "little opportunity or inclination to compare" themselves to anything outside their isolated world. Shafais were often businessmen and traders situated in Taiz, Hudaydah, and the Tihama and therefore more exposed to the modern world and receptive to new ideas. The "Africanized Shafais" of the Tihama were a third group "at the bottom of the social order. It is not going too far to say that Zaydis looked down on Shafais, and both groups looked down on Tihaman and foreign-born Shafais."[93] Little had changed in the relationship between north and south or mountain and shore.

Internal divisions also existed. In Zaydi areas, the Hashid and Bakil fought figuratively and literally for influence. Various *sayyids* resisted Imams Yahya and Ahmed's imposition of a family dynasty. The Zaydis primarily identified themselves in tribal terms; the Shafais, while aware of their tribal links, tended to identify themselves more in terms of location—that is, village and town. In South Yemen, a Shafai society and commercial center were emerging as the political power. The British had created an atmosphere in which the Shafais had become the focal point of political activity. They wanted to end colonial rule but

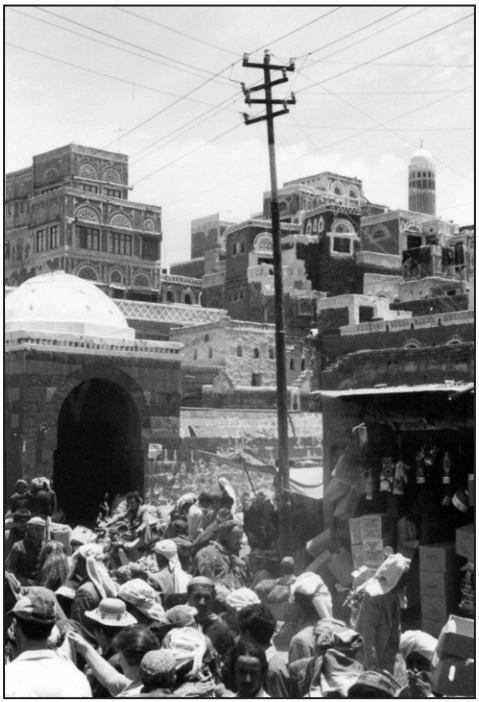

Figure 9. Market Day in the Old City of Sana'a—shopping malls may exist but more traditional settings for commerce still predominate given the growing poverty.

certainly did not want *jabili* Zaydi domination.[94] Why trade one form of colonialism for another?

The tendency among historians is to lump the Hamid al-Din imams together as a single historical period. This practice is convenient but misleading. Dresch states that the writing of history argues tribal history (which comprises most of Yemen history) "is something antithetical to unified narrative and thus to what we expect of states." It is easier to create false but "processual [sic] forms such as state formation." The more sophisticated granular approach requires a level of knowledge about historical processes, objectivity, and experience that only rarely exists. Focusing on dynasties, revolutions, and invasions simplifies the process of explanation. As a result, otherwise intelligent analysts come up with a flawed understanding and policies doomed to fail because they are pegged to false assumptions about historical context.[95]

This issue is particularly key with Yemen, where the granularity of the tribal and factional element is so fine yet so important and the society is so different from the American experience. Lumping Imam Ahmed together with his father is an example: he was not as reactionary, but he could find a path to reform and remain in power — a situation not unlike Yemen today. The focus is skewed because the understanding is superficial; the question is certainly not about Yemen as a *nation-state* — something that has existed largely in the imaginations of outside analysts. It is less about the survival of Ali Abdullah Saleh than it is the survival of the political *nexus* that created and supported him for 32 years.

Hamid al-Din Reform

Imam Ahmed learned from the coup in 1948 that the policies of his father were simply untenable in the post-war era. The isolation of Zaydi Yemen from the rest of the world was not an option. His brother Hasan criticized him for "letting in foreigners." He tried to innovate but survival required a continuation of personal rule.[96] In March 1955, Imam Ahmed's brother Saif al-Din Abdullah led an attempted coup in league with Colonel Ahmed Yahya al-Thalaya. They convinced old Free Yemenis — now free from the "University of Hajja," their old prison — to participate. A reluctant Nu'man and more enthusiastic Iryani supported the coup against Ahmed.[97] In the botched plan, Colonel al-Thalaya — the commander of the Taiz military district — ordered

Muhammad al-Huthi — the commander of the Taiz garrison — to besiege the imam in his Taiz palace fortress.[98]

Like his father before him, Ahmed's son Badr fled to the Hamid al-Din stronghold of Hajja and rallied tribal support for the besieged imam. The coup collapsed for the following reasons:

a. The plotters underestimated both Imam Ahmed and Badr.
b. Misinterpreting the perceived mistake of 1948, they did not assassinate Ahmed.
c. The plotters had no coordinated plan, and what plan existed was botched.
d. The coup itself merely wanted to replace Imam Ahmed with another imam more accepting of political reform.

Again, the tribes provided the tipping point in countering the coup. However, the coup did have consequences. Thalaya, Abdullah, and another of the imam's brothers — Abbas — were captured, interrogated, and beheaded. Prime Minister Saif al-Din Hasan, although in Cairo, was stripped of this position. Badr's performance during the coup brought his immediate promotion to Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, Commander in Chief of the Armies, and Minister of Defense.[99]

Political foment increased in the aftermath of the coup, prompting Imam Ahmed to undertake a program of modernization that would prove to be the undoing of the Hamid al-Din rule. Badr, now in a position of considerable influence, was an ardent admirer of Nasser; he admired Nasser's ideas on Arab nationalism and particularly the anti-British rhetoric. Badr pushed for cooperation with Egypt in targeting the British. The imam now endorsed a program in which Yemen, allied with and aided by Egypt and the Soviet Union, attempted to drive the British from Aden. This decision introduced Egyptian and Soviet military advisors into Yemen to train, support, and modernize the Yemeni Army. Reform-minded Yemenis supported this move despite their opposition to the imamate. They argued that any kind of modernization would open the eyes of the population to their situation and introduce new ideas that would undermine the Hamid al-Din. They were right.

In 1958, Imam Ahmed, with Badr's full support, entered into the ill-fated, pan-Arab experiment with Egypt and Syria, the United Arab States. Imam Ahmad authorized Soviet construction of the deep water port at Hudaydah and two new highways linking Taiz, Sana'a, and Hudaydah built by the

Americans and the Chinese.[100] These improvements did not mollify many in the growing opposition to the imam. Frustrated by the lack of real reform, Zubayri attacked the imamate, claiming it was responsible for the divisions in Yemen and the existence of two Yemens. "According to Zubayri's interpretation then the imamate, in its contemporary form, pitched Shafai against Zaydi, Zaydi against *sayyid*, and finally *sayyid* against the house of the imam — the Hamid al-Din." He also attacked the Qahtani versus Adnani interpretation of "divine right" to rule as the means by which the imam had co-opted the *sayyids*.[101] An additional effect was the token liberalization of 1947. It dramatically increased the exposure of Yemenis to new ideas, increasing pressure on the regime. Yahya had authorized the so-called Famous 40 to go abroad for their educations. Many of the Famous 40 as well as growing numbers of Yemenis in Aden, the protectorate, and the diaspora joined Yemeni branches of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ba'th Party, various stripes of Nasserism, and even Arab communist parties.[102]

The declining health of the imam and the open contempt for Badr did not bode well for the future. In April 1959, Imam Ahmed went to Italy for

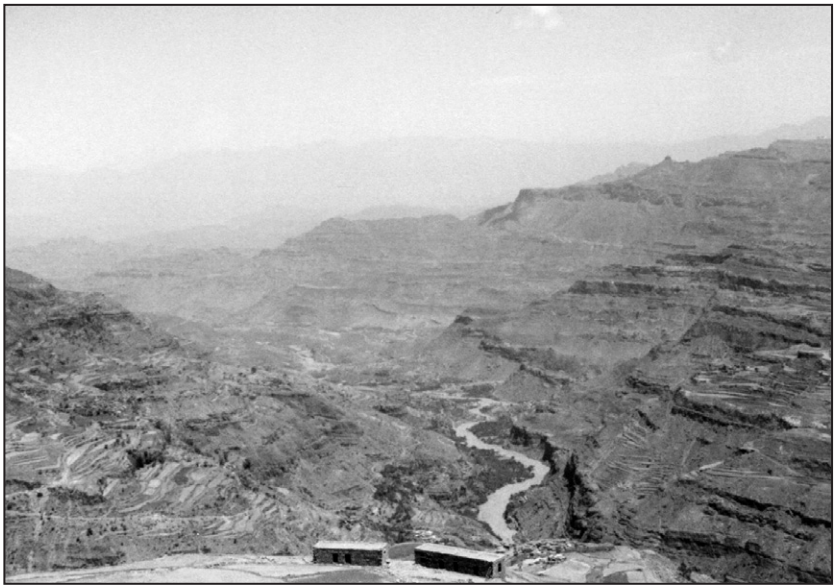

Figure 10. The Chinese engineered and built the Sana'a-Hudaydah highway with its spectacular views and terrifying traffic mishaps. It cut a 2-day journey to 5 hours.

medical treatment, which included an addiction to morphine. In charge, Badr immediately ordered changes, including new political organizations and increased numbers of Egyptian military and security advisors. Unrest in the army grew, prompting Badr to promise a pay increase to the army for which he did not have funds. Unrest in the military again forced Badr to call on the Hashid and Bakil tribal confederations for support. After a substantial subsidy, they sent 50,000 tribal irregulars to Sana'a to cow the army. On learning of the trouble, Imam Ahmed returned from his medical treatments in Italy and laid the blame on the Egyptians. He demanded the removal of the Egyptians, then attempted to recover the subsidy paid to the tribes. This action placed the tribes, the Free Yemenis, and the army at least temporarily on the same side.

The tribes, particularly the Hashid, had been the key support of the Hamid al-Din dynasty and the imam's control; however, at this point, even in Zaydi areas, support was slipping. Many Zaydis who had found work in Saudi oil fields were disillusioned by the situation at home. The Hashid and the paramount sheikh Husayn al-Ahmar had received the lion's share of Badr's subsidy; he had the most to lose if Ahmad recouped the payments. After attempts by the imam to impose control over the Hashid, al-Ahmar declared the Hashid goal as the removal of the Hamid al-Din dynasty. In a secret meeting with the Free Yemenis and army, al-Ahmar hatched a plan to assassinate the imam and replace the imamate with rule by al-Ahmar as something other than imam because he was not a *sayyid*. In January 1960, the revolt was underway and making significant progress when al-Ahmar in a "rare lapse of judgment" accepted Imam Ahmed's invitation to talks based on a promise of safe conduct. Ahmed arrested and executed al-Ahmar and his son Hamid at Hajja. The coup collapsed and the other conspirators, including the Bakil paramount sheikh Sinan Abu Luhum, fled to Aden.

The collapse of the 1959 to 1960 coup was important for two reasons:

a. It severed the historical tie of support between the tribes and the Hamid al-Din.
b. Egyptian support shifted from political organizations like the Free Yemenis to the army.[103] Anti-imamate activities increased.

Summary

The Hamid al-Din experience of 1953 to 1962 provides a clear lesson for Yemeni rulers or would-be dynasties. Attempts to reform, no matter how limited or controlled in the beginning, can spin completely out of control. The Famous 40 produced more political foment instead of relieving the political pressure. Modernizing the army to confront the British created a set of Nasserist and East Bloc influenced officers and the military instrument necessary to destroy the Hamid al-Din. When Ahmed lost the support of the tribal leaders, particularly the al-Ahmars and the Hashid, he removed the traditional trump card of the imamate in any internal power struggle — tribal support. With the threat of the tribes removed, he was at the mercy of the military. For Yemen's rulers, attempts to restructure the political, social, or economic environment are quite often incompatible with survival.

The outsiders' view of Yemen is also instructive. The Egyptians armed with the tenets of Arab socialism believed that they would be welcomed with opened arms. If not, they believed that their large well-equipped modern army and air force would make short work of any opposition. They presumed that they knew Yemen and what it needed better than the Yemenis, thereby alienating everyone. By transforming it into an Egyptian war, they made themselves a target for multiple groups who could only agree on killing Egyptians and their Yemeni collaborators. It was a lengthy and costly mistake, but a good lesson that others might consider.

5. The Yemens' Post-Imamate 1962 to 1979

In 1958, Imam Ahmed — disenchanted with the United Arab Republic (UAR) — wrote a poem severely criticizing Nasser, causing him to end the confederation with Yemen.[104] The poem appeared in an Adeni newspaper and brought a concerted effort from Cairo to undermine the imam.[105] In October 1961 an assassination attempt severely injured Imam Ahmed, and Crown Prince Badr became regent. In December 1961, Nasser labeled the imam along with Jordan's King Hussein and King Saud of Saudi Arabia "reactionaries" and "lackeys of imperialism."[106] Yemen was a part of a much broader problem for Nasser. His Syrian union collapsed in 1961, bringing a more revolutionary approach. Replacing the imamate with an Egyptian-sponsored republic and threatening Saudi Arabia seemed just the project to restore Nasser's lost prestige. Yemen became a pawn in a much larger game involving pan-Arab ideals wedded to Egyptian ambitions. For the Saudis, a Nasserist regime entrenched in Yemen was a direct threat.[107] Then, on 19 September 1962, Imam Ahmed died; 1 week later tanks rolled into Sana'a, ending 1,000 years of Zaydi imamate.

Figure 11. This Soviet-built and -supplied SU-100 fired the first shot of the Yemen revolution of 26 September 1962, initiating almost a decade of civil war.

Civil War and Egyptian Intervention

In the Middle East, things that look simple on the surface often turn out to be very complicated. Yemen's new leader Colonel Abdullah al-Sallal declared a republic and announced the death of Imam Badr. In reality, the imam had escaped to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis initially provided safe haven and nominal support. Nasser poured thousands of Egypt's best troops into Yemen to support the new regime. The British in Aden knew too well Nasser's ultimate

intentions vis-à-vis the crown colony and supported the royalists as did France, Jordan, and Iran.[108] Over strenuous objections of almost all of its allies, the United States recognized the YAR.[109] John Badeau, the new U.S. ambassador in Cairo, argued that the imamate was a "paragon of anachronism" and the U.S. needed to identify with progressive forces as strategy to limit future Soviet influence.[110] Badeau accepted at face value the assurances of the YAR's first Foreign Minister Mushin Ahmad Al-Ayni and Anwar Sadat, the President of the National Assembly and Nasser's "watchdog" for Yemen, Saudi Arabia and political organizations—that is, that neither the YAR nor UAR intended to destabilize Saudi Arabia.[111] Understanding that the only substantive issue for the U.S. related to Yemen was Saudi security, Badeau suggested that the U.S. trade YAR recognition for a UAR guarantee for Saudi stability. The Egyptians refused, arguing that the border situation was a Saudi-Yemeni issue.[112]

The royalists mounted an insurgency from the mountains, ambushing convoys and patrols and constantly harassing Egyptian troops. Later a historian of the struggle would compare it to "the Soviets in Afghanistan."[113] Nasser came to refer to Yemen as Egypt's Vietnam. Tanks, artillery, and fighter-bombers availed little against the mountain guerillas. As a pro-republican Yemen official remarked, "It was obvious that chaos, offhandedness, recklessness, ambitions, competition, and the rush to jostle for positions and power were dominating the new political arena in Yemen."[114] On 1 October 1962, YAR Deputy Prime Minister Abd-al-Rahman al-Baydani, Anwar Sadat's brother-in-law, threatened Saudi Arabia over aid to the royalists. Nasser began to actively support Prince Talal ibn Abd-al-Aziz and other princes who called for a constitutional monarchy in Saudi Arabia. In early October, four Saudi air crews transporting arms to the loyalists defected and flew their aircraft to Egypt, forcing the grounding of the entire Saudi Air Force. At this point, Crown Prince Feisal, with support from the Sudayri Seven — which included Princes Fahd bin Abd-al-Aziz, Sultan bin Abd-al-Aziz, and Naïf bin Abd-al-Aziz — took control of the Saudi government from King Saud.[115] Washington began having second thoughts about where U.S. interests lay — with Nasser or with Saudi Arabia whose oil was critical to the economies of the West. Alarmed, Washington warned the YAR government and Nasser that the "USG [U.S. Government] is morally committed to support [the] maintenance of integrity of reformist Feisal regime and cannot stand idly by in the face of such attacks."[116]

Feisal's intent was to challenge Nasser by proxy and avoid a direct confrontation if at all possible.[117] The Saudis were very cautious. Afraid of confronting Nasser alone, they waited until April 1963, which was six months after the first bombing of Najran, before fully committing to arm and finance the royalists. By that time, fly-bys of U.S. fighters based in Dhahran had assured Riyadh of U.S. support. Also basically on their own, the royalists had managed to push the Egyptians almost back to Sana'a, forcing Nasser to reinforce his expeditionary force. Given Nasser's threats against Aden, the British also supported Feisal.[118]

The Civil War reaffirmed the preeminent position of the Zaydi tribes in Yemen affairs. Whatever influence the tribes had lost to the Hamid al-Din imams was quickly regained as the tribes switched sides based on the highest bidder. Sheikhs like Naji bin Ali al-Gadr went from being a minor Bakil leader to a paramount sheikh with thousands of fighters.[119] Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar faired even better. Solidly republican in the beginning due to the execution of his father and brother by Imam Ahmed, al-Ahmar eventually turned on the Egyptians and al-Sallal in 1965 and was forced into exile.[120] By 1964, unhappiness with the Egyptians and Sallal resulted in a "third force" group; they argued that the Civil War was not a Yemeni issue but a product of Nasserist and Saudi competition. Ahmad Nu'man, Muhammad al-Zubayri, and Abd-al-Rahman al-Iryani resigned from the YAR government, declaring it "corrupt, impotent, and bankrupt."[121] Observers at the time stated that it had been "the only independent-minded government Yemen had had since the 1962 revolution."[122] Nasser may have curtailed third force activities but by 1965, he was looking for a face-saving way out. Disagreements in both the revolutionary government and the royalist camp ended hopes for an early settlement. In an effort to win on the ground or force a compromise, the Egyptians, who had reduced their forces, initiated a surge and raised troop levels back to 60,000 and again began bombing Najran.[123] It would take outside events to convince Nasser that his involvement in Yemen was folly.

The Withdrawal of the Egyptians and the YAR's Survival

In June 1967, Israeli-armored columns in the Sinai rearranged Nasser's priorities. The debacle forced Egypt to withdraw. As in the past, the tribes came down from the mountains and laid siege to Sana'a from November 1967 to February 1968. Residents remembered well the sacking of Sana'a of 1948 and

banded together with the local, secular, and leftist officers, many of whom were Shafai, to lift the siege. The siege ended, but the tribes were the ultimate winners of the Civil War. One observer aptly referred to the resulting YAR government as "tribalist republicans."[124] To say that the tribes regained their influence was to some degree misleading; in fact, they never lost it. The imams depended on tribal support for survival. Once tribal support was lost, the Hamid al-Din dynasty collapsed. The Egyptian withdrawal and the stalemate at Sana'a in 1968 restored the equilibrium between central authority and the Zaydi highland tribes.

The area still had outstanding issues. "The sectarian and tribal cleavages present in North Yemeni society were strengthened by the experience of civil war." With notable exceptions, it is fair to say that most of the republican support came from the Shafais and most of the royalist from the Zaydi. The role of foreign patrons, Saudi and Egyptian, merely increased the divide because it provided independent access to money and guns.[125] "Sana'a was an island of revolutionary enthusiasm surrounded by a rising tide of strident traditionalism. A fight and its outcome were never in doubt."[126] Zaydi tribal traditionalist influence triumphed.

Moves to reassert Zaydi influence in the military resulted in the Sana'a Mutiny of 1968. Shafai officers revolted and were put down by Zaydi commanders in the army with the support of Zaydi tribal irregulars. Conservatives spent months purging the army. They banned trade unions and leftist parties. The Thermodorian move against left-wing influence also confirmed Zaydi dominance. The new President Abd-al-Rahman al-Iryani allegedly told a gathering of Zaydi principal sheikhs, "If ever you want me out, you won't have to do anything to me. Just tell me to go and I'll go. There'll be no need to kill me." The tribal and traditional triumph also gained Saudi cooperation in finally ending the civil war.[127] It did not end direct Saudi involvement with the tribes and in Yemen politics. Yemen was simply too unstable and too strategic to Saudi Arabia's security interests for Riyadh to forego involvement. The northern tribal areas constituted an extended security zone, a buffer against instability and periodic chaos.

Progressivism, Socialism, and the Shafai South

In Aden, the British created a climate in which the refugees from the imamate thrived. It became the conduit into Yemen for new ideas and ideologies.

The Adeni Association, founded by Arab and Indian merchants, was the first political party in Arabia. Students and teachers from abroad returned with Nasserist, socialist, communist, and Ba'thist ideas. The port and British Petroleum refinery created an urban proletariat that by 1963 included more than 20,000 workers; these unions became the vehicle for political ferment. The Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC) stressed economic and political grievances and formed its own political unit, the Popular Socialist Party (PSP). The PSP called for an end to colonial rule and Yemeni unity. In the 1950s, the linkage between Nasser and the imamate brought a request from traditional southern leaders that the British revive the federation concept. Both the Aden Association and the PSP opposed it, but by 1963, the Federation of South Arabia encompassed all of South Yemen. "The end result of direct British involvement in the politics of the hinterland was to ossify a previously fluid political structure and to weaken the tenuous ties that had bound ruler to ruled." Lenient British rule, rather than the historical rulers, allowed political unrest to gain momentum that coupled with Egyptian subversion from the YAR brought revolution.[128]

Despite the Nasserist threat, some tribal leaders resented federation control. A revolt of the Qutaybi tribe was put down by the British. After the death of the sheikh, resistance was taken over by the National Front for the Liberation of South Yemen, otherwise known as the National Front (NF). The NF became the Yemeni branch of the Arab National Movement (ANM) sponsored by Nasser. One of the founders — Salim Rubayyaa Ali — would become the first president of the Peoples' Republic of Yemen (the predeccesor to the PDRY), and another — Abd-al-Fattah Ismail — would succeed him. The NF spent as much energy attacking its radical rivals as it did the British. In 1965, the NF forced Abdullah al-Asnaj — the founder of the PSP — to step down as leader of the Trades Union.

Nasser wanted the NF and PSP to merge and form the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY). Nasser's backing boosted Asnaj and NF military units, shifting support to him. In a preview of things to come, the NF and FLOSY could not meet in July 1966 in Taiz for fear of bloodshed between the groups. Against this backdrop, the British announced that they would withdraw from Aden by early 1968 and terminate their treaties with local rulers and the Federation of South Yemen. The prospect of South Arabia "falling in his lap" spurred Nasser to ratchet up the pressure on the NF to merge with

FLOSY. Egyptian threats and arrests resulted in Ismail and others agreeing to merge under Asnaj and FLOSY. NF ideological purists strongly resisted association with what they viewed as bourgeois elements under Asnaj.[129]

Until Nasser's retreat from Yemen in 1967, FLOSY had the upper hand. The NF reemerged as the leader when both the labor and military wings of FLOSY joined the NF. In 1967, after a mutiny resulting from tribal frictions, the Federation of South Arabia army merged with the NF as the British evacuated. Support for FLOSY collapsed. At the same time, the NF announced the formation of the Peoples' Republic of South Yemen (PRSY). Unlike the north, the NF eliminated tribal control and established a one party state. Now a tightly organized political party of 25,000 members, the NF gave the political structure in South Yemen a degree of control never witnessed in the north. Political struggles and conflicts occurred, but they were for control of the party apparatus. Internal alliances initially followed tribal lines: however, after a series of revolts, the NF leadership systematically eliminated tribal and Islamic challenges to the state.[130]

These developments left Riyadh in a quandary. In March 1970, the Saudis met with republicans, royalists, third force elements, and tribal leaders to attempt a political compromise, ending the civil war in the north. In a controversial move, Muhsin al-Ayni agreed to include royalists in the Sana'a government. More importantly, royalist areas were to be administered by royalist YAR officials. In effect, the YAR agreed to the continuation of the *de facto* Saudi influence in the tribal areas and political partition with the tribes. The YAR also agreed to turn a blind eye to Saudi efforts based in the YAR aimed at the overthrow of the regime in South Yemen.[131]

From this agreement emerged the political and diplomatic balancing act that would dominate YAR and PDRY internal politics and their relations with Saudi Arabia for two decades:

a. The YAR agreed to virtual autonomy for the northern tribal area and acquiesced to an extended Saudi-influenced, if not controlled, security zone inside the YAR.
b. The only YAR defense against Saudi influence were threats like Al-Ayni's to ally with South Yemen or turn to the Soviet Union for support.
c. The PDRY with its Shafai population, radical ideology, and cohesive government menaced the Zaydi-dominated YAR and, from a Saudi point of view, the Kingdom itself.

d. At the same time, the PDRY threat within the context of the Cold War provided a means for the YAR to extract aid from both the Kingdom and the West.
e. The agreement assured that the YAR could not control its tribes or its territory. The tribes with independent support from Riyadh retained the ability to destabilize the YAR.

In Sana'a, government ministers were at the mercy of tribal and military leaders leading to a series of unstable, short-lived governments. In 1972, Saudi Arabia's efforts to undermine the PDRY from YAR territory ignited a border war. The anti-PDRY insurgents collapsed and the YAR army — starved of ammunition, training, and equipment — fared even worse.[132] The military result was predictable; the political result was not. In October, the two Yemenis suddenly agreed to establish joint working committees with the ultimate aim of uniting the country. "Saudi Arabia could hardly contemplate a worse outcome and utilized all the levers of influence it possessed in the North to deflect Sana'a from pursuing unity."[133]

The YAR and the Triumph of Zaydi Military Rule

To say that the idea of a united Yemen did not appeal to Riyadh is an understatement. Opposition to unification became an obsession. Given the history and the relationship of the YAR and the PDRY with the East Bloc, their concern was justified. The Saudis reacted by using the tribes and other clients to pressure the Iryani government. On 13 July 1974 after a bloodless coup, Iryani resigned and left for exile in Damascus. He was the only civilian president that the YAR or Republic of Yemen (ROY) ever had.[134] The Military Command Council emerged with Colonel Ibrahim Muhammad al-Hamdi as its president, and the constitution and Consultative Council were suspended. To gain Saudi and tribal support, Hamdi argued that he acted to prevent a takeover by Ba'thists and other leftists.[135] The son of a respected *qadi* (judge), Hamdi sought to end corruption and restore economic stability and political order. Sinan Abu Luhum of the Bakil, Abdullah Husayn al-Ahmar of the Hashid, and the Saudis supported the coup — believing that in Hamdi they had a figurehead leader they could control.

Hamdi had other ideas. He immediately installed Muhsin al-Ayni as Prime Minister, who attempted to form "an Assembly which would not be dominated by the tribal leaders, and yet not alienate them and also to fairer

reorientation to the Shafais and the town-dwellers." Al-Ayni failed to solve the problem, upsetting al-Ahmar and the Saudis in the process. A double liability, Hamdi dismissed him and made Abd-al-Aziz Abd-al-Ghani the new Prime Minister.[136] He relied heavily on his brother Abdullah al-Hamdi, the YAR chief of staff Ahmad Husayn al-Ghashmi, and the highest ranking Shafai in the YAR military Abdullah Abd-al-Alim — the commander of the paratroop brigade. During 1975, Hamdi used a divide-and-conquer approach by gaining al-Ahmar's support in undermining Sinan Abu Luhum, forcing the resignation of his relatives in the government and military. He used the same tactic on other tribal leaders and then on al-Ahmar himself. The struggle with al-Ahmar was protracted and both sought Saudi support. Hamdi eventually isolated al-Ahmar and ignored him, avoiding a fight that might have united tribal opposition.[137]

In addition to economic development and rationalization of the government operations and planning, Hamdi reformed and reorganized the security services under Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad al-Khamis. The officer had close relations with the Saudis, and his appointment was seen as an effort to reassure Riyadh.[138] Hamdi also signed a military assistance pact with the United States and Saudi Arabia and began a reorganization of the military. Hamdi's goal was to tip the balance of power in the YAR away from the tribes, specifically towards the central government and the army. All of these efforts were linked to a broader effort to alter the YAR political construct. The aim was to undermine the tribalists and the conservatives who opposed modernization and to curtail Saudi Arabia's pervasive influence. The rising educated elites credited Hamdi with trying to abolish the sectarian model and to create a national model of rule that transcended the historic sectarian politics. In the diplomatic and security areas, Hamdi's good relations with his counterpart in Aden — Salim Rubayyaa Ali — and talk of unification plans provided him leverage in his relationship with the West and Saudi Arabia, as did his push for collective Red Sea security in conjunction with the PDRY.

In 1977, Hamdi pressed the Saudis to channel aid for the tribes through the government in Sana'a. Such an arrangement ran directly counter to the Saudi interests and their desire to have direct influence over their erstwhile tribal allies. Hamdi also wanted al-Ahmar removed to a comfortable exile in the Kingdom. Then Riyadh began to drag its feet on weapons deliveries related to the trilateral U.S. arms deal of 1976. Agreements not withstanding, the Saudis were balking at providing modern arms to the YAR military for

fear that they would be used to reduce the tribal Saudi clients in the north and perhaps at some point against the Kingdom as well. "A joke circulating in Sana'a at the time had the Saudis agreeing to the sale of tanks to the YAR only upon invention of a tank that could drive and shoot south but not north."[139] Hamdi's reduction of tribal power, his threat to Saudi influence, his increasingly cordial relations with the PDRY, and his general insistence in increasing policy independence for Yemen and for political independence for himself created powerful enemies.

On 11 October 1977, Hamdi and his brother along with two unidentified foreign women were found shot dead in a house on the outskirts of Sana'a. The consensus was that army officers, led by Chief of Staff Ahmad al-Ghashmi with Riyadh's blessing, decided Hamdi threatened the status quo in YAR and their security and personal interests.[140] Viewed in the cold light of national interests, there is little doubt that had Hamdi's programs succeeded they would have undermined Saudi security interests and the independence of the northern tribes. Hamdi's independent foreign policy initiatives — including direct dealings with the U.S., the continuation of relations with the Soviet Union, and new openings to Iran and France — were also worrisome.[141] A modern Yemeni army might threaten the Kingdom to say nothing of unification with the PDRY. The Saudis were not willing to take a chance. In addition, Hamdi's military reforms threatened the status quo and positions of Hamdi's closest military allies. Just as assassination had been a time-honored way to remove imams, it also worked on the presidents of the YAR.

The PDRY: Ideological Hardliners Confront the YAR and Saudi Arabia

Simultaneously with these developments in North Yemen, the political situation in the PDRY was going through a state of flux. The competition between PDRY President Rubayya Ali and NF Chairman Abd-al-Fattah Ismail was personal, political, and ideological. Ali supported a pragmatic relationship with Saudi Arabia while Ismail wanted an ideological confrontation. Ali talked of forming a Leninist vanguard party composed of multiple leftist elements to broaden regime support, and Ismail opposed it. Ismail and Prime Minister Ali Nasir Muhammad openly accused Saudi Arabia of engineering the assassination of Hamdi and thwarted attempts to end the Dhofar conflict with Oman. They supported expanded ties with the Soviet Union. In October 1977, they forced Ali to accept Ali al-Antar, a NF loyalist, as Minister of

Defense. Rather than supporting Rubayya' Ali, Saudi Arabia interpreted the al-Antar appointment as Ali's responsibility and withheld PDRY aid, a move that totally undermined him in his struggle with the NF.[142]

By June 1978, PDRY support for the National Democratic Front (NDF) insurgency in North Yemen increased, as did friction within the PDRY government between Rubayya' Ali and the NF leadership. Ali opposed overt support for the NDF and attempted to maintain ties with YAR President Ahmed al-Ghashmi and Saudi Arabia. On 24 June 1978, a PDRY courier with a secret communication allegedly from Rubayya' Ali to YAR President Ghashmi opened his briefcase in Ghashmi's office; a bomb killed both men.[143] Ghashmi's assassination set off a power struggle in Aden that ended with the arrest and execution of President Rubayya' Ali and his replacement by Abd-al-Fattah Ismail, the NF party chairman. Given the sequence of events, it is certain that supporters of Ismail, probably with Soviet help, substituted the original briefcase for one that included a bomb and then blamed the incident on Ali.[144]

In the YAR, the loss of a second president in 8 months fueled instability. A four-man Presidential Council was formed and Lieutenant Colonel Ali Abdullah Saleh — a strong Ghashmi supporter, a member of the group that eliminated Hamdi, and the garrison commander in Taiz — emerged as the president of the YAR and the commander in chief of the armed forces. For the Saudis and tribalists, like Hamdi, Saleh appeared to be the safest option. He was from a small Hashid tribe that could hardly serve as an independent power base. He also appointed Abdullah al-Ahmar of the Hashid Confederation and a son of Sinan Abu Luhum from the Bakil to the Constituent Assembly. The assembly was back in the hands of the tribalists.[145] To everyone involved, Saleh appeared to be a manageable commodity. Handling Saleh would turn out to be more difficult than anyone could imagine.

Given the Saleh tribal heritage and accommodation with the paramount sheikh from the Hashid confederation Abdullah al-Ahmar, Bakil confederation tribes became concerned about bias. The Shafais viewed Saleh as a return to Zaydi domination after the evenhandedness of Hamdi. The PDRY and NDF fomented further unrest to destabilize the new regime. Almost immediately, several army officers mounted a serious coup assassination attempt.[146] According to Burrowes in the fall of 1978, a joke circulated in Sana'a that Ghashmi had arrived in Heaven only to be castigated by Hamdi for not bringing *qat* (a mildly narcotic plant chewed by Yemenis) to which Ghashmi replied, "Presi-

dent Saleh has promised to take care of the *qat* — and he should be joining us any time now."[147]

The triangular situation between the Yemens and Saudi Arabia worsened. Many of Rubayya' Ali's supporters had fled to Saudi Arabia and the YAR. Riyadh and Sana'a again began to support opposition to the NF, now called the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP). Unfortunately, the YSP was better prepared than the Saudis or the YAR to play the destabilization game. On 24 February 1979, the PDRY army crossed into the YAR, quickly capturing border towns and threatening to sever the Taiz-Sana'a road. The YAR army virtually collapsed and had to be quickly supported by tribal levies from the north. Defections from both northern tribal levies and from the YAR army to the NDF further complicated the security situation. Cautious, the Saudis did not order its forces into Yemen and refused Sana'a's requests for air support.[148] Lack of help in the border war infuriated Saleh and pushed him toward a greater accommodation with the Soviet Union, leading eventually to a suspension of Saudi aid.[149] In one of those pure Yemeni political twists, the fighting abruptly ended in early March and by late March, at a peace conference in Kuwait, the Saleh government and the Ismail government were calling for an end to hostilities and for unification of the two Yemens.[150]

Summary

In the aftermath of 1979, the Saleh regime faced critical legitimacy problems. The Hamdi period was the standard by which Ghashmi and Saleh were measured and found lacking. Ghashmi may have organized the overthrow of Hamdi but many believed that Saleh was directly involved in his elimination. Both were believed to have acted as the cat's paw of Zaydi tribal leaders and Riyadh. With Ghashmi dead, Saleh became a focus of derision for his lack of education, his tribal origins, and his inexperience. In effect, Saleh had inherited the extra-constitutional system created by Hamdi that lacked legitimacy; in addition, his lack of stature contributed to the view that he was at best a military dictator and not a legitimate ruler.[151] To survive, Saleh' had to stake a more independent course for himself and the YAR. In the PDRY, survival was no less an issue for Abd-al-Fattah Ismail, Ali Antar, and Ali Nasir Muhammad. PDRY and NDF activities to foment trouble in the Shafai south and east met with considerable success. In addition, the PDRY was the only Arabian client of the Soviet Union. While providing a powerful

and somewhat problematic patron, Soviet support also provided powerful enemies, most notably the United States. As a result, in 1979, President Carter declared the Carter Doctrine against Soviet aggression in the Persian Gulf.[152] He also authorized a covert action campaign against the PDRY designed to destabilize the regime.[153]

For Saudi Arabia, refusal to come to terms with the republican government in 1970 had resulted in the rise of Hasan al-Amri, whose relationship with the Soviets pushed the Saudis and tribes to a compromise peace. In 1972, Saudi support for PDRY exiles provoked a war between the Yemens, damaging YAR and Saudi credibility. The Saudis faced a difficult dilemma: Was their greater fear a stable YAR or communist subversion from the PDRY? For that matter: Was a stable Yemen even possible? What challenged and threatened Riyadh was the rise of Hamdi and his policies:

a. Breaking the tribal power in the military
b. Dismissing the consultative assembly
c. Removing Abdullah al-Ahmar and ending direct Saudi aid to the tribes
d. Seeking direct relations with the U.S., Iran, France, and the Soviet Union
e. Playing the Yemeni unification card to pressure Riyadh into compromise.

His removal solved nothing. In fact, the deaths of PDRY President Rubayya' Ali and YAR President Ghashmi in 1979 upended Riyadh's Yemen policies. Riyadh's unwillingness to become directly involved in the border war of 1979 was less timidity than a well-advised conservatism. The defensive posture assumed by the Saudis at the time of the 1979 border war was the prudent course of action. What Riyadh could not know was that the new President Ali Abdullah Saleh, despite his apparent weaknesses, proved to be more adept than any of his predecessors at gaming the Kingdom and the West and in surviving the labyrinth of Yemeni politics.

For the United States, Yemen policy now had a secondary as well as primary thrust. The security and stability of Saudi Arabia remained the primary interest. In the 1950s, the British had sought U.S. help to blunt the influence of the Egyptians and the Soviets and to relieve pressure on Aden and the federation. London told Washington, "Another success for Nasser in this area would have serious consequences for Western prestige throughout the Middle East. All of this increases the need for coordinated action by Britain and America."[154] The U.S. refused to be drawn into any Yemen conflict. Secondarily in the Cold War struggle, the U.S. could ill-afford a PDRY victory. Some viewed the U.S.

reaction to the 1979 border war and the YAR instability as an over reaction; if so, it was done to reassure Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states of the U.S. commitment to maintain their security in the face of Soviet proxies.[155] Viewed within the context of the crisis of 1979 — the fall of Pahlavi Iran, the siege in Mecca, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq war, and anti-U.S. riots in Pakistan — Washington had to respond.

For the Soviets, the PDRY relations had become increasingly important because of port facilities, but the PDRY also represented the only pro-Soviet, socialist state on the Arabian Peninsula. In fact, the close relationship with the PDRY coupled with a continuing relationship with the government in Sana'a offered the possibility that Moscow could become a source of mediation between the north and south, thus a player in Arabian politics. The efforts of Yevgeny Primakov — as chairman of the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Soviet Peace Committee, a KGB front organization during the 1970s and 1980s — testify to the seriousness with which Moscow viewed their Yemen opportunity.[156]

6. The Saleh Regime, Survival and Self-Interest

At this point, the realization that Saleh displayed a shrewd and ruthless grasp of not only Yemen politics but also regional and global dynamics was becoming apparent. Saleh would prove to be a pragmatic risk taker who understood how to operate in a fluid, unstable environment — an important attribute when your next decision could be your last. When Saleh came to power, Yemeni politicians and Riyadh felt they had helped to promote a *safe* candidate to the presidency, one who could be easily removed if deemed necessary. The 1979 border war seemed to confirm this view. The tribalists were once again in the government. Various factors seemed to bode well for even greater Saudi influence over the new regime and a solidified patron-client relationship; examples follow:

a. Saudi aid to the northern tribes
b. Renewed prominence of traditionalist leaders
c. Strategic position held by Muhammad al-Khamis as head of the National Security Organization (NSO) and Foreign Minister Abdullah al-Asnaj, both viewed as pro-Western Saudi allies.[157]

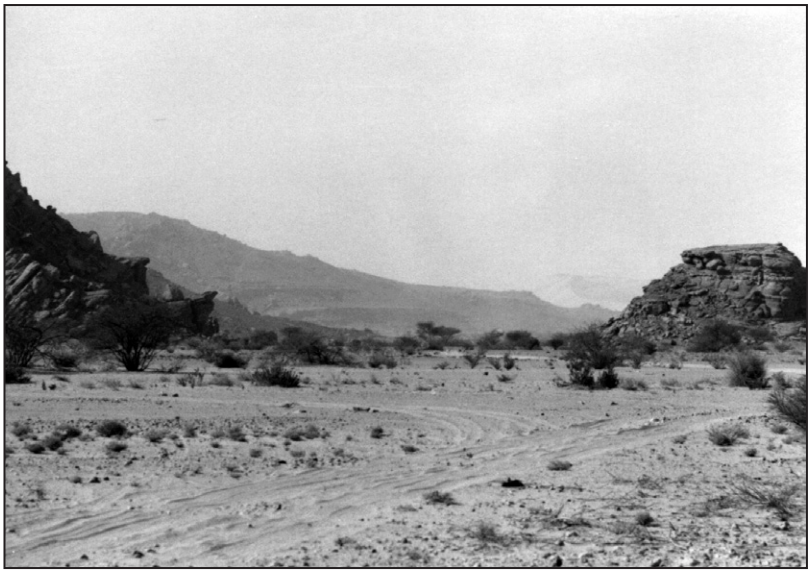

Figure 12. East of Marib, the site of a clash in the no-man's land between YAR and PDRY forces during the 1979 Border War — now a region of antigovernment activity.

Saleh Charts an Independent Course

Everyone underestimated Saleh, who had concluded the following:

a. U.S. relations with the YAR would always be predicated on Saudi interests.
b. The Saudis would use aid, military or economic, and the tribes and purchase political influence as levers of control.

Hamdi's fate served as a strong incentive for Saleh to insulate his regime from Riyadh. Saleh gambled and opened a diplomatic initiative with the PDRY aimed at blunting PDRY support for the NDF. He then turned to the Soviet Union for arms and advisors. He was a credit to the best Yemeni leaders of the past. Saleh chose to assert his regime's independence by initiating a high-wire act between region players and the Cold War adversaries. Saleh hoped that closer ties with the Soviet Union would bring leverage on the PDRY and through Aden on the NDF. Closer ties with the Soviet Union also raised U.S. concerns and brought U.S. pressure on Riyadh to be more forthcoming. The U.S. and Saudis failed to appreciate Saleh's political acumen. Riyadh had "treated the YAR as a virtual dependency" and now Saleh demonstrated that he had options. This treatment proved popular with advisors and nationalists in the officer corps.[158]

Saleh and Hamdi shared many of the same goals, but the former was more focused on personal survival and less on reform. To this end, Saleh moved to surround himself with loyalists dependent on him for their political survival. He reshuffled his government, removing Asnaj as Foreign Minister and shifting Muhammad al-Khamis from the NSO to Minister of Interior. Criticisms of "unnamed Arab countries" that were attempting to buy control of the YAR increased. To make a point, Asnaj was arrested and charged with treason for being on another Arab country's payroll, and still more dramatic, Muhammad al-Khamis died in a still unsolved assassination case. In a series of military shakeups, Saleh placed loyal family members and members of his own tribe in key positions. He also rehabilitated a number of officers who had fallen into disfavor because of their nationalist views during the period of Saudi ascendancy.[159] He bolstered his position with a second tier of supporters including Shafai technocrats who were dependent on him for their positions.[160]

The new regime now turned to the pressing problem of the NDF insurgency. The NDF was heterogeneous; many of its political groups had little in common. In fact, the NDF's origins date to the aftermath of the siege of Sana'a

1968 when the *quid pro quo* for a compromise with the tribes resulted in the Sana'a Mutiny and the elimination of leftist elements from the government. These elements found refuge in the south and developed substantial influence within the PDRY government.[161] Eventually, the NDF came to include Ba'thists, Nasserists, political progressives, and other disaffected groups including large numbers of Shafais.

The common denominator in NDF politics was disaffection with the tribalist Zaydi domination in the north. Politics and power continued to be dictated by a group of military officers and security officials that had emerged from Sahih's Zaydi Hashid confederation tribe. That group ruled through cooption of the two paramount sheikhs, Abdullah al-Ahmar of the Hashid and Sinan Abu Luhum of the Bakil. The tribalists maintained their influence by balancing their political posture between the government in Sana'a and Saudi Arabia, who subsidized their quasi-independent status. Zaydi rulers had traded *sayyid* robes and turbans for uniforms.[162]

Any Zaydi imam would have immediately understood the new regime's problems. The more cosmopolitan PDRY posed a progressive threat to the YAR just as British Aden had proven to be problem for the imams. Traditional tribalists in the north were intent on preserving their prerogatives, and Saudi Arabia saw this focus as essential to its broader regional security interests — thus willing to support it. The Hamid al-Din had also wanted to see their rule extended over all the territories that they considered to be Yemen, and they wanted to be independent of outside influence — exactly the strategic policies of the Saleh regime. Internal groups — in the army, the bureaucracy, Zaydi traditionalists, Shafai groups, and tribal leaders — believed they had as much or more right to rule Yemen as Saleh. Like all Yemeni leaders, Saleh attempted to maintain internal control while dealing with outside interference from the Ottomans, the Portuguese, the British, the Saudis, the Americans, and the Soviets. Pick your period and the political dynamics are surprisingly similar.

Saleh's approach to rule in this unstable political milieu was as traditionally Yemeni as that of any ruler before him:

a. Personal and political survival comes first.
b. Surround yourself with family and tribal loyalists.
c. Create a political following through patronage.
d. Maintain firm control of key military units — tribal or army.

e. Practice divide-and-rule tactics internally.
f. Intimidate or eliminate those that cannot be co-opted.
g. Play foreign powers off (against) each other.
h. Get what you can from foreigners but keep them at arms length.
i. Control what territory you can in Yemen but do not overreach.
j. Play the role of Yemeni nationalist even when compromise is necessary.

This approach is the time-tested way to rule Yemen, but like the imam's approach, it is a form of personal rule and therefore inherently unstable. The only real institution is the military and even that is suspect because positions are so closely linked to personal, family, and tribal ties.

The YAR, the PDRY, and the National Democratic Front

Saleh wanted the PDRY to end support for the NDF. The PDRY wanted the NDF to be incorporated into the YAR government. Evidence of *real* power-sharing would include anti-tribalist, anti-Saudi, anti-imperialist — that is, anti-Western policies. Obviously, since the survival of the YAR government was based in large part on tribalism and aid from the Kingdom and the United States, Saleh was disinclined to agree to those terms. No matter what the real inclinations of the Saleh regime or the leadership in the PDRY, even the possibility of compromise generated strong pressure on both regimes to confront the other. The Saudis and Yemeni tribalists adamantly opposed any compromise on the part of Sana'a, while various Arab regimes like Libya and Syria — backed by the Soviet Union — objected to any solution that might undermine the south's commitment to progressive reform in Yemen.[163]

In 1980, the backdrop was a plot against Saleh's government in the YAR by Saudi-backed army officers, conservatives, and tribalists. It also contained struggles in the PDRY between pragmatists and ideologues. President Saleh and PDRY Prime Minister Ali Nasser Muhammad met, announced agreements and issued communiqués regarding cooperation, and ultimately saw unification of the two Yemens. Alarmed, the tribalists and conservatives in the north — with Saudi support and tacit U.S. approval — formed the Islamic Front against the Communists. The Saudis cut off military and economic assistance amidst reports of Saudi-YAR clashes on the border. At first, Saleh defied Riyadh but eventually, in return for additional aid and accelerated arms shipments, he agreed not to compromise with the PDRY. However, he refused to expel Soviet military advisors.[164] The NDF with the support of the

anti-compromise elements in the PDRY government escalated attacks along the YAR border and in the central regions as well.

In late 1981, YAR regular army and tribal forces attempted to subdue the NDF and failed. The rebellion spread to areas northeast of Sana'a, and the NDF began to set up rudimentary administrations in the mountainous areas southeast of the capital. In the PDRY, Saleh Muslih al-Qasim — a staunch NDF supporter — emerged as Minister of Defense, and the insurgency intensified.[165] The first half of 1982 saw a major expansion of the conflict. Initially, NDF forces captured YAR border towns and downed two YAR Sukhoi-22 aircraft. The Russian advisors in Sana'a had been reluctant to support YAR military operations against their indirect clients, the NDF; however, under significant pressure, Saleh finally ordered them into the fray. The situation became increasingly critical for the YAR government. It was at this point that President Saleh turned to the northern tribes to support the YAR military. As many as 30,000 tribal irregulars descended on the central and border provinces south of Sana'a. The prospect of an extended stay by rampaging Zaydi tribesmen of the Islamic Front in the predominantly Shafai south quickly dried up local support for the insurgency.[166] In comparison, dealing with the government in Sana'a now seemed like a far more attractive option. Saleh also compromised, offering conditional amnesty to NDF members and allowing them to participate as individuals in YAR politics.[167]

What ensued was a period of relative calm in southern Arabia that included closer Saudi ties with the YAR and PDRY. Despite setbacks, Saudi Arabia had achieved its primary goal — namely, preventing the unification of the Yemens and defeating the NDF. The PDRY under Prime Minister Muhammad had moderated its activities in the region; and the Soviets, anxious to prevent the moderate Arabs of the Gulf from adopting an anti-Soviet stance as a result of Afghanistan, had strengthened Muhammad's political hand. The PDRY, while still unacceptable politically, had become at least tolerable to Riyadh. Then in January 1986, Ali Nasser Muhammad attempted to eliminate his rivals in the YSP. After 2 weeks of fighting, Ali Nasser and his supporters fled to the YAR. A new group of civilian Hadramis — Ali Salim Al-Bid, Haydar Abu Bakr al-Attas, and Yasin Said Nu'man — took control of the party and state. More clashes

Despite setbacks, Saudi Arabia had achieved its primary goal — namely, preventing the unification of the Yemens and defeating the NDF.

Figure 12. The tribes in the Wadi Jawf have historically resisted control from Sana'a. When asked about Yemen, one stated, "This isn't Yemen. Yemen is over the mountain pointing toward Sana'a."

occurred between the YAR and PDRY near the new oil exploration sites in the Wadi Jawf near Marib in 1988.

On the eve of unification, the YAR government appeared more chaotic than the party-dominated system in the south, but under the surface, the political and legal systems had similar key attributes. "The two legal systems shared a common trait: the presence of extra judicial military and security courts that needed no charge, warrant, or hearing to detain, imprison, or even execute dissidents." Both security apparatuses were trained by the East Germans and the Iraqis and accounted for over half of state spending.[168]

For the YAR government, the discovery of oil in the Wadi Jawf and its development by Hunt Oil promised the possibility of a new era of prosperity and development.[169] This newfound source of economic stability, coupled with the weakened state of the PDRY, created an environment in which the YAR government was no longer dependent on Saudi largess. It was just this independence that the Saudis had struggled long and hard to prevent. Long-simmering resentment of Saudi pressure and trips to Riyadh, hat in hand to ask for aid, did little to reduce underlying resentment. In 1985, the YAR moved troops into the Jawf to suppress the tribes threatening the oil supplies, and the Saudis moved troops to a location near the Jawf historically viewed as Yemeni territory.

The oil wealth provided Sana'a with the independence to support itself without the Saudis and the funds to expand its patronage in areas where Saudi payments had traditionally dominated.[170] It also provided a flash point as the Saudis staked claims to areas in the Hadramawt, the PDRY oil region in Shabwa, and a part of the YAR.[171] In the late 1980s, the YAR embraced a call by Saddam Hussein's Iraq for Arab unity and a realignment of the wealth of the Arab world. In February 1989, the Arab Cooperation Council — comprised of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and the YAR — was formed. "The Saudis … were appalled."[172] The Saleh regime began talks with Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt that a just distribution of oil was a potential nightmare.

The Emergence of the ROY

The most blatant example of this new found independence came in the form of unification. The very process that the Saudis had thwarted for two decades resulted from the unanticipated collapse of the Soviet Union. In November 1989, the other shoe fell. In Aden, they saw the new direction that Gorbachev had in mind for the Soviet Union; the YSP General Secretary Ali Salim al-Al-Bid unilaterally announced that the draft unity agreement of 1981 between the PDRY and YAR would be the subject of a national referendum. The pending loss of Soviet support drove Al-Bid to move toward unity while he still had cards to play. A surprised Saleh quickly accepted. The upshot was the creation of the ROY in May 1990 with Saleh as president and Al-Bid as vice president. The new constitution called for free elections and a multiparty system.

Underscoring how divided Yemen actually was, more than 40 parties participated. There were three major parties:

a. General Peoples' Party (GPC) belonging to Saleh
b. YSP under al-Bid (basically the ruling party in the PDRY)
c. *Hizb al-Islah* (Reform Party) basically composed of Islamists and tribalists headed by Hashid Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar with substantial Saudi backing.

The significantly smaller secular parties were the Ba'th and the Nasserists.

The result was predictable; the GPC with *Islah* as a partner won in the north and west, and the YSP won in the south and east. The YSP with its Soviet era heritage did not do as well as expected in the Shafai areas of the YAR. The Shafais living in the YAR were either traditional tribalists that opposed the social PDRY government for ideological and religious reasons or

business leaders that opposed for ideological and economic reasons. Although something of an over simplification, two Yemens emerged — one southern, secular, and Shafai and one northern, traditional, and Zaydi. "Neither of the two leading parties had thus managed to attract a substantial constituency in the previous geographic domain of the other."[173] Government positions were divided between the major groups, and the unity government was far from united.

Just as the new unified state emerged, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Because Saleh had close ties to Saddam Hussein, including a palace for personal use in Iraq, he could not bring himself to denounce Saddam. As one U.S. official put it, "Saleh appeared to be enamored, perhaps enthralled would be a better term, with Saddam's ability to control Iraq and his attitudes toward other Arab states particularly Saudi Arabia."[174] It did not help when Yemen television redrew its weather maps to include large areas of Saudi Arabia including Asir and Najran.[175] As a result, the new ROY found it was ostracized by the Gulf states, and most of its foreign workers were expelled. Palestinians paid a similar price because of Yasir Arafat's stand. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis and loss of the remittances created an economic crisis that even the oil revenues could not offset. The riyal dropped from 30 to almost 160 to the dollar. "Saudi Arabia, already discontented if not alarmed by unification before the war, turned more fiercely than any against Yemen's government, and the dislike of Saudi rulers for Yemen's president gained the coloring of feud."[176] Saudi support for Yemen and the Palestinians had not bought their appreciation and loyalty; rather the war brought out "their true feelings." As Yemenis departed Saudi Arabia, they told their employers, "When we come back, we'll be occupying your houses." In Lacey's view, "It was the revolt of the have-nots who had long resented the Saudi blend of windfall wealth and self-righteousness."[177]

Just as the new unified state emerged, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Because Saleh had close ties … he could not bring himself to denounce Saddam.

External problems aside, unification offered a real opportunity to reform the YAR government particularly in the areas of finance and development. While blame lay with the former officials of both states, most of the problem lay with President Saleh and his tribal Zaydi supporters. They did not intend to give up the levers of powers either financial or police and military because their rule had been built and preserved by controlling them. In addition, the

inhabitants of Aden were not happy with North Yemen. They realized that the new oil finds in the south would constitute more than 40 percent of Yemen's reserves and would have supported South Yemen's smaller population well if not taken by the north. Growing disaffection in the south with the Zaydi-dominated north, coupled with the YSP disappointing showing in the April 1993 elections, created additional animosity. In 1994, the frictions resulted in an open revolt and secession movement led by al-Bid.[178]

Seeing an opportunity to undermine Saleh, Saudi Arabia backed the Aden secession; they supported it with an estimated billion dollars in arms and aid. The U.S., mistakenly believing that unity meant stability, backed the YAR government. The YAR campaign pounded Aden into submission. Observers stated that the YAR military, former PDRY exiles loyal to Ali Nasser Muhammad, and Islamist militias treated the inhabitants of Aden so harshly that the seeds of future discord were permanently embedded into the fabric of society.[179] In reality, the seeds had taken root centuries before. One senior Arab diplomat stated, "Rather than treating the Adenis with generosity in defeat and building a new unified state, the Sana'a government acted as a conquering army full of triumphalism."[180] "Many drew parallels between the 1948 sack of Sana'a and that of Aden in 1994."[181] Nevertheless, Saleh had thwarted southern secession and once again, Saudi opposition to a unified Yemen. The obvious casualty of the war was the remote hope of integrating the two Yemens into a democratic state.[182]

Summary

Unification and the Civil War of 1994 are often seen as the triumph of modernism and Yemeni nationalism. It was in fact the triumph of *republican tribalism* based on the historical Zaydi exceptionalism of the north. Particularly by some in the U.S., it was viewed as political progress that could lead to the emergence of a modern Yemen state with democratic institutions. Subsequent events would show the naiveté of this progressive view. In the south, it was viewed first with trepidation and then in many circles as little more than a disastrous return to tribalism. Adenis complained, "Through 130 years of British rule and 30 years of socialist rule, we learned the forms of a developed state. We can't accept going back to tribal rule." What the Adenis complained about was not traditional tribal rule but rather the tribal, clan, and client relations within the neopatriarchy of rule from Sana'a. The key levers of power belong to a historical Zaydi model. Power is based on family, clan, tribal ties, and

finally patronage that focus on a broader circle of prominent Zaydi tribal and government leaders and only then extends to other individuals and groups.[183]

Underlying the secessionist movement of 1994 is the fundamental proposition that no civil nationalist identity exists in Yemen. Multiple Yemens are fundamentally in conflict. At its simplest, coastal and upland Yemen is fundamentally different from highland Yemen. Ali Abdullah Saleh faces the same dilemma as other rulers in the region. He can rule through family, clan, and tribe or he can go the way of Hamdi. Power now centers on the Zaydi military and security establishment focused around the family and Sanhan tribe of President Saleh. Next the tribalists of the Hashid and Bakil confederations — particularly leaders like the former paramount sheikh of the Hashid, Abdullah al-Ahmar — were co-opted or neutralized through patronage. Finally, the Zaydi tribal power centers have for one reason or another been largely excluded from the patron-client arrangement exemplified by their conflict with the Saleh regime. These groups include the Huthis of the Sa'da region who see themselves as Zaydis of the old *sayyid* class — descendants of the Prophet. These competing, conflicting centers of power are the reality of post-1994 Yemen — a Yemen that any of the rulers of the past would instantly recognize, a Yemen in which central authority often merely competes for influence and some degree of control.

7. Yemen, a Nation-State?

An examination of contemporary Yemen underscores the continuity of the political and societal paradigm that has driven three millennia of Yemeni history. The term nation-state is an absolute misnomer. A *nation-state* as defined by Weber has never existed in southern Arabia.[184] By any definition, Yemen today resembles those Yemens of the past far more than it does a nation-state with a civic national identity. The Yemeni governments or central authority have always shared that authority and territorial control to a high degree with tribal elements, direct internal foreign influence, and at times other competing political groups. In fact, the only historical entities that approached the status of a nation-state were the southern Yemen Rasulids of the 13th century and the PDRY with its system of single party rule under the NF; however, even in these two cases, the argument is problematic. The fractured nature of Yemeni society and politics makes it impossible to control by either Yemenis or certainly by foreigners; therefore, the history of southern Arabia, like that of Afghanistan, is littered with the bones and treasure of those trying to change or control it. Political rule in Yemen is personal, and survival is the only measure of success. Successful Yemen rulers, those who survive, are experts at playing internal and external groups against one another to extract political support, funding, or arms; they are on no one's side but their own. By these criteria, Ali Abdullah Saleh ranks with the greatest rulers of Yemen.

The Nature of Rule and Prosperity: ROY, 1994 to the Present

Ali Abdullah Saleh's survival, although surprising, did not reorder the Yemeni political landscape. The unification of 1994 did not create a nation-state; 1994 was an occupation. The ROY is still unstable and fractured. Whatever prosperity that exists is distributed through a patronage system focused on family, clan, and tribe first and political alliances second. This statement is not an indictment of the Saleh regime. President Saleh's actions reflect the way one stays in power in Yemen; it was a matter of political survival. The south became a conquered prize to be divvied up among supporters and family members. Political patronage as practiced by Saleh fits almost exactly Hisham Sharabi's description of *neopatriarchy*:

> Despite all ideological appearances, the individual's basic affiliation in "modernized," neopatriarchal society is to the family, the clan, the ethnic or religious group. For the common person in this society the concept of society or fatherland is an abstraction, which has meaning only when reduced to the primordial significations of kinship and religion. . . . This practice strengthens both personal loyalty and dependence, cultivated early within the family, and bolsters them within the larger social whole in a system of patronage and the distribution of favor and protection.[185]

This system of patronage has to some degree blurred the social lines between historically distinct groups — merchant, sheikh, the military, and "modernists." However, the lines still lead back to the basic power centers that have dominated Yemen for centuries. In addition, they include many of the most influential members of the Yemeni opposition. For example, in 1997, President Saleh — the military officer — became a partner in "Hayl Sa'id Enterprises, the best known of Yemen's industrial and commercial companies." Members of the president's family and his allies have prospered through other commercial and economic opportunities that include pharmaceuticals, tobacco, the national airline, and other enterprises. As a result, "Ordinary Yemenis, with their fields and their little shops, simply do not have access to much of the national wealth." In fairness to Saleh, the same system persists throughout the region, but when the economic pie to be divided is much smaller as in Yemen, the impact is much more noticeable. In the arena of financial investment, investment security depended not on rule of law but on the relationship to the president's entourage of family and supporters or to someone who needs to be bought off.[186]

Political power and patronage tended to work in parallel. The president's sons and daughters are intermarried within the family, clan, and tribal leadership with an eye to strengthening the core of regime support. In 1999, the president made his son Ahmad Ali Abdullah commander of the Special Forces. Brigadier Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, a relative of the president, opposed Ahmad's growing influence and was ordered out of the capital and given the difficult task of suppressing the Huthi revolt. Palace watching — guessing who was in and who was out and who would be the likely successor to the president — has become as pronounced as it was under Imam Ahmad. There were also other comparisons. For example, Imam Ahmad was believed to have

secreted chests of gold and silver in his fortress palaces; today's speculation centers on the belief that members of the Saleh regime are storing the mass wealth in foreign bank accounts.[187]

A striking similarity between the Hamid al-Din imamate and the Saleh regime has been the issue of succession. Saleh gave all appearances of grooming his son Ahmad bin Ali Saleh, the commander of the Special Forces. The *republican monarchy* is a new phenomenon in the Middle East. It was tried in Iraq, Egypt, and Libya; it worked in Syria; and all indications were that Saleh intended to install his son in Yemen. In November 2009, Sheikh Hamid Abdullah al-Ahmar publicly accused the Ahmad bin Ali Saleh of using his republican guards to support Zaydi tribal rebels against troops under the command of Ali Muhsin Al-Ahmar, who is not a close relative of the Hashid al-Ahmars but a political ally. Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar opposed Ahmad Saleh's rise to power ostensibly because he believes that Ahmad is not capable of holding the country together but more likely because ambition and personal reasons. Hamid al-Ahmar, the brother of Sadiq al-Ahmar — paramount sheikh of the Hashid confederation, told *Al-Jazeera*, "The state no longer exists except in the Presidential Palace and in the capital."[188] He accused the president, saying: "If Saleh wants the people of Yemen to be on his side against monarchy and defend national unity, he himself must quit pursuing monarchy." He also called upon Saleh to leave office and not try to enthrone his son.[189]

Many Yemenis, including some supporters of the regime, do not want to see a perpetuation of "pervasive corruption that favors Mr. Saleh's own clan."[190] President Saleh's attempt to pass the presidency on to his son became a rallying point for opposition to the regime. During the first half of the 20th century, establishing hereditary rule had undermined tribal and societal support for the Hamid Al Din monarchy and became a flashpoint for opposition to the imamate. It ran counter to Zaydi traditions, which in many respects the post-1962 republican traditions continued to reflect. As shared in Chapter 3, the most capable sayyid was to be the next imamate. It did not have to be a family member. In Yemen, a certain equalitarianism exists, which is not to be confused with democratic principles; the equalitarianism was violated by the succession policies of the Hamid Al Din and those that Saleh intended. Corruption, economic stagnation, social ossification, and the succession issue alienated the Zaydi sayyid families, created political and tribal unrest, and provided the catalyst that ended the monarchy. Today the Zaydi cultural prejudice against hereditary rule at the top when coupled with more liberal

democratic and secular ideas and Shafai opposition is a potent political mixture. Saleh's attempt to anoint his son was viewed as a blatant attempt to preserve the increasingly corrupt regime. It became a politically explosive issue that united many military, tribal political leaders, and the more politically liberal opposition groups against the regime.

The Saleh Regime and the Future

For Saleh, the issue became succession — not the war in the north, secession in the south, or the battle against Al Qaeda. This focus may prove to have been his undoing. Saleh concluded (or perhaps competing Yemeni leaders concluded) that the only way to perpetuate the regime he created was to hand power to his son Ahmad. The real issue for Yemen is not the person of Ali Abdullah Saleh but rather the future of his regime. It became an extension of his personal struggle to survive, no mean feat in itself. As one of his most vociferous critics — Hamid al-Ahmar — stated, "This man, Saleh, he never had any sort of strategic thinking or vision — his strategy from Day 1 was to remain in power."[191] Obviously, al-Ahmar is too young to remember Yemen in the 1970s and what real instability was like. Saleh is the exception — few rulers have survived a decade in Yemen much less three. The regime includes many of his current detractors. The al-Ahmar family and the Hashid Confederation are enormous beneficiaries of the regime as are co-opted Shafai politicians — Abdul Majid al-Zindani, the radical Sunni cleric; military commanders; and Saleh's relatives (e.g., Ali Mushin al-Ahmar and Ahmad Saleh). The regime is pervasive. It does not end with a change at the top, and it does not see an existential threat from any of these elements.[192]

The conflict with the Huthis in the north is most important because the inability to deal with an internal Zaydi issue constitutes more a political black eye than the issue of Al Qaeda. It will not disappear. Perhaps more important than anything else is the favoritism shown to the Hashid Confederation. It is not about control in the far north *per se*; the government in Sana'a has never controlled the Sada'a. The Huthi revolt represents a fracturing of the Zaydi community's support for the Saleh regime now further complicated by the opposition of the al-Ahmars paramount Hashid Confederation leaders. In addition, General Ali Mushin al-Ahmar has moved to the opposition as well. Being a split in the army, it reflects to one degree or another tribal and clan loyalties within the military — a tribes or factions with uniforms phenomenon.

ROY officials simply do not believe Al Qaeda can threaten the regime and the idea that the regime can reap millions in aid in return for capturing radicalized Shafai Yemenis and Yemeni-Americans who oppose the regime for any number of other reasons. Al Qaeda provides a solid piece of leverage for getting U.S. aid and support. As for the separatist movement in the south, the ability of the military to maintain control — particularly in oil-producing regions of the old PDRY — is important; however, here too the sparse population in most of the critical areas has led ROY officials to conclude that the problem is manageable. One official stated, "We are not going to collapse and talk of a Somalia-like collapse; that is nonsense, but we do like all of the attention because it means that we get a better hearing when we ask for aid."[193] So what does this mean? The Yemenis seem less concerned than Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and others in the region about their situation but are enormously keen to increase military and economic aid, although to what end?

The regional situation further complicated Saleh's position. Events in Tunisia and Egypt have fueled calls for change in Yemen. On 3 February 2011, in a move to preempt anticipated opposition, Saleh publicly announced that he will not seek reelection or attempt to place his son in the president's office. He then moved to recoup his position with the Zaydi tribal leaders and gain more Saudi support. Imams Yahya and Ahmad would have absolutely agreed with his strategy. Assuming that Saleh does leave, it will be the fracturing of his alliance with the Zaydi tribes — not the influence of erstwhile opposition — that drives him from power. The next president will almost certainly be from the Zaydi tribal, military, and security entourage that he has created or be a puppet with those elements remaining the real power behind the scenes. The next president will also require the support of the Hashid and Bakil confederation tribes as well as additional support from Saudi Arabia. It will in large part be composed of elements of the Saleh regime without Saleh. In Yemen, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

On 3 February 2011 … Saleh publicly announced that he will not seek reelection or attempt to place his son in the president's office.

The protesters quoted in news reports were from the Islah party.[194] Islah's founder and former head was Abdullah al-Ahmar, the paramount sheikh of the Hashid confederation and erstwhile ally of President Saleh; thus one interpretation would hold that the Hashid are using recent events to reassert

tribal influence, which has waned to some degree in Sana'a since Abdullah al-Ahmar's death in 2004. The chances for a fundamental revolution are virtually nonexistent. Yemen's next rulers, either overt or from behind the scenes, will have the following elements:

a. Be from the military or security service or have their backing
b. Be Zaydi with republican credentials
c. Be Hashid or possibly (but unlikely) from Bakil tribe or a *sayyid* family
d. Have Hashid and to a lesser extent Bakil backing
e. Be ultimately opposed by southern Shafai separatists, disaffected Zaydi tribal elements, and radical Sunni jihadists
f. Have at least the tacit support of Riyadh.

If a non-Zaydi or civilian becomes a compromise or interim president, which is a remote possibility, it will be relatively short-lived and only with the backing of the stated elements of political community.

The one new wrinkle in Sana'a could be the relationship with the United States. In an interview on CBS's *60 Minutes*, General Yahya Saleh, commander of Yemeni Central Security Forces and nephew of President Saleh, made it clear that the ROY government saw no role for U.S. forces on the ground. In response to an interviewer's question about the unpopularity of the U.S. in Yemen, he responded, "The U.S. is unpopular in the region and Yemen is a part of the region." In the same program, ROY Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi underscored the view that direct U.S. involvement was unacceptable — that is, the involvement created more problems. Al-Qirbi also stated there was "no evidence" to support U.S. allegations that Abdul Majid al-Zindani, the most powerful Sunni cleric in Yemen, is a key supporter of terrorism.[195]

Many in the region, including Saudi Arabia, question the efficacy of U.S. direct involvement and particularly drone strikes, arguing that they provide a recruiting tool and create significantly more radicals than they kill. Any Yemeni government must calculate the benefits of U.S. aid, particularly in the form of training and equipment, to the forces under the command of close family members — who are the ultimate insurance for the regime — and the liability associated with his current Washington relationship. It may well be that the debit column is quickly outpacing the benefits. There is a tipping point at which a new Yemeni government could decide that the U.S. relationship in its current form is politically too expensive. Assuming Saleh's departure, there will even be those who argue that his close relationship with Washington was

his undoing. Al Qaeda is only important in Sana'a if it threatens the established order, and many do not see it as a serious threat when compared to southern secession or the Huthi revolt. United States security problems and priorities are by definition not the same as those of the ROY.

The reading of Yemeni policy, along with its implications for the future, requires a hard look back. For roughly three millennia, Yemeni leaders — particularly the successful ones, survivors — managed a balancing act. Saleh was absolutely correct when he compared it to "dancing on the heads of snakes." Yemeni rulers lived in a fluctuating political environment caught between external pressures and internal conflicts. The survivors utilized family, clan, tribal, and patronage circles of support that protected them to one degree or another from any number of forces that could unseat them. President Saleh has merely been another of the more competent survivors in this tradition. The central issue was always his personal and family survival above all else whether in Yemen or exile. Saleh has shown political acumen that is astounding. His entire patronage network has an interest in seeing his regime, if not his actual rule, perpetuated. Even many of his opponents want to see the survival of the current system, just under different leadership. The al-Ahmars benefited enormously in the Saleh regime. Hamid al-Ahmar's wealth to a significant degree resulted from business transactions blessed by Saleh; the people in the opposition with wealth and power are not really talking about "revolution" but rather realignment largely within the current elites.

Even many of his [Saleh's] opponents want to see the survival of the current system, just under different leadership.

In the case of Al Qaeda, the regime's handling of the USS *Cole* bombing — including the commuted sentences, the eventual escape from a maximum security prison in 2006, and then the house parole of recaptured perpetrators — provides a strong indication of the Yemeni government's real views on Al Qaeda. In the immediate aftermath of the *Cole* bombing, a debate occurred within the inner circles of the ROY government concerning the depth to which it should become involved with anti-Al Qaeda operations and cooperation with the United States. Ghalib al-Qamish, the head of the Political Security Organization and Saleh's long-time associate for national security, opposed becoming enmeshed too deeply in U.S. efforts against Al Qaeda, arguing that it was an American problem; they should not make it a Yemeni one.[196] According to Clark, "Helping to explain why the *jihadi* threat

was very far from the top of any Yemeni agenda was the fact that Yemen's security service, the Political Security Office, was itself a bastion of anti-Western, tending to pro-jihadist feelings." It was staffed by Afghan war veterans who had transferred their hatred of the Soviets to the West and by Iraqi trained officers who hated the West because of the humiliation of the first Gulf War.[197] As others have pointed out, "Yemen began releasing terrorists under presidential pardons and through a questionable rehabilitation program."[198] No matter how aggravating or reprehensible the U.S. may view this attitude, it is nothing if not practical.

From a Yemeni perspective, Al Qaeda's real threat to the Sana'a regime comes not from its potential to topple the Zaydi-dominated government but rather from its ability to damage the economic condition — that is, oil infrastructure — and perhaps to gain support among the disaffected Sunni Shafais in the south. Thus as pressure periodically builds for the ROY to do something about Al Qaeda, the ROY asks for more security assistance and aid. It then launches operations that never gain control of the problem because given the environment, controlling the problem is impossible. Southern Shafai resentment toward northern Zaydi domination and the remote areas of the old PDRY offer an almost perfect refuge for small Al Qaeda cells. Starved of government funds and economic opportunity by what they view as the Zaydi occupation — backed by what radicals labeled as the Zionist-supporting Americans and their clients the Saudis — Al Qaeda payments for protection are no doubt difficult to refuse particularly in the more remote areas. It takes no particular talent to make this sale.

The southern movement for independence could complicate matters. If it turns violent, tenuous government control will be further eroded in the south and east and more ungoverned territory will be created. Recently, the southern leaders ended their calls for independence opting instead to join the cacophony of calls for Saleh's ouster. Their problems have not been addressed. The calculation is simple; with Saleh gone, their options multiply and their goal of independence from northern control comes closer. As noted in previous chapters, the PDRY, while ruled by a monolithic party, constituted a sea of competing factions just below the surface. In 1994, the Saleh regime added to that mix Islamists of varying stripes, exiles with scores to settle, and northern military officers seeking rewards for conquest. Continued lack of success in establishing anything approaching civil society is virtually guar-

anteed. Reports state that police in many southern areas will not wear their uniforms for fear of assassination.[199]

The government explanation for this fear is that control takes different forms in Yemen. The control is often not direct but rather regularly exercised indirectly through tribes and other forms. "It does not have to be direct."[200] The anticipation is that at some point deals will have to be struck with tribal and other groups in an effort to protect the oil-producing areas. This situation will only become more complicated in the future. It is unlikely that any government in Sana'a will be able to satisfy southern demands, which revolve around issues like land and oil that the Zaydi north has expropriated. Giving up either would undermine any ROY regime; while a period of national solidarity and self-congratulation will follow Saleh's departure, the conflicts that face the ROY today will resume. There are fundamental conflicts between political, regional, and sectarian groups and a lack of resources to address them.

Saleh could not change Yemen, nor can anyone else. Assuming that he disappears, a new set of Zaydi military leaders would emerge, initially with a compromise military or even possibly a figurehead civilian as president. After a period of internal political intrigue and instability, but not collapse, the Zaydi establishment — represented by elements of the military, the tribes, and other groups — would either continue to dominate through a merry-go-round of military presidents or more unlikely spawn another Saleh:

a. While government control would almost certainly contract, the core Zaydi-dominated military control would remain.
b. Shafais resentment in the south and east would remain.
c. Yemen's inability to control its territory would remain.
d. The struggles within the Zaydi tribal structure, exemplified by the Huthi issue, would remain.
e. The autonomy of the tribal structure would continue to provide an alternative authority. As one author put it, "the appeal of tribalism and religion are not only ideological, for each is also a system of law capable of functioning in the absence of a state."[201]
f. The problem of providing security for the petroleum infrastructure would remain.
g. The problem of rapidly decreasing water resources would remain.
h. Saudi influence in Yemen political affairs would remain.
i. Yemen as a staging area for radical Sunni jihadists would remain.

Lines and shading on a map do not constitute a state. There have always been multiple Yemens with fundamental social, cultural, and sectarian differences; to view it in any other way sets a considerable stumbling block in the way of creating, much less executing, a coherent strategy or policy. A senior Egyptian military officer — commenting on the ability of any outsider to influence or significantly alter the political, economic, or social conditions in Yemen — stated that given Egypt's experience in Yemen, "Nasser learned the hard way. We have no illusions about changing the place; Yemen is what it is and we accept that. There is no alternative." [202]

The Yemeni Opposition

The fundamental problem with change, much less *revolutionary* change, in Yemen is the intrinsic political, social, and economic structure of the country. The opposition is an absolute reflection of the conflicts residual to this structure. As Saleh's grip on power has slipped, this situation has only worsened with new opposition groups emerging that in fact represent elements of the regime jumping ship in an effort to preserve their influence. The opposition is now represented by what has been described as the *formal* opposition, the opposition within the military, and what can only be termed the *internal regime* opposition.

The formal opposition, or Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), is composed of six loosely aligned parties whose interests are so diverse as to almost preclude any real long-term cooperation in a post-Saleh era:

a. The largest party *al-Islah* is closely associated with the al-Ahmar family and the Zaydi tribalists. It is an Islamist party with Salafist rhetoric but lacks a coherent ideological stance. In short, religion provides the terminology but a coherent ideological base is lacking. In fact, the only reason that al-Islah is in the opposition is because of a falling out between the al-Ahmars and Saleh and the deterioration of its place in the state-sponsored patronage system.[203] For example, Hamid al-Ahmar — the third son of Abdullah al-Ahmar, the former paramount sheikh of the Hashid confederation, and during his lifetime the second most powerful man in Yemen — owns a highly successful mobile phone network that has made him a billionaire. This wealth and that of his family is due in no small part to the Saleh regime and its patronage system.[204] Thus, assuming Saleh departs, this very powerful family that

also enjoys Saudi support and is a former integral part of the regime will hardly seek a revolutionary change in the Yemeni political system.

b. Al-Islah is aligned with the *Yemen Socialist Party,* the former partner of the Saleh regime from 1990 to 1994 with its secular largely South Yemen-based support headed by Yassin Numan, whose family opposed both Imams Yahya and Ahmed. The group also includes the Arab nationalist parties, the *Nasserites* and the *Ba'th Party*, both of which have a history of opposition to tribal-based power and influence.[205]

c. The last two parties are *al-Hizb al-Haqq* and the *Union of Popular Forces Party*. The Hizb al-Haqq is the party of the Zaydi sayyids and has expanded its influence to include the Ministry of Religious Endowments. It is based in the Zaydi strongholds of Hajja and the Huthi north around Sada'a. The influence of this party has grown as the situation between Saleh and the al-Ahmars and thus al-Islah worsened. In addition, the Sada'a and thus Huthi connection does not bode well for future relationships with the non-sayyid al-Ahmars. The last group, the Union of Popular Forces, is an almost entirely foreign-based Zaydi party with only limited presence in Yemen. Most of its members reside either in the United States or Saudi Arabia.[206] The alliance of these parties had largely a single goal — that is, to prevent Saleh from playing one against the other. In a Yemen without Saleh, their interests diverge significantly and they share almost nothing in common ideologically. The implications are obvious — cooperation will likely be very short-lived.

There has been much talk about the military opposition to the Saleh regime. Almost all of it has centered on the person of Brigadier Ali Mushin al-Ahmar. While al-Ahmar is not one of the Hashid confederation shiekh al-Ahmars, he has been closely aligned with them, particularly as a result of the Huthi rebellion in the north. Brigadier al-Ahmar has had responsibility for war in the north. The feud between the Huthi and the al-Ahmar sheikhs has been the prominent feature of that conflict, placing the brigadier and the shiekhs on the same side politically. In addition, they were avowed opponents of Ahmad Saleh's succession to the presidency. Brigadier al-Ahmar saw Saleh's continuation in office as promoting a political and a military rival. Like the Hashid shiekh al-Ahmars, the brigadier was very much a part and beneficiary of the Saleh regime. His opposition to Saleh was personal. He is not a revolutionary who wants to see fundamental change in the Saleh system and in

a post-Saleh world, he will likely be the most influential commander in the military. Conflicts reflecting tribal and personal loyalties will likely emerge in the military as they have in the past; it is fundamental to the Yemeni system. It was exactly the same type of conflicts that brought the turmoil of the 1970s and the rise of Saleh. The military has a key position in the Yemeni political framework since the revolution of 1962, and no one should expect them to relinquish that role now — Saleh or no Saleh.

Now, with Saleh's apparent coming departure, another political grouping has emerged, the *Justice and Development Bloc*. The new party is headed by Muhammad Abu Lahum. Sinan Abu Lahum was the long-time paramount sheikh of the Bakil tribal confederation, the second most powerful tribal group in Yemen. The new group represents officials and tribal elements tied to the regime who have gone over to the opposition. It includes a number of parliamentarians and former and current ministers.[207] Whether or not this sudden conversion to the opposition represents an attack of conscience or perhaps more likely a pragmatic, self-serving (or perhaps self-preserving) maneuver, some of these figures represent powerful Zaydi tribal interests that will also have a role in defining any post-Saleh future. Like the al-Ahmars and the military, it is unlikely that they envision a true revolution in which the limited largess that the state has to bestow is divided at their expense.

Yemen also has the separatist or revolting groups:

a. The southern separatists have announced their support for the opposition and that they have for the time being dropped the demand for southern independence. This show of unity is almost certainly a political calculation with no intention of foregoing long-term demands for independence. Without Saleh, the conqueror of the south in 1994, the separatists no doubt believe that their goal is more attainable. The likely weakness of the central government following a Saleh departure would also contribute to the program. The separatist move to support the opposition will evaporate once Saleh is gone. In the north, Saleh's departure will have little if any effect on their situation. The hated al-Ahmars and the Hashid will still have a powerful role in the government. Brigadier Ali Mushin al-Ahmar will likely have a more powerful position in the military, and the Hizb al-Haqq could lose its position and influence in a new government. It is difficult to see a situation in

which the Huthis would be more likely to cooperate with a post-Saleh regime that they would likely view as worse.

b. If Zindani acquires a more influential position within a new government and the government reinstates the truce that Brigadier al-Ahmar maintained with them during the middle of the last decade, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its Sunni tribal supporters might lessen their activities directed against a new government. That would be very bad news for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and their efforts to control AQAP's attempts to destabilize the region.

Given this situation, the question is not so much can the opposition mount a revolution but rather will they choose to mount one. The answer is almost certainly no. The most influential elements that will constitute a new government have been in fact part and parcel of the Saleh regime. While changes will occur, they will be superficial and most likely temporary. The al-Ahmars and the Hashid will not relinquish their power or tribal prerogatives and will move to recover any influence lost during their estrangement from Saleh. Despite divisions, the army will protect the privileged position that it has held for the past 50 years. This protection does not mean that faction or conflict will not occur within the military as in the past. Whatever military leadership emerges will jealously guard its power and eventually reclaim the presidency in the event that a nonmilitary president emerges.

While changes will occur, they will be superficial and most likely temporary.

The large demonstrations in the cities of the non-Zaydi coastal plain are hardly surprising. From a cultural, sectarian, and even ethnic point of view, these areas comprise a different Yemen that is neither Zaydi nor a key player in the military-security elite. In one form or another, they are largely Sunni Shafaii and have viewed themselves as little more than occupied by tribal-dominated Zaydi Yemen. These demonstrations — no matter how large — represent just another in the long line of contractions of central political control in Yemen driven by political and economic marginalization by the government in Sana'a. Saleh — like other Yemeni leaders before him — has survived these types of contractions before, only to reassert control or influence at a later date. What makes the current situation different is that Saleh has lost the support of important elements in the Zaydi-dominated military and among the Zaydi tribes of the Hashid Confederation and their leadership

the al-Ahmars. These elements have traditionally been the core of Zaydi-dominated rule in central Yemen. It is the fragmentation or defection of the Zaydi and military core that threatens the regime, not the size of the street demonstrations. The unrest could be managed to one degree or another but not without military and Zaydi tribal solidarity.

Other political elements in Yemen will also maintain their influence. The Bakil tribes must be included in any power-sharing. The key Shafai political and tribal leaders must also have a share. With some deletions and some additions, the post-Saleh political system will very closely resemble the Saleh regime. Even a free election will not change that reality. After the euphoria of a Saleh departure, the reality of Yemen's limited economic resources and fractured society will bring the country back to the reality of its stunted and fractured political, economic, and cultural structure. Many Yemenis will likely actually look back on the Saleh era with all its problems and conflicts as a period of unrivaled stability and prosperity. What they have to look forward to is the Saleh regime without Saleh to balance the interests.

Saudi Arabia's Interests and Future of the Yemens' East

On his deathbed, Ibn Saud is purported to have warned his sons Saud and Feisal, two future kings, that nothing but trouble would come from Yemen. For Saudi Arabia, the Yemens are an ongoing critical strategic consideration; ignoring Yemen is not an option. Yemen is primarily a Saudi issue. There is a history of border disputes, including relatively recent Saudi claims to the Hadramawt and petroleum-producing regions. In the south and east, many of the separatists are Salafist Hanbali and Shafai Islamists who have long enjoyed Riyadh's support. But for the British, Saudi Arabia would have conquered the Hadramawt, Tihama, and perhaps Aden in the 1930s. Currently, the Kingdom expresses strong support for the unity of Yemen — that is, the ROY regime under Saleh.[208] What unity means exactly is somewhat ambiguous. A unified Yemen, particularly in any post-Saleh period, might in fact be a federalized Yemen with significant local and regional — that is, southern autonomy. Saleh would have never agreed to it but a fractured, weakened post-Saleh regime might. If central government control contracts significantly — a distinct possibility of which the Saudis are well aware, then it is difficult to believe that they do not have a series of potential contingencies for the Hadramawt and eastern provinces in mind. If they do not, they should. Saudi largess in taming the region would likely be more influential than Sana'a's coercion.

These disputes are often overshadowed by what Yemeni officials sometimes refer to as "the special situation" — namely, the Kingdom's maintenance of a security zone deep into ROY territory through payments to tribal sheikhs and at times to key Yemeni officials.[209] It is an open secret that Saudi Arabia, through payments to tribal leaders, often has greater influence in the northern and eastern tribal areas than the government in Sana'a.[210] An ongoing debate concerns how much loyalty the Saudis actually buy. As one former U.S. official wryly put it; "the Saudis only have influence on the day that they pay the tribes." While Saudi payments do not buy absolute loyalty, in the Yemens — where funds were historically lacking — the payments buy useful, if not critical, influence.[211] Some have criticized Riyadh for meddling in Yemen's internal affairs, but such criticism ignores the reality of the alternative: it is not ROY government control but rather the totally uncontrolled tribal areas that pose a threat to regional security. The Saudi intelligence services demonstrated the usefulness of their involvement in Yemen in the fall of 2010; their warning foiled multiple attacks on airlines where bombs hidden in printers were mailed from Sana'a. It appears that without Saudi involvement, there would have been no warning.

Riyadh has been the *bête noir* for modernists, secularists, the imams, tribalists, and Yemeni governments, including that of Saleh; however, those who complain ignore the fact that Saudi Arabia has also been the source of critical aid and support for the YAR and now the ROY. In addition, Saudi aid to the tribes has often protected Saudi and Western interests. It has been a two-way street. The Yemenis have used the Saudis to gain influence and survive politically, and the Saudis have used Yemenis to enhance the Kingdom's security. Have their policies always created the best result either for the Kingdom or for Yemen? No, but to assume that without Riyadh's meddling the ROY would evolve into an open democratic state with liberal institutions and a stable economy is simply nonsense. At this point, the fact that Saleh has turned to the Saudis for support — given the history of political and even personal animosity with the Kingdom — is an indication of the stress within the regime. Make no mistake — while complaining about meddling, his successors will be asking for Riyadh's help. Ahmad al-Ahmar's accusation that the Saleh government only controls Sana'a because it has circled the city with 60,000 troops is no doubt an exaggeration, but only just.[212] Given this environment and the proximity to Saudi Arabia, it would be foolish on

the part of Riyadh not to create a security buffer and extend its influence as deeply into Yemen as possible.

Influence and alliances with the northern tribes — particularly the new leader of the Hashid Confederation, the son of Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, Sheikh Sadeq Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Ahmar — are particularly important. The elder al-Ahmar's alleged estrangement during his later years from the Saleh regime has been viewed as an indication of growing unhappiness in traditional tribal circles with the Saleh regime. The elder al-Ahmar's ability to take stances independent of the government in Sana'a was directly related to his personal stature and his ties with Riyadh.[213] Tribal structure looks different today, but power and influence among the tribes and in Sana'a are functions of family and patronage. As the situation worsens, the political, social, and economic stability of the north and east will depend on ties to the Saudi security apparatus and economy. It could very likely be the difference in the maintenance of relative stability in the tribal areas of the north and east over chaos.

This discussion leads to the issue of the Huthi revolt or insurrection in the north. The Sana'a government pejoratively described the revolt as *Huthi* to discredit its leadership. The leaders come from the al-Huthi *sayyid* family that has dominated the region for centuries. The Huthis have used their claim to a *sayyid* heritage as a mark of legitimacy in arguing that the Saleh regime has not only economically neglected the Sada'a region but also allied itself with Sunni Wahhabi and Salafist elements sponsored by Saudi Arabia in an attempt to destroy Yemen's legitimate Zaydi Shi'a heritage.

The Huthis are divided into four primary entities:

a. A small ideologically motivated group that is anti-Western and embraces Iran
b. Those defending the Hashemite/Zaydi identity
c. Armed tribal elements with financial motivations
d. Tribesmen defending their land and families against state-sponsored encroachment by rival tribes, most notably the Hashid.[214]

They argue that not only has the government attempted to award local land to its Wahhabi and Hashid supporters but also dispatched Brigadier Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, a Wahhabi sympathizer, to conduct literally "Operation Scorched Earth." Military operations have been unsuccessful and have managed only

to alienate a much larger swath of the population against the government in Sana'a.[215] This lack of success has hit the ROY government at a critical time. Falling government resources and the southern movement have constricted Sana'a's ability to spread its patronage. The inability of the government and its allies to quell the revolt has created a perception of weakness.

As the situation deteriorated and the Yemeni army failed to gain control, the government resorted to mediation. The normal internal Yemeni process failed, in part undermined by the death of Abdullah al-Ahmar. Hashid encroachments may have been part of the problem, but Sheikh Abdullah was a master at intertribal negotiations. At this point, the Qataris offered their good offices and mediators. The Qataris negotiated a settlement not only for the Huthi situation but also to provide economic and investment support. This solution brought an immediate Saudi response. The Saudis were already traumatized by the U.S. destruction of Sunni Iraq and the Iranian-backed Shi'a gains there as well as in Lebanon, with Sunni Hamas and agitation in the Gulf.

With Saleh's encouragement, Riyadh concluded that the Huthi problem was an Iranian-backed effort to undermine Saudi Arabia by providing weapons and financial support.[216] The optimism of the accord, signed between the government and the Huthis in Doha on 1 February 2008, quickly vanished as heavy fighting resumed.[217] Recently the Saudis have been arguing that there are ties between Al Qaeda and the Huthis; some believe it is an attempt to gain more U.S. support for what the Saudis view as their priority issue, Iranian support for the Huthi rebellion.[218] U.S. officials bluntly state that they see no indication of Iranian support for the Huthis and for what it is worth, Washington has prohibited the Yemeni government from using U.S.-supplied arms against the Huthis.[219] A new ceasefire is in place; however, no one knows for how long.

No matter what the merits of the Iranian argument, to a certain extent it is a replication of Saleh's Cold War tactics. Fear of the Soviets extracted aid and concessions from Riyadh and Washington. In addition, the ROY regime might well have used the possibility of a Qatari-brokered peace to leverage the Kingdom.[220] The Saudis want absolutely nothing to do with any compromise that might leave an Iranian-sponsored group on their border with Yemen. Given the Yemeni view of partnering — "How big is your checkbook? What are you doing for me?" — the Saleh regime walked away with billions in aid and copious amounts of military assistance and direct assistance in fighting the Huthis.[221] This situation occurred in spite of the fact that U.S. officials viewed

Saudi concerns about Iranian infiltration as alarmist and not supported by the facts on the ground. The U.S. concluded as follows:

a. Arms from Iran were totally unnecessary because the ROY army and tribal levies were more than willing to provide them directly to the Huthis.
b. Funding is likely occurring. The ROY, its tribal allies, and the Saudis blockaded the Huthis, who are unlikely to be particular about the source of funding.[222]

This U.S. assessment would lead to a significant U.S.-Saudi disconnect over Yemen policy. In late 2009, after the deaths of two Saudi border guards, Riyadh launched a bombing and special operations campaign against the Huthis. The incursion came as a surprise to the U.S. because of a failure to understand the degree of Saudi concern about the Huthi issue.[223] The Saudis attempted to establish a rebel-free zone on the Yemen side of the border and failed, leaving more than 100 Saudi soldiers and border security personnel dead.[224]The Saudis insisted they want a compromise solution that will bring peace to the northern border areas and any involvement with the Iranians must cease.

For Saudi Arabia, the fundamental security issue is that the northern tribes provide a critical security buffer against both threats and the potential for humanitarian chaos emanating from Yemen. The death of Abdullah al-Ahmar and the strife between rival Zaydi tribal factions threatened to undo that system. Coupled with the belief that Tehran is involved, it becomes an immediate, high priority problem. Another indication of the level of this concern is the willingness to commit its own forces — despite their relative inexperience at these types of operations — to the fray.[225] In addition, the Saudis are in the process of improving not only border control but also command and control for both police and military units along the entire Yemen border.[226]

Some observers call the Yemen government increasingly inefficient, not well governed, and with a widespread reputation for corruption and incompetence and view Riyadh's support as problematic.[227] While the Saudis are concerned about the problem of Al Qaeda in Yemen, they believe the Kingdom has the problem more or

While the Saudis are concerned about the problem of Al Qaeda in Yemen … they are far more concerned about Iranian influence in the region

less under control. Presently, they are far more concerned about Iranian influence in the region and are sure the Iranians are behind the Huthi revolt. The aid to Sana'a buys them a free hand in dealing with the Huthi problem. From a Saudi perspective, if the revolt is allowed to fester, it not only creates a potential Iranian proxy on the Saudi border but also encourages other pro-Iranian groups to attempt to undermine the Saudi state.[228]

The Saudis believe that the less overt U.S. involvement in Yemen, the better. They view independent U.S. action against Al Qaeda bases as risky and more likely to complicate security issues, by creating more recruits for the radical jihadists rather than contributing to their elimination. They argue that people who really know Yemen and their tribal allies or the government in Sana'a, all of whom have assets on the ground and good intelligence, are in a far better position to be effective.[229] The Saudis have three primary concerns:

a. U.S. actions might go awry as they have in the past.
b. Successful U.S. operations also create more recruits for the jihadis.
c. Unilateral U.S. operations would complicate their own efforts to garner support and cooperation in the Hadramawt and other tribal areas.

In short, the *lack of control* from Sana'a has created a zone in which the jihadists of all stripes survive and train and is unlikely to improve any time soon. Saudi influence and involvement, particularly in the south and east, might actually contribute to greater stability.

Saudi Arabia, like the United States, has invested considerably in the Saleh regime and in the person of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Both Riyadh and Washington believed that Saleh was the best hope for the maintenance of any type of centralized control in Yemen. The U.S. now believes that Saleh must go and the Saudis are looking for a way to at least have a say in the process. As a result, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have hosted a series of meetings under the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that appear to have led to an agreement between Saleh and the opposition, facilitating his near-term departure.

Summary

The primary issue that Yemen represents for Saudi Arabia is that of security. Historically, Yemen's perpetual instability and the periods of hostility toward the Kingdom have made it an intractable problem. Events in Yemen have had an enormous impact on Saudi regional and security policy. The threat

posed by Nasser and the new Yemen Arab Republic brought a confrontation that required risk taking and dogged opposition to the consolidation of an Egyptian puppet state on the Arabian Peninsula. In the process, Saudi Arabia built a formidable relationship with the northern tribes that preserved its influence in Sana'a. Riyadh opposed any unification of Yemen because it feared the threat that a united Yemen might pose. Now, just as the rule of the sons of Abd-al-Aziz ibn Saud nears its end and the internal Saudi political paradigm is changing, so too are the security issues. The destruction of Sunni Iraq in 2003 removed a security buffer against a resurgent Iran. The Saudis believe that Washington has repeatedly ignored security concerns and advice on issues ranging from Iraq to Iran to Afghanistan.[230] Now, Riyadh is faced with the prospect of preserving or adjusting the security paradigm with regard to Yemen that has served it well. No matter how problematic it may be for those focused on the territorial and political integrity of the Yemens, historically Saudi involvement and influence in the Yemeni political milieu has constituted a net plus for the Kingdom's security and for the security of the global oil supply.

The security requirement had not changed. Yemen tribal politics are more fractured than ever, and providing support for the tribes has become more difficult. The Saleh regime is as unreliable with regard to Saudi interests as it has ever been, but they continue to work with him. The Huthi threat is an internal Zaydi dispute that the Saudis, with a little more Machiavellian pragmatism, might well turn to their advantage. A little less paranoia about the Iranians and a little more largess toward the rebels from Sada'a might boost Saudi influence enormously. Increasing Saudi influence in the Hadramawt and eastern provinces maintains some degree of outside influence if not stability in the event that government control entirely collapses. It also provides a security buffer against Sunni jihadists. And finally, the Kingdom is constructing a border security system and command-and-control structure capable of supporting security forces in sealing off the border if necessary. These policies are nuanced, layered and should be flexible enough to adjust to any situation including, if necessary, providing a buffer to insulate the Kingdom from a humanitarian catastrophe or the unlikely total collapse of the government in Sana'a.

8. Conclusion, U.S. Interests and the Yemens

The political context of the Yemens is much more than the last 30 years under Ali Abdullah Saleh, the 50 years since 1962, or the political history of government of the YAR or ROY. Yemen history has consistent themes that date back almost three millennia and tell a surprisingly consistent story. Central authority in Yemen was less about controlling territory than it was about the personal political survival of a given ruler and about protecting the economic interests of a regime. The Sabaeans, the Himyarites, the Rasulids, the Zaydi imams, the YAR (North Yemen), and finally the Saleh regime since 1994 have understood the limitations that the peculiar structure of Yemen society places on central authority. Rule has been based on patronage, and patronage has to be funded.

Organization	Focus
Sabaeans and Himyarites	Trade routes
Rasulids	Trade and the ports
Zaydi imams	Taxation and trade
YAR	Control of foreign aid and oil revenues
Current regime in Sana'a	Monopolizing development projects, oil revenues, and the distribution of foreign aid

Rule based on family, clan, and tribe has been the norm. Talk about ending the patronage system in Yemen and evolving Yemen into a civil society based on rule of law and civil governance flies in the face of the most basic logic. No government in Yemen has ever constituted a nation-state. Central authority has always existed in equilibrium with other tribal, sectarian, and political groups whose independent power base curbed the political options available to any central authority. All of these groups functioned and continue to function on the basis of patronage. In any historical period, political power ebbed and flowed between central and decentralized local and regional authority.

The political structures were remarkably similar:

a. At the core of political life, the ruling family's primary focus was self-perpetuation and survival through giving "trusted" relatives key positions in the military, the government, and the economy.

b. Next close allies, clan and tribal, were followed by co-opted groups rewarded for their loyalty through patronage.
c. The maintenance of sufficient tribal support provided a buffer against disloyalty in the inner circle or other tribes hostile to the region.
d. Those in opposition to the regime who were the ruling elite were either unable or unwilling to co-opt and merely attempted to intimidate others into acquiescence or subservience.

Rule, either by the state or an individual, has never been absolute. The Hamid al-Dins, particularly Yahya — who was credited with pacifying the tribes — created an intimidating mass hostage system. Still, he faced revolts. Saleh surrounded himself with family and then spread his largess among the military, political, tribal leaders, and potential political adversaries to tie them to the regime. He still has difficulty in controlling much of the territory claimed by the ROY. Civil authority is lacking and where patronage either does not work or the price is too high, the regime in Sana'a, just like the rulers in the past, applies extra judicial means of attempting to suppress or eliminate its opposition.

From earliest times, the Yemens also existed in a broader regional and even global equilibrium. It is geography that has made Yemen important, not indigenous resources. As a result, just as rulers have had to balance internal political forces that could threaten the regime they have had to manipulate external powers and their ambitions and interests as well. Relative to its neighbors, trading partners and imperial overlords, the Yemens have always been relatively weak. The Queen of Sheba negotiated with the Israelite King Solomon in Jerusalem to stabilize the spice trade through Yemen and the Hejaz. The Himyarites balanced warring Byzantines and Sassanians who were both critical to their prosperity and apparently converted to Judaism to enhance Himyarite neutrality. The Hamid al-Din imams fought the Saudis for control of Asir and Najran and embraced Nasser to undermine the British. Then the imams embraced the Saudis to undermine Nasser and the YAR. Rule in Yemen is a three-dimensional juggling act.

Saleh embraced the Saudis and their Yemeni clients in his rise to power. He then promptly eliminated the key Saudi supporters in his regime and embraced the very policy, accommodation with the PDRY that had brought Saudi ire and the elimination of President Hamdi. He then called on Saudi and U.S. support in the border war with the PDRY. Disenchanted, for cause,

with that arrangement, he flip-flopped again with a Soviet arms deal. He then again called on tribes, erstwhile clients of the Saudis, to crush the NDF who were clients of the pro-Soviet faction in the PDRY. Immediately after gaining the upper hand in 1982, he again moved to normalize relations with the PDRY. Later he sided with Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq in the call for the pan-Arab sharing of Arab wealth and refused to condemn Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait despite the support that the Kuwaitis had given him, thus alienating the Gulf Arabs. Between 1990 and 1994, he again defied Saudi Arabia and finally unified the YAR and PDRY in addition to challenging Saudi influence and claims in the Hadramawt. Now, once again, he has re-embraced Saudi Arabia in return for economic support, military assistance, and their influence in controlling factions within Yemen that want to undermine his regime.

The uninitiated outside observer might conclude that President Saleh had a history of being unpredictable, unreliable, and ungrateful for aid and support. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. He was absolutely consistent and predictable. Every political move and policy reversal was predicated on his evaluation of what was required for his survival and that of his family, clan, close associates, and regime. Despite mistakes, Saleh has understood Yemen and his times as well as any leader in the modern Middle East has understood his own political milieu and, with fewer resources, he has performed better than most of them. Saleh understood that tribalism, despite urban growth and modernization, is fundamental to Yemen's political structure. In 1986 in an interview with *al-Mujalla*, Saleh was asked, "To what extent has Yemen succeeded in moving away from the stage of tribalism to the state stage? And can it be transformed from multiple tribes to one tribe?" He responded,

> The state is part of the tribes and our Yemeni people are a collection of tribes. Our towns and countryside are all tribes. All the official and popular apparatuses of the state are formed from the tribes.[231]

Tribalism, factionalism, and patronage are facts of political survival in Yemen. The labels and the exact political configurations shift from time to time but the fundamentals do not. From a U.S. perspective, he is not nor will he be a reliable ally because cooperation requires that his interests intersect with those of Washington.

The War on Terror and U.S. Policy in Yemen

From the Yemen perspective, the U.S. has not exactly been the most reliable ally either. Since the 1970s, U.S. deference to Saudi Arabia's interest vis-à-vis Yemen has been particularly galling even when it came to bilateral aid arrangements.[232] The inconsistency of U.S. strategies and policies has been another aggravation. Washington wants cooperation on the issue *de jour* without taking into consideration what the longer-term implications of cooperation might be for the regime in Sana'a. Policies toward radical Islamists are a prime example. There is a certain memory lapse in Washington about the origins of the Islamic Front and the radical jihadists that now plague U.S. global interests. With U.S. blessings and support, they were trained and armed during the Cold War for use against the Soviets in Afghanistan or the Soviet-supported regime in the PDRY and the NDF. No one objected when they were used in the 1994 conquest of the southern secession movement because those behind it were viewed as Soviet-era socialists.

Suddenly, the attacks on the embassies in Africa, the attack on the USS *Cole*, and the attacks on 9/11 converted these former U.S. allies into terrorists, and now the U.S. demands the ROY cooperation in their eradication. The Yemen government had incorporated many of them in its system of control. These Islamist elements are useful against the southern secessionist led by al-Bid or against the Huthis in the north. In the recent past, Abdul Majeed al-Zindani, who the U.S. classifies as a terrorist, offered to recruit thousands of militants for the war in the north against the Huthis.[233] In effect, some Al Qaeda elements or at least radical Sunni jihadists have been the allies of the regime in Sana'a. Yemen's political and security requirements had not changed, but U.S. requirements did. Saleh understandably was reluctant to sacrifice himself on George W. Bush's altar of the global war on terror without something of considerable value in return. As a result, Saleh resorted to the "live and let live policies" of 2004 to 2007 with the jihadists engineered by Brigadier Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar as an example.[234] Saleh's close relationship with the U.S. may in fact have contributed to his current predicament and possible downfall. Whether true or

Saleh understandably was reluctant to sacrifice himself on George W. Bush's altar of the global war on terror without something of considerable value in return.

not, it will likely be seen in that light. In addition, cooperation on key security issues in a post-Saleh era will be more difficult to obtain.

Even the current level of cooperation does not reflect real concern in Sana'a that Al Qaeda is a threat to the regime. Yemeni government officials, including Saleh, believe that the U.S. has shown far too little appreciation for what he has done since 9/11 and that for U.S. domestic political gain he has been often double-crossed and embarrassed by disclosures of his cooperation. Case in point, in 2002, a U.S. drone attack killed Al Qaeda's top man, Abu Ali al-Harithi.[235] ROY cooperation was revealed when the Bush administration insisted on taking public credit. Then there is the more fundamental issue. No matter what his rhetoric, the Yemeni government "does not believe AQAP poses a grave threat to his regime's stability but rather is a Saudi and American problem."[236] Senior Yemeni officials share his view.[237] Given the existing problems with the south, a vigorous campaign there could provoke a wider civil conflict and further undermine the regime.[238]

Accusations are already surfacing that the ROY campaign against Al Qaeda has been in reality a campaign against regime opponents in the south and will serve as an anti-U.S. recruiting point for Al Qaeda.[239] This possibility must be factored into the policy calculation. The U.S. has no way to control Yemeni operations or in some cases to accurately assess information passed by the ROY. This lack of control fits similar patterns of behavior where the labeling of political or tribal opponents as terrorists is used to settle scores that have nothing to do with counterterrorism.[240] Even when the intended target is eliminated, it often serves as a recruiting tool for more jihadists.[241] In addition, the training and equipment provided to Yemeni Special Forces under the command of Ahmad Saleh were undoubtedly being used against political opponents and demonstrators — not the best endorsement for cooperation with the U.S., particularly if Saleh steps down as it now appears that he will do.

Historically, the most westernized element of society has been the Sunni population. It is this population that is most estranged from the government and most vulnerable to radical Salafi and Al Qaeda overtures and recruiting. The Sunnis also represent the largest group in the Yemeni diaspora and particularly in the United States. Anwar al-Alwaki — the American born, radical jihadist sought in connection with inspiring the Fort Hood shooting spree by Major Nidal Hasan — is considered extremely dangerous because he understands exactly how to present jihadist ideas to American and Western-born

Muslims.[242] Ironically, by supporting the Zaydi military government in Sana'a, the U.S. is fueling grievances of the southern and eastern Sunnis, the very societal groups in Yemen that can produce the radical jihadis who are potentially most dangerous to U.S. interests. The radicals are becoming increasingly effective in linking Western threats to Yemen with the unjust distribution of oil wealth found on southern tribal lands, some of which are also known sanctuaries for Al Qaeda.[243] Any perceived ROY government excesses or U.S.-targeting errors have the potential for unintended consequences.

The last big lesson about the Yemens is the level of institutionalized hostility. Internally, tribes are hostile to one another. Northerners are hostile to southerners, Zaydis to Shafais, *sayyid* Zaydis to non-*sayyids*, old NLF to FLOSY, modernists to tribalists, Hashid against Bakil, and so on. The society is fractured from top to bottom, thus making it virtually impervious to attempts at centralized control. The only thing that Yemenis really agree on is that they generally despise foreigners who intervene in their affairs. Whether Ethiopian, Portuguese, British, Ottoman, Egyptian, Russian, or Saudi, foreigners have always come to grief in the Yemen having wasted money, lives, or both pursuing their own plan for Yemen and failing. After all the effort and blood, Yemen — with adjustments for time and technology — is still very much the Yemen of the past. There is also perhaps a broader lesson here. In describing Yemen, Burrowes stated, "North Yemen and Afghanistan maintain that each of these late-developing countries is more like the other than like any other country in the world."[244] Countries with a penchant for state building like the United States and a short memory about adventures past and present — the Philippines, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan — need to ask what a given place will really look like 20 years after a large U.S. presence on the ground. In this case, Yemen would eventually look just like Yemen.

U.S.-Saudi Relations and U.S. Policy in Yemen

Once again no matter the temptation, any involvement would acquire a self-generating momentum and rationalization of its own, the only truly U.S. strategic interest in Yemen is the security of Saudi Arabia and the oil supplies of the West. The Sunni jihadists in Yemen and their collaboration with others in the region are a tactical not a strategic threat to the West. The real issue is the seriousness of the threat that they represent to Saudi Arabia. No one would care about a dispute between Zaydi Huthis and Zaydi-dominated

government in Sana'a if not for Saudi Arabia. The coming water shortage in Yemen and its accompanying humanitarian crisis would have little or no impact, as in Ethiopian and Sudan, on U.S. strategic interests in the region if not for the proximity of the Kingdom. Pirates in the Arabian Sea are an aggravation but not a strategic threat. Many Saudis are convinced that any unilateral U.S. involvement in Yemen — given Iraq, Afghanistan, and support for Israel — has more of a detrimental than a beneficial effect on the Kingdom's security. The Middle East has a decided no-confidence vote in the U.S. ability to be a positive independent player; they also have the strong feeling the U.S. is fixated on what is now the lesser threat of Al Qaeda when the real threat is Iran.[245]

If the U.S. is to be effective in southern Arabia, it must pursue focused policies in which the stability and survival of the Kingdom are paramount. This focus does not mean that Saudis dictate all the priorities; to the contrary as Prince Turki bin Feisal bin Abd-al-Aziz once said when talking about Saudi criticism of the U.S. in Iraq, "Real friends sometimes have to say things that their friends do not want to hear."[246] In addition, sometimes friends have to take actions that other friends do not approve of; however, in Yemen disconnects in Saudi-U.S. policy are a very serious matter. Independent action should only be taken after very careful consideration of the consequences and potential collateral damage to other more strategic interests.

In addition to the training role for U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), the U.S. should retain its capability to act independently with precision to eliminate threats with or without the agreement of others. At the same time, Washington should not forget that the Saudis have managed over the years to have considerable influence within the Yemeni political milieu without a highly visible direct involvement on the ground. In the past, some Saudi policies have failed, but those failures have been tactical; the strategic goal of maintaining influence and the strategic security buffer has remained in place. The Kingdom and the United States need to see that continue. Saudi policy has been consistent and conservative; it is also focused on the use of proxies. U.S. policy should encourage this approach.

The U.S. should also take to heart the fact that well-meaning, progressive ideas about transforming other societies into democratic open civil societies are usually naïve and can lead to calamitous misadventures. Those who argue

that Yemen will become Somalia or U.S. action can prevent it or change the climate of chronic political instability are wrong on at least two counts:

a. Yemen has never been a nation-state in any conventional sense of the words. The *Yemens* are fundamentally different with interests that conflict.
b. It is unlikely that Yemen will become a Somalia.

In classic Western terms, Yemen may be a failed state, but it is not a failed society. In other words, contractions in state authority and control such as the one now being experienced have never brought societal collapse. In addition, top priority U.S. problems associated with Yemen are not necessarily those of the Yemeni leadership. Yemen cannot be transformed: "It is what it is."[247] An antiterrorism campaign in Yemen cannot be won by chasing a handful of Sunni jihadists with tens of thousands of troops; besides it is not cost effective and would undoubtedly transform the U.S. into just another invader.

In late 2010, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin gave a litany of the aid promised to Yemen in 2010 and 2011. It amounted to approximately $300 million dollars. The official explained that the assistance and training had "only been marginally effective because the environment was not conducive to government control." A former senior U.S. official posed the following question, "With the U.S. approaching [a] budgetary cliff, did it really make sense to spend $300 million annually to chase 200 to 300 Al Qaeda terrorists with 'marginal success' — that is more than $1 million per head annually." The ambassador agreed that $300 million in aid was a drop in the bucket when compared to Yemen's overall problems and categorically stated that the U.S. had no intention of putting combat troops on the ground in Yemen.[248] This begs the question, What is next?

A humanitarian crisis is a real possibility, perhaps even a probability. Previous famines and unrest have in large part created the Yemeni diaspora that stretches from Dar es-Salaam to Kuala Lumpur to Detroit. If such a crisis occurs, the U.S. will not be able to stop it. The U.S. national security objective (as opposed to humanitarian objectives) should be to assist the Saudis in preventing the crisis from spilling over the border into the Kingdom. Strengthened border security and command and control are obvious requirements as well as better operational integration of assets. Why then is the U.S. sending $300 million in aid to the Sana'a regime? It could be argued

that the U.S. security concerns regarding Yemen are as much about internal U.S. political considerations as any other issue.

Achievable Goals

The 24 December 2009 attempted bombing of the Northwest Airlines flight by a Yemeni-trained jihadist brought calls to do something about Yemen. Forgetting for a moment that the individual involved should never have been allowed on the flight, the problem has no solution. For three millennia, no internal or external political or military power has been able to control Yemen; that is a fact. The economic problems are so enormous that the U.S. and even Gulf Arab aid has had only a marginal impact. The struggle between politically, socially, and culturally diverse factions and tribes over the dwindling economic pie will only intensify. Given the nature of Yemen society, political, economic, and social strife will find increasing expression in cultural and religious terms. The Zaydi Huthi rebellion and the inroads that jihadists have made in the Sunni population are examples. Problems that cannot be solved can only be contained.

A lesson from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan is that the lack of clear achievable goals tied to a concrete exit strategy is a recipe for the expenditure of blood and treasure with little or nothing to show for it. The U.S. has been in the business of nation building for more than a century, and the track record is less than stellar — it is in fact dismal in developing countries. If fundamental change is unattainable, then goals by necessity have to be realistically modest. The more limited the goals, the more likely the chances of success. Hand in hand with the realistic goals should be a realistic deeper contextual view of what Yemen is and what it is not. Some analysts have called Yemen a *pivot point*. Yemen lacks the cohesion to be called a pivot point. Historically, only the coastal areas have been viewed as strategically important and then only when one empire's expansion threatened another's interests in the area. Yemen is strategically important because of its geographic proximity to Saudi Arabia.

Some analysts have called Yemen a pivot point. Yemen lacks the cohesion to be called a pivot point.

There are issues of tactical importance. Coastal Yemen is important because of the aggravation posed by buccaneering in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. Another issue is the uncontrolled movement of people and arms by sea between Africa and the Subcontinent (India) — an unstoppable and

uncontrollable phenomenon that has spanned millennia. Yemen's disaffected Sunni areas are also tactically important because several hundred jihadists are training a handful of terrorists to strike at Western targets in general and the United States in particular. These problems cannot be solved nor can they be totally controlled; they can only be imperfectly contained.

It is as a part of this imperfect containment that SOF will be most heavily involved in Yemen. As CBS *60 Minutes* pointed out (in its 16 January 2011 broadcast), there is already significant involvement in training ROY counterterrorism forces. As both Arab and U.S. officials have noted, the ROY government — for all its issues to this point — has been "the only game in town."[249] Even as government control shrinks, the government in Sana'a — if it can reconcile itself with the Zaydi tribal elements, including the Huthi rebels in the north — represents the current best vehicle for maintaining societal cohesion. This desired cohesion is among the Zaydi tribal interests. The old YAR political factions, which have coalesced over the years around the patronage system, existed before Saleh but he perfected them. This SOF support for the government will not enable it to regain control of Yemen but rather to better control areas where the government in Sana'a has traditionally held sway. The support programs are necessary; however, the Saleh opposition appears to place the U.S. on the same side as their political enemies and oppressors. U.S. support programs have in effect become an element in the recruiting program of Sunni jihadists, including AQAP and other potential opposition groups (e.g., the Huthis and the southern separatists). Saleh leaving will not solve that problem because the regime's military and security apparatus will no doubt remain largely intact.

SOF training and support for Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Defense and Aviation and Ministry of Interior and their border and cross-border capabilities may in the long term be the best strategic investment that U.S. containment efforts can make. In the end, Riyadh's policies regarding Yemen will have a far greater impact there than anything that the U.S. does unilaterally. Differences over the nature of the Huthi rebellion notwithstanding, close cooperation in all areas — but particularly in joint operational training and exercises — will be absolutely critical should ROY central government control continue to erode. In the scheme of things, the Yemenis know the most about the key relationships between and among political factions, including the radical Sunni elements, but Saudi knowledge runs a close second. Riyadh knows more about Yemen at a tactical level than the U.S. government will ever know; the

issue is combining their knowledge and capabilities with U.S. capabilities in containing future eventualities. As Ambassador Benjamin stated, "Anything that affects the security of Saudi Arabia is significant to global stability." [250]

The U.S. needs to have the capability to act unilaterally in isolated, high priority cases. For now, it is the most effective approach to support Yemeni efforts to contain terrorist cells. As imperfect and frustrating as it may be, it is likely the most effective approach to containment at the present time. Although a further contraction of Sana'a's control or an individual high value target might necessitate limited unilateral U.S. action at some unforeseen future date, the word *limited* is key. The May 2011 bin Laden raid is an example, but the political risks have to be rigorously and dispassionately evaluated against the potential political and operational gain. In the case of bin Laden, even if the mission had failed, the risk was worth it given the potential gain. In the case of most of the Yemeni jihadists, that will likely be a more difficult call. In Yemen, the chance for strategic success rather than limited tactical gains, emanating from unilateral U.S. military action, is virtually nil.

In addition, the U.S. is currently linked to a regime in Sana'a that has been historically opposed by the Sunni elements, jihadist, or otherwise in the south and east of what is now called the ROY. The Zaydis have always been the tribal, economic, and religious competitors of the groups that are supporting AQAP and other Sunni jihadists. The government in Sana'a is unlikely to win any hearts-and-minds campaign; the Saudis have a much better chance and more resources to exert influence in the Sunni areas. Washington now appears to be adopting an approach to aid for Yemen that conforms more closely to the Saudi model by attempting to bypass the central government — that is, provide aid directly to the local level, a recognition that the ROY central administration simply does not function.[251] This situation has strategic implications for any future U.S. military involvement in Yemen's eastern and southern Sunni regions — those most affected by the groups that Washington sees as potential threats or sources of instability — tribal and AQAP jihadists, and even radical African elements. Close coordination with Saudis will be strategically critical if the U.S. contemplates even limited direct action in Yemen.

Lastly, a cautionary note is in order. This study has attempted to show that Yemen, or rather Yemens, today are no more or no less potentially fragmented than they have ever been. Authority and governance viewed in light of nation-state standards is an illusion. The idea in the media and other places that unification, the election of 1990, and Saleh's victory in the

1994 civil war represented the formation of a real modern state were simply false — an illusion. The last 20 years represent a blip on three millennia of a fractured political paradigm. However, the misconception — this lack of perspective — has created the myth that Yemen was unified and is now crumbling into a failed state. Yemen is what it has always been — a politically, economically, socially, and culturally diverse corner of the Arabian Peninsula where factionalism, sectarianism, and tribalism hold sway. The media and to some degree government officials have fed an overreaction to what is now occurring in Arabia Felix.

A recent article in the *Washington Post* stated,

> For the first time since the September 11, 2001 attacks, CIA analysts see one of Al Qaeda's offshoots — rather than the core group now based in Pakistan — as the most urgent threat of U.S. security, officials said.

The article went on to say that "Yemen has emerged as a more potent threat."[252] On 8 September 2010, Ambassador Benjamin stated,

> The *Washington Post* is misleading. First, there is no threat ranking system and second, while Yemen is obviously a concern to say that it is more of a problem than Pakistan or some other place is simply wrong.[253]

A better understanding of Yemen's paradigm and how the U.S. and its allies fit into that paradigm would facilitate two desired outcomes: a) a more judicious and accurate appraisal of the situation and where it is likely to go over the coming decade and b) clarification of the real interests of the United States. Yemen politicians and tribal leaders argue as follows:

> The danger is a myth propagated by Washington to impose its control over the country or by the Sana'a government to give it an excuse to strike its domestic enemies.[254]

The argument about U.S. control demonstrates the deep suspicion with which any direct U.S. involvement is viewed. The second point underscores the fractured political landscape and the suspicion with which much of the country views Saleh or for that matter, any government in Sana'a. The bottom line is that the odds for success, in an environment where fundamental motives are questioned and the ability of the government in Sana'a to deliver is questionable, are significantly less than optimal.

The bottom line raises another series of questions:

a. Given budget deficits and the absolute opposition to new taxes, can the U.S. afford its current approach of throwing money at problems through marginally effective or totally ineffective allies? The situation promises to worsen.
b. Are 200 to 300 jihadists — the vast majority of whom have little chance of reaching a U.S. target — a strategic threat?
c. Is the real threat that which is potentially posed to the security and stability of Saudi Arabia?
d. Is there an alternate approach that has more promise of containing (if not eliminating) the threat and the U.S. can afford, both politically and economically?

Since the Yemen Revolution of 1962, the consistent answer has been that the U.S. strategic interest in Yemen is the security and stability of Saudi Arabia. One might conclude that the answer to the formulation of a flexible, cohesive strategy involving Yemen is most likely to be found in close coordination with Riyadh rather than in Sana'a.

In the end, countries are not transformed. In the case of Yemen, if the U.S. seriously looks into the past and examines the present, a series of snapshots about the future emerge. These pictures represent the possible scenarios for the Yemen of 2030 that would undoubtedly have most if not all the following attributes:

a. Central political authority will continue to be weak with significant areas of the country beyond the control of Sana'a.
b. The leader or leadership will rule surrounded by family, clan, and tribal loyalists supported by other clients through a system of political and economic patronage. If the ruler does not possess the gifts of charisma, guile, and ruthlessness, he will not survive.
c. The ruling elite will take the lion's share of the economic benefits from the areas controlled by the central government and will distribute the remainder in an effort to maintain the loyalty of its client supporters.
d. Large areas of the country will be excluded from sharing in the wealth or political power, and this situation will cause periodic, widespread unrest.

e. The Zaydi tribes of the north will provide a social underpinning for the highland population and their loyalties will be split, based on the generosity of the government in Sana'a and the willingness of the Saudis to subsidize them. Severe weakness in Sana'a would result in the virtual incorporation of the north into the Saudi economic and security structure.
f. The Shafai and southern resentment of the north and Zaydi rule will result in a more federal arrangement, total independence, or less likely the total subjugation and occupation of the south. The latter possibility guarantees growing problems for Sana'a.
g. If a great water crisis or other natural disaster occurs, the Yemeni government will invite United Nations (UN) support. The UN will provide camps and food, and the principal supporters of the regime and the army will be sheltered from the privations affecting the general population.
h. Pockets of radical jihadist groups and individuals will continue plotting terrorist acts against the United States and by-and-large their families and tribal ties will protect them.

No matter what the United States does or how much it invests, it will be a drop in the bucket compared to the problem, and Yemen will still function as a fundamentally fragmented political landscape of weak central government, competing power centers, and chronic revolts. Yemen will continue to be Yemen.

As a result, careful consideration needs to be given to the costs before anyone even thinks about deeper involvement. In an article on the role of the military, Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff made comments about Afghanistan that are readily applicable to Yemen; "In this type of war, when the objective is not the enemy's defeat but the people's success, less really is more." [255] Mullen was discussing the role of the military and operations, but in the case of Yemen that statement applies to U.S. direct involvement. The U.S. embassy and military simply do not have the resources, staff, or experience in Yemen to run an effective smart power program. "The problems in Yemen will not be solved simply by throwing American money at them." [256]

The U.S. role in Yemen requires a very low profile with an ability to act independently in exceptional circumstances. The rejection by the Obama

administration of putting combat troops on the ground represents a two-fold recognition:

a. Both the ROY and the Saudis oppose the direct involvement of U.S. ground troops in Yemen.
b. Unilateral U.S. intervention would be severely handicapped by a lack of information and intelligence without ROY or Saudi support.

Conversely, the greater the diplomatic, military, and development support for any regime in Sana'a, the more its actions will be laid at the American doorstep. This reality is exactly what many in Washington fear and why aid has continued despite the situation on the ground and the protests against the regime. The U.S. continues the military aid in hopes that it will be used against Al Qaeda, as opposed to political opponents, and fears that change could bring a new government that more reflects the strong anti-American sentiment in Yemen and curtail or even end cooperation on terrorism issues. As Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said, "Obviously the situation right now is a difficult one. The longer it festers, the more difficult it becomes. That is why this government has been urging a negotiated transition as quickly as possible." He then went on to comment that Saleh continued to be in control of Yemen's military forces and military aid was continuing.[257] That may no longer be the case.

As one U.S. military officer stated, "If Saleh goes, the two likeliest outcomes are anarchy or a government that is not as friendly."[258] A recent survey in Yemen conducted by Glevum Associates tends to bear out this concern. Only 1 percent of the population feels that the U.S. should "address" in dealing with the violent protest; most support an Arab League solution. Eighty eight percent are either very or somewhat unfavorable toward the U.S.-led war on terror and policies toward the Islamic world. The study also concludes, "There is a notable level of popular support for the radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki and for the actions and agenda of the terrorist group Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula." At the same time, almost half want to see U.S. military assistance continue.[259]

One might argue that the position on aid is traditionally Yemeni — give us aid and stay out of our politics. Glevum allows for a margin of error of 3 percent; however, even assuming a much larger margin of error, the U.S. is deeply unpopular in Yemen. A key reminder for anyone involved in Yemen follows:

> When any Yemeni leader's evaluation of the situation requires a change in policy concerning the U.S. relationship, interests, or involvement, it will happen.

Given the sentiments outlined above, it could very well happen. Saleh's alleged quote — "the Americans are hot-blooded and hasty when you need us [but] cold-blooded and British when we need you" — certainly reflects Saleh's and Yemen's experience with the U.S. since the 1950s. The Yemenis know that the U.S. interest in Yemen is tangential to other political and strategic interests. When evaluating the present and planning the future in Yemen, glance back frequently at the deeper context and track record and factor that into the equation. Saleh's 32 years reflected Yemen's cultural, political, economic, and social reality — not the converse. As Saleh contemplates his next move and his opponents contemplate theirs, it bears remembering that political power in Yemen is about survival first and perhaps some limited vision of a political and economic future that is highly circumscribed by Yemen's reality. Write any name into the blank space left for the chief executive — Saleh, Hamdi, Iryani, Imam Ahmed, Imam Yahya; as this monograph has outlined, the differences are only marginal. Understanding the overall context and flow of Yemen's historical reality refracted through the prism of time on the present is what is important. Whether Saleh comes or goes as appears likely or whether his successor lasts 10 years or 10 days, Yemen will still be Yemen. There "the past is not dead; it's not even past."[260]

Endnotes

Foreword

1. Jeffrey D. Feltman (Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. DoS), "Yemen on the Brink: implications for U.S. Policy," Remarks to House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Washington, D.C., 3 February 2010; available at www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/136499.htm, accessed May 2011.
2. Daniel Benjamin (Coordinator, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Washington, D.C.), "Remarks at Jamestown Yemen Conference," 15 April 2010; available at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2010/140327.htm, accessed May 2011.
3. Ibid.

Yemen: A Different Political Paradigm in Context

1. See Neil MacFarquhar, "Tahseen Bashir, Urbane Egyptian Diplomat, Dies at 77," *The New York Times*, 14 June 2002. Tahseen served Nasser and Sadat and thoroughly harassed Mubarak. Urbane, well-educated and well-read, was famous for memorable political phrases. Two of the more memorable were "the mummification of the Egyptian cabinet" and "Egypt is the only nation state in the Arab world, the rest are just tribes with flags." When asked in the 1990s why Mubarak failed to make sweeping changes in a new cabinet, he remarked, "Because their tombs weren't ready."
2. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Books, 2006), 160. Anderson's work is a challenging look at modern nationalism and its effect on global communities. He views it as selling a myth unity to communities whose interests are fundamentally different — the creation of *imagined* communities and argues that the real surprising issue is not that adherents to these imagined communities are willing to kill for a myth but that millions have been willing to die for one. This book is a challenging work but a most interesting look at nationalism. It also provides some thoughts for practitioners of nation building. In fact, one might argue the advent of the professional army as opposed to the citizen army in the United States reflects the breakdown of what Anderson calls the *nationalist myth* in that most of the citizens support a system in which they are actually unwilling to die for their country or unwilling even to pay through taxes for the wars that it fights.
3. "In quite a state: Defining what makes a country," *The Economist*, 10 April 2010, 62-63.
4. There are those within the Special Operations community who argue, and rightly so, that SOF needs to create cadres of experts on the environments within which they operate. Often the term used is to create "T. E. Lawrences" who have an understanding of all aspects of a given society so that they have a better chance of operating successfully in that environment. If that is to be the model, then the first

lessons is to understand that Lawrence was an archeologist whose understanding of the Middle East was constructed on a grasp of the earliest fundamentals of Middle Eastern cultural development. In the Middle East, heritage, ethnology, history, and culture are supremely important in placing individuals and groups within a deeper cultural context because it is the context that motivates, explains, and to a certain degree makes actions predictable. With the "Lawrence goal" in mind, this study includes an introduction to ancient Yemen as the necessary foundational building block to an understanding of the contemporary situation.

5. Richard H. Sanger, *The Arabian Peninsula* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), 239.

   See also Wendell Phillips, Qatabah and Sheba (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), 89-119. This book contains an interesting description of archaeological teams in Yemen working on the ruins of the city. The description of a meeting with Imam Ahmad also underscores the nature of personal rule and the imam's intimate knowledge of the foreigner's activities in Yemen.

6. Sally Ann Baynard, Laraine Newhouse Carter, Beryl Lieff Benderly, and Laurie Krieger, "Historical Setting," *The Yemens* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1986), 11.
7. Ibid., 8.
8. J.J. Saunders, *A History of Medieval Islam* (London: Routledge Press, 1965), 7.
9. Baynard, *The Yemens*, 13.
10. Jacob Adler, "The Jewish Kingdom of Himyar: Its Rise and Fall," *Midstream*, May/June 2000 (Volume 46), 28.
11. It was in fact a Kharajite who murdered the Caliph Ali and not an Umayyad Sunni. Today, the largest concentration of Kharijites is the Ibadis in Oman. They reject both the Kharijites and Ibadi labels, arguing that they are the true Muslims and thus should be called simply Muslims. The Ibadi imam was called imam *al-muslimin* (imam of the Muslims).
12. Philip K. Hitti, *Makers of Arab History* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 47 and 61-64.
13. Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 50.
14. John L. Esposito, *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 44.
15. Baynard, *The Yemens*, 24.
16. Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 669.
17. Momen, *Shi'i Islam*, 51. See also Dilip Hiro, *Dictionary of the Middle East* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 349.
18. Manfred W. Wenner, *Modern Yemen 1918-1966* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 30. See also *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.

19. Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, 669.
20. R.J. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1996), 11.
21. Patricia Risso, *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 45-47.
22. Gavin, *Aden*, 12.
23. Baynard, *The Yemens*, 35.
24. A senior Arabian official knowledgeable about Yemen and Saudi Arabian affairs.
25. Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume I Empire of Gazis and the Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 84.
26. Ibid., 100.
27. Eric Macro, *Yemen and the Western World* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 37.
28. Shaw, *Ottoman Empire*, 176.
29. Baynard, *The Yemens*, 36.
30. Ibid., 39.
31. Tom Pocock, *Battle for Empire: The Very First World War 1756-1763* (London: Michael O'Mara Books Limited, 1998), 13.
32. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism on the Dark Continent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), 1-26.
33. Gavin, *Aden*, 22.
34. Christopher Bayly, *Imperial Meridians: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (London: Longman Limited, 1994), 35-74.
35. Gavin, *Aden*, 24.
36. Ibid., 37.
37. James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21.
38. Although nominally under Ottoman control, Mehmet Ali (or Muhammad Ali) — an Albanian military officer — had emerged in the early 19th century as the independent viceroy over whom the Ottoman's had little or no control. His dynasty would rule Egypt until 1952 and the Nasserist revolution.
39. Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 17.
40. Marco, *Yemen and the Western World*, 21.
41. John Marlowe, *History of Modern Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 1800-1956* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1956), 37.
42. Gavin, *Aden*, 27.

43. Paul Dresch, "Imams and Tribes: The Writing and Acting of History in Upper Yemen," in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* , editors Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1990), 273.
44. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 45.
45. Ibid., 47.
46. Dresch, *Imams and Tribes*, 273.
47. Baynard, *TheYemens*, 13.
48. Jamal Al-Atasi, *Al-Thawra li Jamal Abd-al-Nasser wa ala Fikrihi al-Istratiji wa al-Tarikhi,* (Beirut: Mahad Al-Agmaln Al-Arabi), 7.
49. Dresch, *Imam and Tribes*, 275.
50. Ibid. See also, Phillips, *Qataban and Sheba*, 205. Phillips recounts a meeting with Imam Ahmad in the early 1950s in which the imam questioned them about the details of their journey, including why they provided an old man in Shabwa a gazelle that they had killed. Phillips commented, "The King seemed satisfied with the reply, while I was lost in admiration of his intelligence system, wishing that Washington might have one like it."
51. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 62.
52. There is an old Yemeni proverb that states, "Ruling Yemen is like trying to dance on the head of a snake." See a paper presented at the U.S. Naval Academy by Major Stephanie Kelley, U.S. Air Force. The proverb differs slightly from the title of Victoria Clark's recent book, which was taken from a comment by ROY President Ali Abdullah Saleh, "Ruling Yemen is like dancing on the heads of snakes." Saleh no doubt made the statement plural to more accurately reflect his own position and challenges.
53. William Shakespeare, *Henry IV* (Act III, Scene I, Line 33).
54. Dresch, *Imams and Tribes*, 275.
55. Ibid., 273.
56. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 80.
57. Gunther Pawelke, *Der Jemen – Das verbotene Land* (Dusseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1959), 75.
58. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 59.
59. Baynard, *The Yemens*, 46.
60. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 76.
61. Dresch, *Imams and Tribes*, 273.
62. Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 21 and 31.
63. F. Gregory Gause III, *Saudi-Yemen Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence* (New York: Columbia Press, 1990), 58.
64. "Arabia: Fall of Yemen," *Time*, 14 May 1934 (online article), 2.

65. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 164. The British "forward policy" was to create a federation and use it to get the tribal areas under control and to institute progressive reforms. The British hoped to create a new class of rulers who were enlightened and pro-British. All this required a much more aggressive policy in the hinterland to provide security and stability for the institutional development.
66. The British were reluctant because they understood that in tribal societies, the people that you train and arm today are more likely than not the people that you will have to fight tomorrow. Or as the case may be, the people who sell the arms give them to the very people that you want to fight. The object lesson for training and arming groups, as an example, is that many of the Afghan jihadists of 1979 are now the Afghan jihadists of 2009.
67. Dresch, *A History*, 32-34.
68. Gause, *Saudi-Yemen Relations,* 58.
69. J. Leigh Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement 1935-1962* (Beirut: The American University of Beirut Press, 1987), 15.
70. Gause, *Saudi-Yemen Relations*, 58.
71. "Telegram from the Governor of Aden Sir John Hall to the Secretary of State for the Colonies," Public Records Office (FO 371/45182, 20 March 1945). Also see description of FYP travails in Aden from 1944 to1945 in Douglas, *Free Yemeni*, 76-85.
72. Ibid., 110-115.
73. Gause, *Yemeni-Saudi*, 58.
74. Douglas, *Free Yemeni*, 140-142.
75. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 105.
76. Ibid., 150.
77. Ibid., 131.
78. Ibid., 150.
79. Ibid., 161.
80. Gavin, *Aden*, 320-325.
81. Ibid.
82. The term "wave of the future" became synonymous with Nasser and widely used. In 2003 interviews — with Phillips Talbot, General Andrew Goodpaster, William "Bill" Lakeland, and Walt Rostow — each used the term to describe the U.S. evaluation of Nasser and the Nasserist wave that seemed to be sweeping the Arab Middle East. Sultan bin Abd-al-Aziz also used it in an interview in describing Nasser and scoffing at the U.S. view of the 1950s that Nasserism would triumph.

    See also Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations, The Amorality of Power Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969), 214-218. Copeland's account of various reactions to the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957 is one of the more entertaining. First, he quoted a member of the U.S. Middle East Policy Planning Committee asking the CIA,

"Would you fellows like to send someone along on the mission that's going out to explain it to the Arab chiefs of state? We can't afford to associate ourselves with every lunatic scheme that comes along." He quotes Nasser as saying, "The genius of you Americans is that you never make clear-cut stupid moves, only complicated stupid moves, which make us wonder at the possibility that there may be something to them we are missing." Complicated or not, Copeland points out Nasser understood that the Eisenhower Doctrine did not bode well for his view of Arab unity or his ascendancy in the region.

83. "Eisenhower to the Acting Secretary of State, 23 April 1953," Dwight David Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman Files, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, p. 3.

84. Interview with William C. Lakeland, Berkeley, California, 23-24 September 2003. Lakeland was the former political officer in Cairo at the U.S. Embassy and served as the conduit between the British and the Egyptians in the Canal negotiations.

85. Adeed Dawihsa, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 173.

86. Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Arab Left* (Syracuse, N.Y.: The Syracuse University Press, 1976), 78-79.

    See also:

    a. Richard P. Mitchell, T*he Society of Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1993), 105-164.

    b. Abdel Moghny Said, *Arab Socialism* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1972), 73-79. This book is a theoretical discussion of Arab socialism and how it differs from both capitalism and Marxist-Leninism. It explains in theory the justification for alternative approach to modernization and the Nasserist "command economy."

87. Jamal Al-Atasi, *Al-Thawra li Jamal Abd-al-Nasser wa ala Fikrihi al-Istratiji wa al-Tarikhi* (Beirut: Mahad Al-Agmaln Al-Arabi), 7.

88. Gavin, *Aden*, 332.

    See also Frederick D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1922). Gail M. Gerhardt, *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 1997, 643 provides this review:

    > The definitive defense of British colonial rule in Africa by its most eminent practitioner, this work catalogued the vast variety of administrative and development issues in the heyday of empire: systems of land tenure, direct and indirect administration through indigenous authorities, taxation, agricultural and mineral exploitation, education, transport, trade, legal development, and the eradication of indigenous forms of slavery. Lugard conceded that British methods had not produced ideal results everywhere and that the time was not yet foreseeable when complete independence would be feasible for African colonies, but he argued with assurance, contrary to the skepticism expressed by the British Labour Party, that Britain's rule was fundamentally benign. Pure philanthropy,

> he wrote, could of course never be the motive of empire, yet the welfare and advancement of African peoples was a strong guiding principle of British rule, part of its 'dual mandate' of reciprocal benefit. Where native races were becoming restive, he declared, it was precisely because of their exposure to British values of liberty: 'Their very discontent is a measure of their progress.

This argument in many respects reflects U.S. attitudes about *nation building* that come from the American progressive traditions of the 19th century. The idea is that somehow we can make others think and act like us and that the resulting spread of western style liberal democracy will create global peace and prosperity. It also touches on what has been described as *Salvationist discourse*. This western idea of superiority and thus greater responsibility to teach, to cajole, and if necessary to compel others to develop liberal democratic institutions because it is for their own good is virtually always a motivating element in U.S. approaches to nation building. It was an abiding theme in the Philippines, Cuba, Vietnam, and now Iraq and Afghanistan.

89. Gavin, *Aden*, 333. The problems with counter propaganda are illustrated by the following humorous but instructive report from Aden on suggested propaganda strategies:

"Letter from the Political Office, Middle East Command, Aden (J. C. W. Bushell) to Arabian Department FO (A. R. Walmsley), 27 December 1962," PRO, FO371/168625, 1.

This particular letter contained a request from Aden that London mount a diplomatic campaign to counteract Egyptian propaganda against the British in Oman and Aden. The Egyptians claimed that the Royal Air Force (RAF) was bombarding the peaceful population in both places. Bushell wanted the various British missions to point out that the RAF had "never dropped napalm on defenseless villagers as the Egyptians do" or "explosive cigarettes." In the attached minute (commentary), B. R. Pridham in London commented, "I wonder if Mr. Bushell is serious in making the point in para 2 around which his letter is built. We can scarcely reply to propaganda by saying that we kill Arabs in a much more genteel manner than the Egyptians."

90. There is a lesson here for the United States. The Internet has caused a second round in this communications revolution. When comparing return on investment, the Islamic militants have gotten far more bang for the buck than all the elements of the U.S. Government combined. The real successes that are now occurring are in large part the result of indigenous factionalism and rivalries. An American organization making an appeal or argument in the Middle East is at best viewed as suspect and at worst usually ignored. To encourage the natural tendency toward internal factional conflict has always proven more effective.

91. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 176.

92. Gavin, *Aden*, 338.

93. Robert D. Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic: The Politics of Development 1962-1986* (Boulder, Colorado: The Westview Press, 1987), 9-12.

94. The term *jabili* often pronounced *gabili* comes from the Arabic word *jabal* that means mountain. Hence a *jabili* is a person from the mountains and is often used in the pejorative by urban dwellers or in the case of the Yemens by urban dwellers and Shafais referring to their Zaydi overlords. It is a proper term but can be used in a way that directly parallels someone calling a person from Appalachia a "hillbilly" with all that it implies.
95. Dresch, *Imams and Tribes*, 275.
96. Lakeland interview. In the mid-1950s, William Lakeland — a U.S. Foreign Service officer — accredited in Yemen recalls a November visit from Aden, first to Sana'a where he learned that the imam was in Hudaydah and then the bone-jarring trip down the mountains and through the wadis to present his credentials. At the audience, the imam sat on a dais taking petitions from his subject written on small strips of papers. He would remove his conical head dress and place ones of particular importance in the liner, which apparently served as a portable royal filing cabinet. His departure from Yemen required the imam's personal authorization, which the imam refused to give until after Lakeland had taken a 3-week tour of the imamate that the imam viewed as more important than a family Thanksgiving celebration in Aden.
97. Douglas, *Free Yemenis*, 184-188.
98. Ibid., 188.
99. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, 115-120.

    See also Colin Reid of the *London Daily Telegraph* who compiled a list of Imam Yahya's 14 sons that survived childbirth. The list was reprinted in "And then there were only . . .," *Newsweek*, 18 February 1958, 39. It is instructive on the nature of Yemeni internal politics and is ordered from the oldest Ahmad to the youngest Abd-al-Rahman:

    a. Ahmad became the imam.
    b. Muhammad drowned (not easy in Yemen, without assistance).
    c. Hassan was exiled.
    d. Husayn was murdered.
    e. Ali moved to Coventry (no doubt motivated by self-preservation).
    f. Abdullah was beheaded.
    g. Qasim exiled.
    h. Mutahir died in Cairo.
    i. Ibrahim disappeared.
    j. Ismail went "abroad" and apparently stayed there.
    k. Abbas was beheaded.
    l. Yahya disappeared.
    m. Muhsin was assassinated.
    n. Abd-al-Rahman continued to live in Yemen.
100. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 20.

See also Robert Lacey *The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Saud* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, Inc., 1981), 310-371. "Colonel Nasser's New Way" gives an overview of the impact of Nasserism on the Saudis and southern Arabia. The book makes two particularly important points:

a. It briefly discusses the role of Egyptian teachers in Saudi Arabia and the grass-roots influence that they exerted on the Kingdom. Because of the cadres of Egyptian teachers in the imamate and the large numbers of Yemenis from the north in the protectorate and Aden, this influence was also true for Yemen.

b. Lacey discusses the impact of Nasser's July 1956 visit to Dhahran and Riyadh and humiliation of the Saudi royal family, "There could be no face-saving rationalizations of the hysteria that swamped the Egyptian leader when he arrived. … Riyadh had never seen anything like it. No member of the house of Saud had ever inspired such spontaneous displays of passion."

101. Muhammad M. Zubayri, *Al-Khud'a al-Kubra fi'l-Siyasiyya al-'Arabiyya* (Cairo: [pamphlet]), 86.

102. Robert Burrowes, "Yemen's First-Generation Modernists and Educational Emigrants," *Middle East Journal* (Winter 2005), 81-97.

See also Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen,* Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East, No. 17 (London: the Scarecrow Press, Inc.), 145. Imam Yahya, with some (as it would turn out) justifiable trepidation about the potential impact of foreign ideas, authorized the first large group of young Yemeni men to go outside Yemen for their education. Three-fourths were Zaydi, and virtually all them came from "humble backgrounds." The group first went to Beirut in 1947 and then later to Egypt. Approximately one-third were ultimately educated in Western Europe and the United States. That group included several of the soldiers that would participate in the Revolution of 1962. Virtually all of the students supported the revolution and returned to Yemen to serve the Republic. "For these boys, the move from Yemen to Cairo and beyond amounted to going from the 16th century to the 20th century."

103. Douglas, *Free Yemeni*, 238.

104. Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen, 1962-1970* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), 3.

105. Steven C. Caton, *Peaks of Yemen I Summon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 216. Caton states that even in the 1960s poetry, particularly tribal offerings were an important means of expressing political positions and criticisms. Apparently, when the coup plotters of 26 September 1962 took over the Sana'a radio station, they broadcast the declaration of the new republic in the form of a poem. All of this writing underscores that this is an ancient society in which modalities of behavior have a momentum of their own and cannot be easily altered.

106. Douglas, *Free Yemeni*, 232.

107. Badeeb, *Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 49.

108. Victoria Clark, *Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 91.

109. Oral history. John S. Badeau, Ambassador to the United Arab Republic, John F. Kennedy Library, interviewed by Dennis O'Brien in New York City on 25 February 1969, 24-25. The new Kennedy administration had appointed John Badeau, the former president of the American University in Cairo, as ambassador to the UAR. Badeau believed that U.S. support for monarchies "played into the Russian hands as they … depict (the U.S.) to the Middle East as the supporters of the vanishing order" while they support revolution. He then added that "the traditional order is doomed" and "radical change" was probably the "wave of the future."

110. "Telegram from U.S. Embassy Cairo (Badeau) to WDC, 12 October 1962," NACPM, GRDOS-59, NEA, CDF 1960-1963, 786h.02/10-1262, 1.

111. "Telegram from U.S. Permanent Mission to UN (Stevenson) to WDC on Meeting with YAR foreign minister, 18 October 1962," NACPM, GRDOS-59, NEA, CDF 1960-1963, 786h.00/10-1862, 1.

"Telegram from Badeau, Cairo, to Washington, 18 October 1962," NACPM, GRDOS-59, NEA, CDF 1960-1963, 786h.00/10-1862, 1.

Sadat became Minister of State in 1954, Secretary to the National Union in 1959, President of the National Assembly from 1960 to 1968, and Vice President and member of the Presidential Council in 1964. He was serving as Vice President when Nasser unexpectedly died of a heart attack in 1970. Because he was viewed as easy to manipulate, he became the consensus replacement for Nasser. He adroitly outmaneuvered his political opponents and emerged as a powerful independent ruler within 2 years. As Anthony Nutting points out in *Nasser* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1972), 123-124, Nasser's distrust of the Foreign Ministry and his lack of knowledge about his fellow Arabs caused him to give foreign policy responsibilities to his former military colleagues. Sadat received the Saudi Arabian and Yemen portfolios.

By the time of the Yemen Revolution, Sadat — now President of the National Assembly — had increased his portfolio to that of "presidential watchdog" for political organizations as well as for Yemen and Saudi Arabia. It was in this capacity that he bluntly warned U.S. Ambassador John Badeau not to succumb to Saudi pressure to support the royalists in the Yemen Civil War. See "Telegram from Cairo (Badeau) to Washington, 27 September 1962," National Archives — College Park, Maryland, 786h.00/9-2762.

See Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen*, 69-70, in which the author describes al-Ayni as Yemen's "best-known civilian modernist politician from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s." He was the first foreign minister and would later serve four stints as both prime minister and foreign minister in the governments of President Abd-al-Rahman al-Iryani (1967–1974). He was at times viewed as al-Iryani's likely successor. He also served as prime minister under President Ibrahim Muhammad al-Hamdi who demoted him in a power play in 1975 against the paramount sheikh of the Bakil Confederation, Sinan Abu Luhum, who was al-Ayni's brother-in-law.

112. Telegram from U.S. Embassy Cairo (Badeau) to WDC, 22 October 1962," NACPM, GRDOS-59, NEA, CDF 1960-1963, 786h.02/10-2262, 1-2.
113. Badeeb, *Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 40-41.
114. Ibid., 93-97. Several sources place the number of Egyptian troops at 75,000 to 80,000.

    See also Clark, *Yemen*. Clark quoted Dr. Abdul Karim al-Iryani, a former minister as saying, "Even if Nasser got fed up with him, Sallal was completely Egypt's man. Without showing any respect for our national identity or pride, the Egyptians came in here and practiced 'direct rule' just like (L. Paul) Bremer in Iraq."
115. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 60-61.
116. "Telegram from WDC to U.S. Consulate General Taiz, 9 November 1962," National Archives, College Park, Maryland, GRDOS-59, NEA, CDF 1960-1963, 686B.86H/11-762, (M-1855, 59/250/3/27/4), 1.
117. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 61.
118. Badeeb, *Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 55-57.
119. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 23.
120. Clark, *Yemen*, 99.
121. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 65-67. See also Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 26-27.
122. Dana Adams Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 220.
123. Edgar O'Ballance, *The War in Yemen* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), 152 and 165-168.
124. Clark, *Yemen*, 101.
125. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 23.
126. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 30-31.
127. Clark, *Yemen*, 101.
128. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 40.
129. Ibid., 46.
130. Ibid., 51.
131. Ibid., 82.
132. Ibid., 98.
133. Ibid., 93.
134. Clark, *Yemen*, 105.
135. John F. Devlin, *The Ba'th Party: A History from its Origins to 1966* (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1976), 325.
136. Robin Bidwell, *The Two Yemens* (Boulder: Longman Westview Press, 1983), 173.
137. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 65.

138. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 110. Khamis' close relationship with Riyadh would later cost him his life.
139. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 72-85.
140. Ibid., 87. See also Clarke, *Yemen*, 108.
141. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 128. Gause points out that the Iran opening in Yemen was particularly vexing to Riyadh. Always concerned about Iranian and Shi'a influence in Arabia, the Saudis were attempting to pressure the Sultan of Oman to remove the Iranian troops sent by the Shah to support his regime during the Dhofar rebellion. With Iranian troops in Oman, the idea that Zaydi Shi'a Yemen might also have close relations or even an alliance with Riyadh ignited Saudi paranoia on multiple fronts — ideological, ethnic, sectarian, and regional geopolitics. In the context of the times, Pahlavi Iran was a focus of suspicion and competition.
142. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 123-125.
143. Ibid., 123.
144. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 92.
145. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 127.
146. Ibid., 130.
147. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 92.
148. Ibid., 96.
149. Bidwell, *Two Yemens*, 331.
150. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 96.
151. Ibid., 97.
152. James E. Carter, Jr. "The Defense of the Gulf," *Air Force Magazine*, April 2010, 72.
153. *Washington Post*, 4 December 1986, 1 and 44.
154. "Memorandum from Eastern Department FO (Riches) to Hayter, 30 April 1958," PRO, FO371/132968.
155. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 134.
156. Primakov served as the troubleshooter and a lead Soviet official with regard to Middle East affairs during the 1970s and 1980s. His importance and stature would later become apparent when he emerged as Russian prime minister under Boris Yeltsin in 1998. He was an ardent opponent of American unilateralism in the post-Soviet era and the architect of the Russian challenge to U.S. and NATO policies with regard to Kosovo in the late 1990s.
157. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 105.
158. Ibid., 98.
159. Ibid., 106. See also Dresch, *A History*, 152. Dresch explains that Khamis was assassinated by internal security units. "The organizer of the operation later spoke too freely and was lucky to escape with a transfer to the criminal investigation branch."
160. Dresch, *A History,* 149.

161. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 99.
162. Dresch, *A History*, 164.
163. Ibid., 101.
164. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 139.
165. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 101-104.
166. A former western diplomat that serving in Yemen.
167. Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni*, 147.
168. Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen: The political economy of activism in modern Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39.
169. Ibid., 151-154.
170. Dresch, *A History*, 162.
171. Clark, *Yemen*, 133.
172. Dresch, *A History*, 180.
173. Nazih N. Ayubi , *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 1995), 437.
174. A former senior U.S. Ambassador knowledgeable about Yemeni-Saudi security affairs.
175. Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia* (London: Viking Press, 2009), 129.
176. Ibid., 186.
177. Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom*, 130.
178. Clark, *Yemen*, 143.
179. Ibid., 144.
180. Senior Gulf Arab diplomat familiar with the politics familiar with internal Yemen affairs.
181. Dresch, *A History*, 197.
182. Ayubi, *Overstating*, 437.
183. Dresch, *A History*, 197.
184. Fuad I. Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion, and Sects in Islam* (London: Saqi Books, 1990), 57. Khuri explains the difference between Max Weber's definition of a state with a "political personality" and a "jurist personality." The latter is a modern western style state; it can sue and be sued and the latter, he argues, is represented by the Ibadi imamate in Oman and the Zaydi imamate in Yemen both creating a "unique political personality" that has existed since the 9th century. Khuri points out that the concept of state in the Arab world tend to refer to governments or regimes that resembled the concepts found in Ibn Khaldun's medieval works on society and government. His states lacked the attributes of and were in fact not nation-states.

See also:

a. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967). Although Khaldun (1332 to 1406) lived his entire life in Islamic Spain and North Africa, his family was Hadramawti in what is now Yemen.

b. Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990). Khaldun's thoughts on *asabiyya* (the bond between tribal groups) provides the cohesion necessary to gain political power and as it wanes, the group disintegrates. The parallels are obvious with the cyclical nature of the historical Yemeni political paradigm.

185. Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), 45-48.

See also Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 173. Choueiri argues that all Arab states, whether monarchies or republics, shared a "common patronage system." "Hence family ties, regional identifications, as well as ethnic, tribal and sectarian grievances, were either reconstructed or reactivated. ... Jobs, loans access to education, legal rights, and even marriages were supposed to become available or be withdrawn according to the rules of patronage." Yemen's core system of patronage shifted from one group to another but never changed.

186. Dresch, *A History*, 202-203.

See also:

a. Steven Erlanger, "In Yemen, U.S. Faces a Leader Who Puts Family First," *New York Times*, 5 January 2010. The author quotes analysts as saying that Saleh spent "less time in the past 2 years managing the complicated tribal and regional demands of fragile Yemen than trying to consolidate the power of his family."

b. Nasser Qahtan, "A Republic or a Kingdom?" Aden Press Web version, 10 February 2010. The author provides his list of the Saleh family members that hold key positions in Yemen.

187. Ibid. (Dresch).

188. "Ahmar Says President Saleh Seeking to Get Rid of General Ali Mohsen," *Yemen Herald*, 7 November 2009.

See also Jane Novak, "Hamid al-Ahmar, the Strong man of Yemen," *Yemen Times*, 28 December 2007.

189. Steve Erlanger, "In Yemen, U.S. Faces Leader Who Puts Family First," *New York Times*, 5 January 2010 Web article, 3.

190. "Strife in Yemen - The World's Next Failed State," *The Economist*, 12 September 2009, 49.

191. Dexter Filkins, "Letter from Yemen: After the Uprising" *New Yorker*, 11 April 2011, 46.

192. A senior Arabian official knowledgeable about Yemen and Saudi Arabian affairs.

193. Ibid.
194. Ahmed al-Haj, "Yemenis trying to oust leader protest for 5th day," Associated Press, 15 February 2011.
195. Interviews by Steve Kroft, *60 Minutes*, CBS, 16 January 2011.
196. A former senior western diplomat knowledgeable about Yemeni affairs.
197. Clark, *Yemen*, 170.
198. Ali H. Soufan, "Closing the Case on the Cole," *New York Times,* 12 October 2010.
199. Robert F. Worth, "Separatists put Yemen at risk of self-destruction," *New York Times Global Edition*, 1 March 2010, 6.
200. A senior Arabian official knowledgeable about Yemen and Saudi Arabian affairs.
201. Carapico, *Civil Society*, 203.
202. A senior Egyptian military officer knowledgeable about Yemeni and Saudi affairs.
203. Sarah Phillips, *Yemen: Developmental Dysfunction and Division in a Crisis State*, Developmental Leadership Program, February 2011 research paper.
204. Filkins, "After the Uprising," 46.
205. Phillips, *Yemen: Developmental Dysfuncton*.
206. Ibid.
207. Mohammed Ghobaari and Mohamed Sudam, "Yemen ruling party members from pro-protest bloc," Reuters, 18 April 2011; available from www.reuters.com/assets/print?aid=USTRE73H1EU20110418.
208. Lynn Carter, *Yemen Desktop Interagency Conflict Assessment* (U.S. Agency for International Development, Management Systems International), 17 September 2009, v.
209. A senior Arabian official knowledgeable about Yemen and Saudi Arabian affairs.
210. A mid-level Middle Eastern security officer knowledgeable about Yemen security affairs.
211. A former senior U.S. Ambassador knowledgeable about Yemeni-Saudi security affairs.
212. "Ahmar Says," *Yemen Herald*, 7 November 2009.
213. Adel Ameen, "What it means: The Demise of Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar," *Yemen Times*, 8 December 2009 and Sadam Al-Ashmori, "Hashid Tribe Expresses Allegiance to Sadeq Al-Ahmar as New Leader," *Yemen Times*, 26 January 2010.
214. "Yemen: Defusing the Saada Time Bomb," *International Crisi Group - Middle East Report No. 86*, 27 May 2009, 5.
215. Carter, *Yemen Desktop*, 14-15.
216. Senior Middle East military officer knowledgeable about Arabian Peninsula affairs and Iran.
217. "Saada Time Bomb," *Crisis Group,* 21-22.
218. "Saudi claims Yemeni rebels linked to Al Qaeda," *Reuters,* 23 January 2010, 1.

219. "Presentation and discussion at the U.S. Institute for Peace – Daniel Benjamin, Ambassador At-Large for Counter-Terrorism," 8 September 2010, Washington, D.C.
220. Senior Qatari official knowledgeable about the Yemen negotiations and development aid. The Qataris are Wahhabi but of a much more relaxed strain than Saudi Arabia. In addition, al-Jazeera, the Qatari cable network, consistently tweaks Riyadh on a number of embarrassing issues. One could also make the argument that Qatar has better relations, thought strained at times, with Iran than any other Gulf Arab state. Thus the idea of Qatar mediating a dispute between Zaydi Shi'a groups on the Saudi border, where the Iranians were believed to be supplying the rebels as well as increasing its influence in Yemen through large amounts of aid, was a scenario that Riyadh could hardly be expected to welcome.
221. Greg Bruno, "Interview with Christopher Boucek Carnegie Endowment for International Peace," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 29 December 2009, 3.
222. A U.S. official knowledgeable about Saudi-Yemeni affairs.
223. Roby C. Barrett, "Gulf Security: Policies without Context," *MEI Bulletin*, December 2009, 2-3.
224. Caryle Murphy, "Yemen: Why it's a bigger problem for Saudi than U.S.," *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 January 2010, 3.
225. A mid-level foreign military officer knowledgeable about Saudi military capabilities.
226. A senior Middle Eastern security official knowledgeable about border security issues.
227. Murphy, "Yemen," 2.
228. Senior Middle Eastern military officer knowledgeable about Arabian Peninsula affairs and Iran.
229. Ibid.
230. A senior Middle Eastern security official knowledgeable about border security issues.
231. Dresch, *Imams and Tribes*, 280.
232. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 107.
233. Kevin Peraino, "The Reeducation of Abu Janda: Can Jihadis really be Reformed?" *Newsweek*, 8 June 2009, 42.
234. Clark, *Yemen*, 282.
235. Charles Levinson and Margaret Coker, "Al Qaeda's Deep Tribal Ties Make Yemen a Terror Hub," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 January 2010.
236. Barak Barfi, "Yemen on the Brink? The Resurgence of Al Qaeda in Yemen," *New American Foundation-Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper*, January 2010, 1.
237. A senior Arabian official knowledgeable about Yemen and Saudi Arabian affairs.
238. "A growing worry for the West," *The Economist,* 2 January 2010, 35.

239. Christopher Boucek, "Question presented by Ahmed Saleh described as a South Yemeni," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - Al-Qaeda in Yemen*, 7 July 2009.

240. A relatively new area of study on colonial regimes is called *informant theory* for lack of a better term; it looks at police and security operations and how they were colored by who the informant supplying the information fit into the society. For example, having a Christian Lebanese report on *Hezbollah* or a *Jaish al-Mahdi* member report on the Sons of Iraq (SOI) invites problems of intentional and cultural prejudice that distort the information.

    See an excellent study by Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999). It examines the complexities evaluating information and sourcing in a culturally diverse environment.

241. Senior Gulf military officer knowledgeable about tribal issues and U.S. policy.

242. "Growing Worry," *The Economist*, 35.

243. Levinson, "Deep Tribal Ties." *The Wall Street Journal*.

244. Burrowes, *Yemen Arab Republic*, 8.

245. A senior Middle Eastern military officer knowledgeable about Arabian Peninsula affairs and Iran.

246. Prince Turki bin Feisal bin Abd-al-Aziz, speech at the Middle East Institute Conference, Washington D.C., November 2006.

247. "Presentation – Daniel Benjamin," 8 September 2010.

248. Ibid. Another person suggested that the U.S. might consider paying the jihadis $100,000 each to stay at home because it would be "more cost effective."

249. "Presentation – Daniel Benjamin," 8 September 2010.

250. Ibid.

251. Jim Michaels, "U.S. takes new approach to Yemen aid program," *USA Today*, 16 November 2010, 5A.

252. Greg Miller, "CIA sees increased threat in Yemen," *The Washington Post*, 25 August 2010, A1.

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254. "U.S. terror war in Yemen frustrated by politics," *AOL News*; available at www.aolnews.com/story/us-terror-war-in-yemen-frustrated-by/1335869 (accessed April 2011).

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256. Frederick W. Kagan and Christopher Harnisch, "Yemen: How to Apply 'Smart Power' in Yemen," *Wall Street Journal*, 14 January 2010, 2. This article is absolutely correct about the capabilities of the U.S. Government in Yemen, but the solution of creating a capability in Washington to address problems in Yemen is utter nonsense. The

authors are under the impression that the government in Sana'a is a nation-state and must be supported as the only alternative to the Huthi rebellion and southern secession. The problem is far more complicated.

257. Phil Stewart, "U.S. urges Yemen transition, no aid cut-off Pentagon," *Reuters*, 9 April 2011; available at http://uk.reuters.com/assets/print?aid+UKTRE7346V720110405 (accessed April 2011).

258. Filkins, "Letter from Yemen," 40.

259. 2011 Yemen Stability Study — Glevum Stability Assessment, March 2011; available at www.fpri.org/pubs/2011/glevum.yemen2011stabilitysurveyvi.pdf (accessed April 2011), 11.

260. William Faulkner, "Requiem for a Nun," 1951.