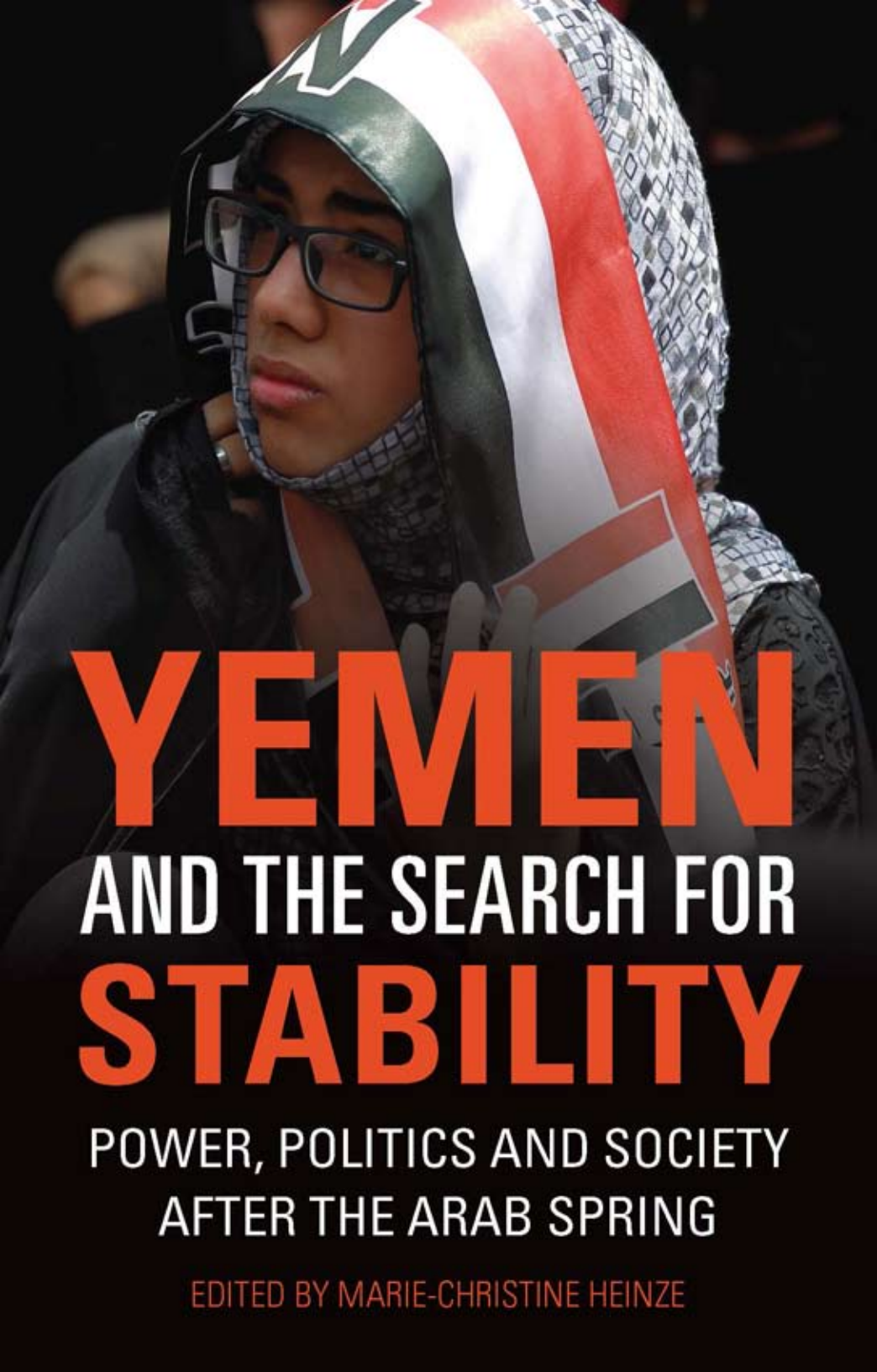

YEMEN
AND THE SEARCH FOR STABILITY

POWER, POLITICS AND SOCIETY AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

EDITED BY MARIE-CHRISTINE HEINZE

Marie-Christine Heinze is President of CARPO (Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient) and a researcher at the University of Bonn, where she has headed the research project "Framing the 'Revolution' in Yemen", which the University of Bonn coordinated together with the Yemen Polling Center, and "Academic Approaches to Peace-building and State-building in Yemen", co-implemented with the Gender Development Research and Studies Center (GDRSC) at Sanaʿa University. She holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Bielefeld and is editor of the *Jemen-Report*, the magazine of the German-Yemeni Society. She also frequently works as a consultant on Yemen and has published widely on social and political change in the country.

"An excellent collection of new research on Yemen based on detailed fieldwork."

Charles Schmitz, Professor, Towson University

"An exciting, indispensable collection of chapters by up-and-coming scholars, based on first-hand field research completed mostly during the tumultuous, but still hopeful, historical moment between the mass popular uprising in 2011 and the outbreak of war in 2015."

Sheila Carapico, Professor, University of Richmond

"Today Yemen suffers its worst crisis since the turbulent years of the late 19th century. A catastrophic war is compounded by the prospect of the country's renewed partition and colonial encroachment. Yet far from writing Yemen's obituary, the authors of this timely collection of essays provide compelling and nuanced analyses of the cultural and political trajectories of the years that followed President Ali Abd Allah Salih's resignation. Readers become familiar with the creative responses of activists, filmmakers, artists and entrepreneurs to what appeared as a moment of profound transformation, in the hope that their grass roots activities will contribute to a peaceful and stable post-war era. A number of highly original essays discuss hitherto little-known features of the transition process: women's empowerment in the National Dialogue Conference, Salafis' 'democracy training', provincial self-organization models and intergenerational memory among sympathizers of the Southern Independence Movement.

Yemen and the Search for Stability makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the 'Arab Spring' and its aftermath on the Arabian Peninsula. It will be illuminating for anyone who wants to gain insights into contemporary Yemen beyond the headlines."

Gabriele vom Bruck, Senior Lecturer, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London

YEMEN AND THE SEARCH FOR STABILITY

Power, Politics and Society after the Arab Spring

Edited by
Marie-Christine Heinze

I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2018 by
I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
London • New York
www.ibtauris.com

Copyright Editorial Selection © 2018 Marie-Christine Heinze

Copyright Individual Chapters © 2018 Anne-Linda Amira Augustin, Laurent Bonnefoy, Marieke Brandt, Maria-Louise Clausen, Marie-Christine Heinze, Katherine Hennessey, Elisabeth Kendall, Judit Kuschnitzki, Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi, Nadia al-Sakkaf, Stephen Steinbeiser, Ewa K. Strzelecka, Tobias Thiel, Mareike Transfeld

The right of Marie-Christine Heinze to be identified as the editor of this work has been asserted by the editor in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, this book, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

References to websites were correct at the time of writing.

Library of Modern Middle East Studies 183

ISBN: 978 1 78453 465 3
eISBN: 978 1 78672 351 2
ePDF: 978 1 78673 351 1

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Typeset in Stone Serif by OKS Prepress Services, Chennai, India
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

To the Yemenis who continue to struggle peacefully for a better future –
may their voices be heard and their spirits not falter.

Contents

Acknowledgements and Note on Transcription ix
List of Abbreviations xi

Introduction: Yemen and the Search for Stability 1
Marie-Christine Heinze

Part I *Competing Visions: Yemen's Imagined Futures*

1. Scepticism among Emerging Public Intellectuals in Post-Revolution Yemen 27
Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi

2. A Political Culture of Feminist Resistance: Exploring Women's Agency and Gender Dynamics in Yemen's Uprising (2011–15) 47
Ewa K. Strzelecka

3. The Mobilization of Yemen's Eastern Tribes: Al-Mahra's Self-Organization Model 71
Elisabeth Kendall

4. Generational and Political Change in Southern Yemen: "The Generation of Unity" Envisions its Southern State 93
Anne-Linda Amira Augustin

Part II *Transition and Its Discontents: Visions and Strategies of Yemen's Political Actors*

5. Governance in Transition: The Dynamics of Yemen's Negotiated Reform Process 117
Tobias Thiel

6. Negotiating Women's Empowerment in the NDC 134
Nadia al-Sakkaf

7. The Huthi Enigma: Ansar Allah and the "Second Republic" 160
Marieke Brandt

8. Reversals of Fortune: The Islah Party in Post-Salih Yemen 184
Laurent Bonnefoy

9. A Party for Salafis?: The Building of al-Rashad in Yemen's Transition Period 204
Judit Kuschnitzki

Part III *Socio-Cultural Upheavals: Yemen Before and After the Arab Spring*

10. A Youth Non-Movement in Sanaʿa: Changing Normative Geographies through Fashion, Art and Music 231
Mareike Transfeld

11. Can We Talk to Terrorists?: Extremism and the Potential for Dialogue, as Portrayed in Yemeni Film and Theatre 258
Katherine Hennessey

12. Can the "Old Yemen" Survive the "New Yemen"?: The Depredations of War and Other Threats to Yemen's Cultural Heritage 278
Stephen Steinbeiser

13. Can Federalism Save the Yemeni State? 306
Maria-Louise Clausen

About the Authors 327

Index 331

Acknowledgements and Note on Transcription

The chapters in this book result from papers presented at the conference "The 'New Yemen' – Social, Cultural, and Political Ramifications of the 'Revolution' Three Years After" at the University of Bonn on 16–17 June 2014. The conference as well as this volume are outputs of a project entitled "Framing the Revolution in Yemen", which was co-implemented by the University of Bonn and the Yemen Polling Center from 2012 to 2014 and which was generously funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. The editor would like to gratefully acknowledge the Volkswagen Foundation's continued support throughout the course of this project as well as the publication process of this volume. She would also like to gratefully acknowledge the continued support of the director of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Bonn, Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann, for this project as well as the excellent cooperation and partnership with the Yemen Polling Center, and particularly with Hafez Albukari and Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi, throughout the project and beyond. She would furthermore like to thank Amira Augustin, Marieke Brandt, Katherine Hennessey and Mareike Transfeld for commenting on some of the draft chapters as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful remarks and recommendations. A very special and heartfelt thank you goes to Debra Lichtenthaeler for her excellent and patient editing of the entire book.

For the transcription of Arabic names and terms into English, the editor has chosen to remain as close as possible to the rules of academic transcription without using diacritics (except for the *ʿayn* and the *hamza*). The names of personalities as well as place names have been rendered according to this rule except when citing the authors of papers or books. Here, the spelling of the name in the publication was retained.

List of Abbreviations

AQAP	al-Qaʿida in the the Arabian Peninsula
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
COCA	Central Organization for Control and Auditing
EBAA	Executive Bureau for the Acceleration of Aid Absorption and Implementation of the Mutual Accountability Framework
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPC	General People's Congress
ICT	internet and communication technology
JMP	Joint Meeting Parties
LAL	Local Authority Law
LCCD	Local Councils for Cooperative Development
LDA	Local Development Association
MOLA	Ministry of Local Administration
MoPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
NGO	non-governmental organization
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PNPA	Peace and National Partnership Agreement
SNACC	Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WNC	Women's National Committee
YSP	Yemeni Socialist Party

INTRODUCTION

Yemen and the Search for Stability

Marie-Christine Heinze[1]

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2011, Yemenis took to the streets to protest for a better future for their country. They called for the "fall of the regime" of President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, widely perceived as corrupt and unjust, and for the building of a "new Yemen". Their protests lasted more than nine months before Salih formally agreed to step down in November 2011. These 2011 upheavals continue to be referred to by regime-opponents in Yemen as *thawra* (revolution), yet that year did not see a revolution, i.e. a fundamental change to political power structures and the social norms and practices that carry them.

Rather, as this collection demonstrates, the country merely witnessed a change at the top of the regime. On 23 November, Salih signed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative, which was designed with the motivation to prevent the outbreak of civil war – a very real possibility that had loomed since March 2011 when significant numbers of formerly regime-loyal actors, including parts of the army and the security services, had joined the protests in Sanaʿa and throughout the country. The GCC Agreement initiated a two-year transition process that was to result in a new constitution and subsequent elections. In the subsequent months and years, Yemen embarked on the process of re-building its political system. This process was fraught with difficulties, and its ensuing failure has culminated in a full-out war with regional participation.

As Yemenis pick up the pieces of their Arab Spring dreams, it is important to remember the plans, hopes, visions and ideas that nurtured the protests of 2011 in order to investigate why Yemen's search for stability failed and to assess the impact of Yemen's violent recent history on society and its various actors. In doing so, the scholars assembled in this book contribute to writing a history of Yemen's present, taking stock of the visions Yemenis have (or once had) and the strategies the various actors pursued to achieve their aims. The upheavals of the Arab Spring, protests that began in 2011 and took such different trajectories in various contexts in the years that followed, continue to shake the region and will undoubtedly do so for years to come as competing actors and ideas struggle for predominance. This volume provides an overview of some of the most important ideas and actors that have shaped the Yemeni struggle in the initial post-2011 years and of the factors, both internal and external, that derailed Yemen's transition process.

The volume is divided into three sections. In the first, entitled "Competing Visions", Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi, Ewa Strzelecka, Elisabeth Kendall and Anne-Linda Amira Augustin explore the ways in which various elements of Yemeni society – in particular the intelligentsia, Yemeni women, and Southern Yemenis of varying regional backgrounds and age categories – initially envisioned their future post-Salih, and how those visions collided with Yemen's entrenched political realities. The second section, "Transition and its Discontents", shifts the focus to those gritty realities. Tobias Thiel, Nadia al-Sakkaf, Marieke Brandt, Laurent Bonnefoy and Judit Kuschnitzki examine the visions and strategies of various political actors in their attempts to find their footing on constantly shifting territory, from the protest camps of Change Square to the conference rooms of the National Dialogue. The articles by Mareike Transfeld, Katherine Hennessey, Stephen Steinbeiser and Maria Clausen in the final section, "Socio-cultural Upheavals", act as a bridge between the vagaries of the recent past and the still uncertain future, suggesting that, though Yemen's search for stability has failed in 2014–15, the vision and ideas brought forward during the "revolution" and the transition process can provide the basis for a better Yemeni future if taken into account.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE 2011 YEMENI "REVOLUTION"

Yemen's protests first erupted in January 2011 in solidarity with the demonstrations in Tunisia and gathered significant traction after the fall of Husni Mubarak in Egypt on 11 February. Due to this direct linkage and the hope that Mubarak's fall ignited among the disillusioned in Yemen, 11 February 2011 is now considered as the starting date of the Yemeni "revolution". A myriad of actors organized the protests throughout the country, at the forefront of which were the so-called "youth" who were themselves a diverse group of people with a range of backgrounds and aims. In a recent essay in the *Jemen-Report*, an annual magazine on Yemen published by the German–Yemeni Society, al-Rubaidi (2016) discusses the various and at times politicized notions of the term "youth" and points out that in the Yemeni context the term refers less to an age group and more to one's position in society. Men and women whose lives remain determined by the authority of a father figure are considered "youth", and the "youth revolution" of 2011 was accordingly seen as an uprising against father figure ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, whose 33-year grip on power made him the only head of state that many of the "youth" had ever known. The participants of the uprising rose to challenge Salih's authority as well as the norms and structures that maintained his position and that forbade any disobedience towards the regime.

In this volume, al-Rubaidi furthers his earlier argument, demonstrating how the normative social order that had sustained Yemen's political system (and with it the Salih regime) over the last decades gradually broke down as its sustaining elites disintegrated in the course of the 2011 protests. This breakdown opened up new discursive spaces that allowed for the expression of fundamentally new ideas, which furthermore became – in part due to the use of social media – accessible to a wider audience than intellectual discussions had been in the past. Over the course of 2011 and beyond, the scepticism of a new generation of Yemeni intellectuals towards the political, tribal and religious elites of the country gained widespread traction in Yemeni society and contributed to a revolution in Yemeni thinking, the effects of which will last well into the future, particularly as the authorities they sought to

challenge were among those who led Yemen into war that began in 2014–15.

The feminist resistance of 2011 and beyond likewise has the potential to subvert dominant patriarchal power structures. Pointing to the fact that women made up a significant and highly visible part of the youth that first took to the streets of Yemen in 2011, Strzelecka's chapter in this volume shows how the absence of elders in the first months of the protests resulted in a rapid transformation of gender relations: Women "organised marches, led demonstrations, documented events, spread the news through social media and blogs, gave workshops and talks, formed coalitions, made decisions, prepared art programs, chanted slogans, nursed the wounded, provided food, raised funds, lived and slept outside in tends in the revolutionary squares (camps), just like the men" (see Chapter 2).

In the first months of the 2011 protests, the creativity of the youth turned the protest sites into liminal spaces defined by a spirit of community and frank debate (Damesin 2013: §§ 15–20). The aim was not only to arrive at political change, but to challenge, redefine or abort the existing norms, values and social structures upon which the ruling elites had based their control of the country. Such structures had enabled corruption, nepotism and an increase in violence, as local norms containing and preventing violent behaviour eroded without the state being able and willing to ensure the rule of law.

The youth protesters were quickly joined by two disenfranchised movements, whose followers saw the protests as an opportunity to take their demands to a broader level: the Huthis and the Southern Movement. Both groups had already been protesting against the economic, cultural and political marginalization of their home regions, the corruption in the country and the lack of rule of law for several years prior to 2011.

The Huthis, who since 2011 have referred to themselves as Ansar Allah [Partisans of God], emerged out of a Zaydi[2] revival movement in Saʿda governorate on the border with Saudi Arabia. This revival movement arose in the early 1990s to counter an increasing Sunnization of Zaydi doctrine,[3] the spread of Salafism in the Zaydi heartland of Saʿda, and a systematic government policy of neglect towards the Zaydis (Brandt 2017). In the late 1990s factional disputes

within the movement led to internal schisms and to the emergence of a group led by the young cleric Husayn al-Huthi; from 2001 onwards this group became known as "the Huthis". Between 2004 and 2010 the Yemeni government and the Huthis fought each other in six increasingly violent conflicts, known in Yemen as "the Saʿda Wars" (*hurub Saʿda*). (On the history of the Saʿda Wars and the rise of the Huthi movement, see Brandt's chapter in this volume.) In Saʿda, and later in other northern governorates as well, the Huthis were able to rally a growing number of supporters around their revolutionary agenda, which addressed issues such as corruption, economic neglect, social and religious marginalization as well as Salih's complicity in the US "war on terrorism". It was therefore no surprise that the Huthis quickly chose to join the youth protests in Sanaʿa, particularly as this also gave them the opportunity to carry their protests from the northern margins of the country into Yemen's capital city.

The Southern Movement (*al-hirak al-janubi*; or simply Hirak) is a large-scale protest movement in the Southern part of the country, spanning across all regions of the former South Yemen. Having started in 2007 as small-scale protests by members of the former Southern military who had been forcibly retired after the civil war of 1994,[4] they continued to grow in size as more and more people joined their sit-ins, protesting against land theft in the south by northern elites, the lack of rule of law, corruption, etc. The struggle over control of territory is a particularly important issue in the ongoing power struggles between northern elites and people in the South. Around 80 per cent of Yemen's few oil reserves lie in Yemen's eastern province, Hadhramawt, considered to be part of the political South. Moreover, the Bab al-Mandab – the strategic Southern entrance to the Red Sea from the Arabian Sea, through which runs one of the most important sea trading routes worldwide – is also Southern territory. To reclaim these lands for an independent "South Arabia" after they were, according to Southern perception, "occupied" and "stolen" by northern elites after North and South Yemen unified in 1990 is one of the most important objectives of the Southern Movement.

In 2007 and after, the regime refused to respond to the Southern Movement's peaceful demands, but instead increasingly employed

violence against the protesters. Thus more and more Southerners began to call for independence from North Yemen, a goal the Southern Movement framed as "liberation" from "northern occupation". These sentiments have increased in popularity since 2009, when the flag of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) became a ubiquitous symbol for Southern demands. In this volume, Augustin argues that relics of the past, such as the flag of former South Yemen, are powerful discursive tools utilized by Southern protesters to counter the hegemony of the Northern regime. In employing such tools, however, the *jil al-wahda* (generation of unity), i.e. the generation of Southerners born in 1990 and after, at times seeks to communicate a different message than the generation of their parents, who experienced an independent Southern state and who have been criticized by the younger generation for leading the South into unity with the North in 1990. While the Southern Movement is united in its framing of South–North relations as "Us" versus "Them", and in its demands for an independent "South Arabia", social and political change in the South is driven not only by the civic and educational grassroots movement that spread throughout its urban areas, but also by intergenerational struggles over how to deal with the past and by the youth's increasing challenge of the older generation's leadership.

These groups, namely, the youth, the Huthis, and the Southern Movement, were those who initially carried forward the "revolution" until the events of one day changed Yemen's future forever: On 18 March 2011, after Friday prayer, regime-loyal snipers killed more than 50 protesters by firing into a crowd on Change Square, the heart of the protests in front of the new Sanaʿa University campus.[5] The events of the "Friday of Dignity" (*jumʿa al-karama*), as the day came soon to be known in Yemeni collective memory, resulted in a significant shake-up of regime-sustaining forces. The leaders of the largest opposition party, *al-tajammuʿ al-yamani li-l-islah* – the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, generally known as Hizb al-Islah (the Reform Party) or simply Islah – officially joined the "revolution" in protest of these indiscriminate killings, as did a significant number of tribal *shaykh*s and military actors allied with the party. Prior to February, Islah had organized large-scale demonstrations in Sanaʿa

and elsewhere parallel to, but not in support of, the protests staged by the youth. Until then, Islah's protests had demanded reforms but not the resignation of President Salih, thus remaining well within the rules of the game that had sustained Salih's regime for more than 33 years. But increasing violence against the protestors from February onwards, as well as the appalling events of 18 March, caused Islah, among others, to ally with the youth calling for Salih's departure.

The Hizb al-Islah is the largest party in Yemen's opposition coalition, collectively known as the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), established in 2005. Islah brings together tribesmen, businessmen, Salafis and members of the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood in a highly diverse union. Indeed, as Bonnefoy points out in this volume, diversity is one of Islah's most striking characteristics. One of its most prolific members has been Shaykh ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani, head of the al-Iman University in Sanaʿa and an influential cleric, who is often described as Salafi or Wahhabi (Yadav 2013: 30), and is considered to represent the "radical Brotherhood" wing of Islah (Dresch 2000: 201). Alongside al-Zindani but representing the tribal part of Islah, the other most important member of the party was – until his death in December 2007 – Shaykh ʿAbd Allah al-Ahmar, paramount chief of the most politically powerful tribal confederation in northern Yemen (Hashid), president of the party and speaker of Parliament. Upon his death, his oldest son Sadiq al-Ahmar succeeded him as Hashid's *shaykh* of *shaykh*s. Another son, Hamid al-Ahmar, is a charismatic politician, business tycoon and also an influential member of Islah.

Thus the largest opposition party, along with some of Yemen's most powerful tribal elites, joined the 2011 protests. A further crucial shakeup in the wake of *Jumʿa* al-Karama came when General ʿAli Muhsin al-Ahmar threw his (and his military brigades') weight behind the protesters' cause. Despite the name, the general is not related to the aforementioned al-Ahmar family; rather, he hails from the same village as ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih and was for many years one of the president's closest allies and one of the most influential persons in the Salih regime. As commander of the north-western military district and the First Armoured Division (known as *firqa* (division)), he led the six wars fought against the Huthis from 2004 to 2010.

ʿAli Muhsin long considered himself Salih's potential successor, but his relationship with the president deteriorated over the course of the new millennium as it became apparent that Salih was grooming his son Ahmad for succession. Along with these significant actors, many other diplomats, members of the security forces, parliamentarians and other formerly regime-loyal actors joined the "revolution", levelling the political and military playing field but heightening the danger of a full-out civil war.

As these elites took increasing control of the protest squares throughout the country, the dynamics of the protests changed significantly. The youth who had organized the initial protests with the aim of achieving fundamental social and political change began to feel that their revolution was being hijacked by the same elites they had sought to topple. The Southern Movement quickly dissociated itself from the protests "in the North", believing that its aims could no longer be achieved now that Islah and the old guard had taken control of "the revolution".[6] The dynamics of the squares, particularly at Change Square in Sanaʿa, also changed drastically. As Strzelecka points out in her chapter in this volume, the initial liberalization of social norms that had allowed women to protest side by side with men was reversed when the old elites established control over the spaces of protests. Struggles over the control of the stage and who would be allowed to speak increased, due to antagonism between the conservative Sunni Islahis, the revivalist Shiʿi Huthis, the fundamentalist Salafis and the comparatively liberal youth.[7] Youth and women sought to continue their struggle for social change, but now found themselves on the margins of a fight for power between the old elites.

Low-level violent confrontations throughout the country, coupled with coordinated protests at the Change and Liberation Squares in many Yemeni cities, became the theme of the subsequent months. On 3 June 2011, a bomb exploded in the mosque on President Salih's compound, severely injuring him and killing and injuring a number of his important supporters. Salih subsequently had to leave Yemen for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia, an event that led many protesters to believe that he was using this as a pretext for an honourable escape. These hopes were shattered, however, when Salih returned to Sanaʿa on 23 September. The danger that the political and

military stalemate, which was regularly interrupted by low-level violence throughout Yemen, would escalate into a full-fledged civil war remained a real risk, until the GCC together with the United Nations and other members of the international community successfully convinced Salih to sign the GCC Initiative on 23 November 2011.

THE GCC INITIATIVE AND THE TRANSITION PROCESS, 2012–14

The stipulations of the GCC Initiative and its accompanying Executive Mechanism were based on ideas that had already been brought forward by the JMP in April 2011 in an attempt to solve the political crisis without further bloodshed (Heinze 2015: 40–1). Throughout the months between April and November 2011, Salih had signalled his willingness to sign the agreement several times, only to withdraw at the last minute. What ultimately convinced Salih to sign the Initiative remains unknown, but its guarantee of immunity for him and his family was certainly an important factor. Without this guarantee, which allowed him to remain in the country and continue in his position as head of the ruling party, the General People's Congress (GPC), Salih would certainly never have signed.

Three immediate political steps, which heralded the "transition phase" until a new president and government could be democratically elected, followed the signing of the GCC Initiative. First, a transitional government, half of whose positions went to the GPC and the other half to the JMP (mainly to Islah), was sworn in on 7 December 2011. Muhammad Ba Sindwa, a politician from Aden who had been in the opposition as an independent since the early 2000s, became prime minister. Second, on 21 January 2012, the law guaranteeing immunity to President Salih and his family was adopted; and third, on 21 February 2012, Salih's former vice president, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, was formally elected as the new president of Yemen for the coming transition phase of two years. The election was carried out with Hadi as the only candidate, a fact received with mixed feelings among Yemenis.

While many joyfully participated in the elections – mainly to vote out Salih, rather than to elect Hadi – many others criticized the whole

process around the GCC Initiative as an undertaking that primarily served to retain the status quo for the political elites of the country. These dissenters noted that none of the new forces on the political scene of the country, i.e. the youth, the Huthis or the Southern Movement, had been included in the development and negotiation of the GCC Initiative; rather, the same parties that had sustained the regime over the past decades, i.e. the GPC and JMP (chiefly Islah), now made up the transitional government. Moreover, Hadi, who had served as vice president for almost two decades, was now to be president. And perhaps most galling, Salih was to receive immunity. These critics worked to create a "parallel revolution" to ensure that Salih's network would not continue to pervade the state. Through strikes and demonstrations, this "parallel revolution" blocked the work of numerous institutions and attempted to rid these bodies of officials linked to Salih – in several cases quite successfully.

Several further developments also took place concurrently. In Sanaʿa, preparations were made to organize the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), envisioned as the heart of Yemen's "transition process". Delegates from the various political parties and groupings as well as representatives from all regions of Yemen and of all social categories were to come together to deliberate the political future of the country and to craft a new social contract that would be the basis of a revised political system. As stipulated in the Executive Mechanism of the GCC Initiative, the results of the NDC were to form the foundational ideas of a new constitution, which was then to be approved by referendum at the end of the transition process, to be followed by elections. The Executive Mechanism also called for a security sector reform process in order to reunite the army, which had split in March 2011 when General ʿAli Muhsin al-Ahmar and others joined the revolution, as well as for a transitional justice process to address the violence committed in that year.

Though the elites of Sanaʿa were busy deliberating the number of seats to be allocated to each faction in the NDC as well as the respective selection process, they also found time to involve themselves in armed power struggles outside the urban areas. The history of these struggles dates back to the Saʿda Wars between the Huthis and the regime from 2004 to 2010, in which tribes and

militias affiliated with Islah and the Salafiyya in these northern governorates also took part. In 2011, the Huthis used the power vacuum, which evolved as a result of the split in the army, to expand their power base in the north of the country; after they established control over the governorate of Saʿda, they then pushed into the adjacent governorates of Hajja, ʿAmran and al-Jawf. The expansion of the Huthis was opposed by parts of the army as well as by tribes and militias, many of which were affiliated with Islah and other conservative Sunni factions in Yemen, such as the Salafis. Though the conflicts were often localized and fuelled by local interests, they reverberated into the political scene in Sanaʿa. Infighting between various factions of the army and the police, as well as between forces loyal to the former president and those loyal to other factions, also contributed to a continued deterioration of the security situation in the non-urban areas of northern Yemen.

In the south, meanwhile, where the Southern Movement – along with the Huthis – had rejected the GCC Initiative, developments of a different kind took place. On the one hand, activists of the Southern Movement continued to drive a broad civic endeavour that aimed at establishing a new Southern identity and an independent "civil state". Particularly in urban areas, educational events, protests, marches and campaigns, art contests and numerous other forms of civic engagement took place, always explicitly intended to contrast the perceived "violent, backwards and uncivilized" north. The Southern Movement, while protesting similar forms of marginalization as the Huthis, in direct contrast chose to remain distinctly non-violent, even in the face of ongoing violence against its activists.

At the same time, however, the South faced a deteriorating security situation. The security vacuum of 2011 had resulted in the empowerment of al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula and affiliated groups such as Ansar al-Shariʿa which had taken over entire towns in the governorate of Abyan. In May and June 2012, with support of the Yemeni army and US assistance, local militias referred to as "Popular Committees" launched an offensive to liberate the towns of Zinjibar, Jaʿar, Shuqra and others. During the campaign, hospitals and universities were destroyed, thousands of civilians displaced (most fled to Aden) and numerous civilians killed and injured.

On 18 March 2013, against this backdrop of escalating conflict, the NDC finally began its deliberations. A total of 565 delegates, including (almost) all political factions, all governorates of Yemen and an unprecedented number of women, youth and civil society representatives, came together at the Mövenpick Hotel in Sanaʿa to discuss the legal and institutional foundations upon which Yemenis would live together in the future. In nine working groups, the delegates were to discuss the Saʿda Issue (*qadiyya Saʿda*), i.e. the Huthi question); the Southern Issue (*al-qadiyya al-janubiyya*); matters relating to transitional justice; state-building; good governance; the reform of the military and the security forces; the question of special entities (i.e. relating to the right of minorities and marginalized groups); and the topics of rights and freedoms as well as development-related challenges.

Regarding the representation of political and social factions, a few things are particularly important to note: First of all, as Kendall points out in her chapter in this volume, the selection of representatives from the various regions (as well as from different social categories) was not always a transparent process. For example, 14 delegates were chosen to represent Yemen's easternmost province, al-Mahra, but not all Mahris agreed that this selection was truly representative, particularly since the delegates, in contrast to most of al-Mahra's population, hailed from urban rather than rural areas. A "fundamental concern", argues Kendall, "should have been the large swathes of the Yemeni population that were assumed to be represented simply because they were allocated delegates" (see Chapter 3).

On a more positive note, the NDC significantly empowered women's political participation. Women made up 28 per cent of the delegates and were either appointed as representatives of various political parties or participated as members of a group of 40 politically independent women who had been selected on the basis of their former activism and experience. As al-Sakkaf critically notes in her chapter in this volume, however, there was a "visible difference in the expertise among the women in this conference" and often a "deliberate isolation of the female members within the political parties when it came to developing and articulating the political position of the party towards the issue at hand" (see Chapter 6). Nonetheless, as chairs of

working groups, as rapporteurs and as delegates with specific pro-women's issues on their agenda, many female delegates at the NDC left a deep impression on the male members of the NDC as well as the general public. They were also able to push through some highly significant recommendations, among which the most prominently cited is the 30 per cent quota for women in both elected and nonelected governmental decision-making positions.

The Huthis, despite their ongoing efforts to secure control over more territory in the north and their initial rejection of the GCC Initiative, participated constructively in the NDC's deliberations. In this volume, Brandt describes in detail the contributions of Ansar Allah to the discussions at the Mövenpick Hotel and how they successfully influenced the recommendations of the Saʿda Issue working group, i.e. the NDC working group that particularly addressed their concerns. Their ability to influence the NDC outcomes in their favour, according to Brandt, was also due in part to the exclusion of important anti-Huthi Saʿda tribal elites from the working group; the political and military weakness of their Sunni Islamist counterparts; and the consensus-building role the moderate Ansar Allah delegates played in this working group of the NDC.

The Sunni Islamist counterparts of the Huthis, the Muslim Brotherhood, likewise played a constructive role during the NDC. As Bonnefoy points out in Chapter 8, "the ideas put forward by the Islahi leadership for a 'new Yemen' in the party's media and during the NDC were consistent with a moderate and gradual transition to democracy". The self-conception of Islah as a conservative (Sunni) party, however, sometimes collided with its willingness to compromise in the NDC and to be a constructive political actor in the transition process. For instance, as Bonnefoy shows, "matters linked to women's rights or debates on child marriage were highly controversial within the party and risked creating a rift between the party itself and the image it projected of itself, through its leadership".

Established in 2012, the Salafi al-Rashad Union was an entirely new actor on Yemen's political scene. Its participation in the NDC was subjected to particular scrutiny, not only because of the negative stereotypes and notions of religious extremism that are associated

with the Salafiyya, as Kuschnitzki illustrates in Chapter 9, but also because the establishment of a Salafi political party constituted a clear break with the quietist approach the Salafiyya had adopted in Yemen in the past, an approach which rejects any form of political participation. The party used the NDC to present itself as "approachable, rational, and reasonable" in the course of the deliberations at the Mövenpick Hotel, with the professed aim of recruiting new members.

In contrast to most of the other political factions, the Southern Movement's separatist hardliners refused any participation in the NDC from the onset, as the possibility of an independent Southern state was not on the table. While delegates speaking for the South did participate in the dialogue, important factions of South Yemen's political spectrum were thus not represented and many Southerners accordingly refused to recognize the NDC and its results. Those Southern delegates who participated in the NDC found themselves in a difficult position: though more willing to compromise than other Southern hardliners, they had to bring home a result that would be considered acceptable to the Southern population. The discussions in the Southern Issue working group were therefore particularly difficult and resulted in serious threats by the Southern participants to withdraw from the dialogue if their demands were not met.

In order to overcome this deadlock, a small committee was established in September 2013, when the NDC was officially scheduled to conclude. This committee became known as the "Eight Plus Eight" or the "North–South" Committee, and included 16 members of the main political factions and the Southern Movement. After several months of deliberations, the committee compromised on a federal solution in which more control and autonomy would be devolved from the centre to the regions (Gaston 2014: 3–4). To this day, most Yemeni political actors and factions – as well as the international community – remain committed to the introduction of federalism in Yemen. However, "federalism" was and remains a rather vacuous, abstract concept which allowed, as Clausen argues in her chapter in this volume, "a wide range of actors the chance to see federalism as an acceptable political outcome, but also

simultaneously undermined federalism's potential to provide a clear way towards the 'new Yemen'" (see Chapter 13).

On 21 January 2014, under significant international pressure, the NDC finally came to an end, six months after its intended conclusion as stipulated in the GCC Initiative. Almost 1,800 recommendations by the nine working groups had been discussed in the NDC's General Assembly and approved as foundations of Yemen's new constitution. In the Guarantees Document signed on the same day by the participating parties,[8] Yemen's transition process was extended for another year and with it President Hadi's term of office which would otherwise officially have ended on 21 February 2014. To this day, many Yemenis as well as international observers consider the NDC an important and ultimately successful undertaking, and believe the resulting recommendations could serve as foundations of a new Yemeni state once the ongoing war comes to an end. On the other hand, the failure of the NDC delegates to agree on further details of the shape and mechanisms of a future federal system arguably mark the beginning of the failure of Yemen's transition process and its search for stability.[9] At the end of more than ten months of negotiations, the new shape of the future political system remained utterly unclear: the delegates had not been able to agree on the number of federal regions, nor on the relationship between the regions and the centre, nor on the division of national resources.

THE SLOW, VIOLENT DEATH OF YEMEN'S POLITICAL TRANSITION PROCESS

No longer willing or able to wait for all pertinent stakeholders to deliberate and agree upon this crucial decision for the future of Yemen, President Hadi chose to push the transition process forward by appointing a 21-member committee to decide upon the new federal structure. While the members were chosen from across the political spectrum, they were not appointed by the factions themselves but selected on the basis of their closeness to the president. Accordingly, when President Hadi approved the new federal structure of six regions (two in the former South Yemen and

four in the former North Yemen) as decided by the committee three weeks after the end of the NDC, protests erupted from several sides. The Huthis were particularly dissatisfied with the structure as it (intentionally) destroyed their plans for a semi-autonomous northern region under Huthi control, which they had hoped would include the governorates of al-Jawf, (parts of) ʿAmran, and Hajja with its access to the Red Sea.

Southern representatives, too, objected to the division of the South into two separate regions and called for either a two-region federation according to Yemen's historic divisions into North and South, or for the independence of the South from the North. In al-Mahra, the South's easternmost province, a majority of the population favoured the independence of a separate Mahri state over all other options – over a unified Yemen, a federal Yemen, or inclusion in an independent Southern state – due to "a widespread disenchantment in Mahra with the experience of Yemeni rule, both as part of South Yemen after 1967 and as part of a unified Yemen after 1990" (Kendall in Chapter 3). Out of fear of being dominated by the rich neighbouring province of Hadhramawt, with which al-Mahra was to be subsumed in one federal region together with Shabwa and Socotra, Mahris strove to self-organize and have since, with Kendall's help, tried to ensure that their sparsely populated region has a voice in the deliberations.

Despite the protests and the criticism of the six-region configuration, President Hadi pressed ahead with the political transition and announced the members of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) on 8 March 2014. The members of the CDC were chosen in the same fashion as those on the committee that decided on the federal regions. They were sworn to ensure that the draft constitution would be based on the almost 1,800 recommendations resulting from the NDC[10] – no easy feat given the fact that many of these recommendations had been agreed upon without taking federalism as the future political system into account. The members of the CDC were thus tasked with the difficult job of developing a constitution that would adapt the NDC recommendations to a federal system they had yet to design. Given the fact that it is the details "that define whether a federation will be able to manage and reduce conflict",

as Clausen points out in her chapter in this volume, the CDC's work was highly political rather than solely technical. This small committee ultimately had to decide whether the decision to adopt federalism would "be the first step in building a 'new Yemen' or further escalate the Yemeni state's fragmentation by giving local elites a platform to fight each other for political and economic privileges" (see Chapter 13).

While the CDC set to work, public trust and confidence in the transition process continued to deteriorate. During its first two years, as Thiel demonstrates in detail in Chapter 5, the transition government had focused too much on infighting and on gaining ground vis à vis the other party and had thus "failed to espouse popular demands for more transparent, effective, inclusive and rule-based public governance". The President "moreover used the extra-constitutional transition framework to leverage existing legislation and undermine existing institutions" thus eroding faith in the willingness and capacity of the transitional government to lead the country towards a better system of governance.

Moreover, Yemenis lost faith in the concepts of dialogue and compromise that had long been an integral part of Yemen's political culture. In the face of ever-increasing instability and violence, the resultant economic hardships and confronted with an end to the NDC that was in many ways far from consensual, many Yemenis began to doubt the adequacy of dialogue as a means to solving their nation's socio-political problems. Examining contemporary Yemeni theatre and film, particularly productions that treat the issue of terrorism, Hennessey traces this loss of faith in Chapter 11 in this volume. Before the conclusion of the NDC, when dialogue had "seemed an effective strategy, some terrorists were rendered as psychologically complex, potential interlocutors. From 2014 onwards, however, Yemeni playwrights increasingly opted to stage an inscrutable, inherently brutal and violent stereotype [...] suggesting that there is no point in attempting a dialogue with such monstrosities, no language common to civilized, rational 'Us' and savage, bloodthirsty "Them'". And in fact during the war that began in 2014–15, the various fighting factions have chosen to portray their enemies in ways that foment dehumanization of and

hatred towards the "Other", to the point that dialogue among the competing parties hardly seemed an option.

In 2014, the Huthis, whose loss of trust and belief in the political process had empowered the militant hardliners among them, continued their militant advance further south from Saʿda governorate and in July of that year took ʿAmran, the traditional stronghold of the al-Ahmar family.[11] With the weakening of the Ahmars, the Islahi star in Yemen's political transition quickly began to fade. In the span of just a few years, as Bonnefoy points out, the Hizb al-Islah had gone from "alleged hijacker of mobilizations on Change Square in Sanaʿa, [to] kingmaker before finally being side-lined by the rise to prominence of the competing Zaydi-based Huthi movement" (see Chapter 8).

In August and September 2014, by way of strategic escalation tactics, the Huthis seized Sanaʿa (on these events, see Bonnefoy and Brandt in this volume). The subsequent military successes of the Huthis in Sanaʿa turned out to be due in part to a deal between the Huthis and their former enemy ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, who continued to wield strong influence in the security sector. Their advance on the capital city was met with little resistance and resulted in the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA) on 21 September 2014, negotiated with the help of Jamal Benomar, UN Special Advisor on Yemen, and backed by most political parties.

At that point in the transition process, the September 2014 events, which the Huthis framed as a "continuation of the 2011 revolution" (Heinze 2015: 50), and the signing of the PNPA seemed like the beginning of a new era in an entirely new Yemen. Some of the old elites, like the al-Ahmars, had been significantly weakened and the transitional government, which had been divided between the two former regime-sustaining political parties, namely the GPC and Islah, was to be replaced with a technocratic consensus government according to the PNPA. Other articles in the agreement stipulated steps regarding the implementation of recommendations formulated in the NDC, measures against corruption, plans to foster economic development in the country, and a partial reintroduction of the energy subsidies that the government had cut at the end of July 2014. In return, the Huthis agreed to gradually dismantle their camps in and around Sanaʿa, among other things.

On 11 November, President Hadi appointed a new consensus government under Prime Minister Khaled Bahah. The new government set to work right away, aware that only a quick delivery of results to the suffering and increasingly disillusioned Yemeni population could prevent the country from sliding into further chaos and save the transition process. The Huthis, however, did not withdraw from Sanaʿa, but rather installed themselves as self-proclaimed guardians against corruption in the ministries, hampered their work and sowed further distrust in the work of the government they had worked to install. In the months to come, Ansar Allah took further control of state institutions and thus called into question their commitment to adhere to the PNPA.

On 17 January 2015, the new draft constitution was to be presented. Despite the fact that the Huthis had been promised a renegotiation of the division of the federal regions, Article 391 of the draft laid down the division as had been decided the previous spring. On the day the draft constitution was presented, a group of Huthis kidnapped Ahmad ʿAwadh bin Mubarak, the director of President Hadi's office. In the days that followed, the situation in Sanaʿa escalated violently and Huthi fighters occupied the presidential palace, with support from military units loyal to ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih.

On 22 January, President Hadi and the government under Khaled Bahah resigned, no longer believing that it would be possible to negotiate with the Huthis. Yet despite the Huthis' ongoing pressures on the government ministries and their non-adherence to the PNPA, it is most likely that the Huthis had not aimed for this end result. It is more likely that the Huthis, who to this day have not established their own political party, had hoped to rule through a puppet government and president, possibly expecting the ministers to cling to their positions, as had been the case in the past. Their first reaction was to place the entire cabinet, including Hadi, under house arrest. At the end of January, they staged a three-day "national conference" in Sanaʿa, which included representatives of the various political factions as well as different social categories, which allegedly "authorized revolutionary committees and the leadership of the revolution to take immediate steps necessary for organizing political authority and the transitional phase to move the country out of the current deadlock".[12]

On 6 February, the Huthis announced their Constitutional Declaration, which stipulated the establishment of a transitional national council of 551 members (the 301 members of parliament and others) and of a presidential council, with Muhammad al-Huthi, a cousin of ʿAbd al-Malik al-Huthi, at its head. Neither institution was ever established. Rather, a Supreme Revolutionary Council headed by Muhammad al-Huthi would speak for the de facto authorities in Sanaʿa for the time to come. If some had still believed that Yemen's "transition process" could be saved after the Huthi takeover of Sanaʿa, the events of January 2015 confirmed that this process was irrevocably dead.

On 21 February – the day that his presidency would have officially ended had he not stepped down a month earlier – ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi escaped from house arrest in Sanaʿa and fled to Aden. There, he rescinded his resignation and announced that he would soon form a new interim government to run the country's affairs from Aden, which would be the temporary capital of Yemen. In the coming days, however, the Huthi / Salih forces advanced further south from Sanaʿa towards Aden, forcing Hadi to flee once more, this time to Riyadh. On 25 March 2015, a "Saudi-led coalition" intervened in the conflict in Yemen with the aim to "restore the legitimate government" of the country to power and to drive the Huthis, who Saudi Arabia considers Iranian proxies, from the capital city. The Saudi intervention in Yemen added a regional and – due to the support it received from Western countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom – an international dimension to a local conflict over power and resources. The ensuing war has cost the lives of thousands of Yemenis, injured many more, caused millions to flee their homes and resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, bringing large parts of the population to the brink of famine.

CONCLUSION

Five years after thousands of Yemenis took to the streets in the hope of creating a "new Yemen" that would offer a better and brighter future for themselves and their children, Yemen lies in ruins.

Thousands have died; millions have fled and now languish in refugee camps; millions more suffer from lack of food and water as well as access to healthcare. Large parts of Yemen's infrastructure and parts of its invaluable cultural heritage have been destroyed. Yemen's future looks bleak.

Yet the essays in this volume also remind us that there is an abundance of creativity, of constructive visions as well as ongoing dynamics for positive change that could contribute to (re-)building the country if Yemenis regained hope in their power to do so and willingness to do so together. The examples of past local efforts to protect and preserve Yemen's cultural heritage, which Steinbeiser brings forward in his contribution to this volume, testify to this potential, while his illustrations of GCC-led investment projects also point to the dangers that lie ahead once the process of rebuilding the country and a new quest for stability begins. In a similar vein, Transfeld argues that even though the Yemeni youth lost their leverage on the political process in the wake of the GCC agreement, the continued efforts of the youth on the micro level have the potential to generate slow but lasting change in the country. As activists, photographers, filmmakers, artists, entrepreneurs and writers, they continue to challenge traditional norms as well as authorities in their everyday practices. While these do not seem to have made much of an impact on national-level power structures, the activities of Yemen's youth carry the potential for bottom-up social and political change. Such everyday struggles continue and are particularly important as a counter-force to the ongoing violence and destruction of the war that began in 2014–15.

The texts in this volume thus serve as salutary reminders that although Yemen's search for stability has once more failed, this was by no means the outcome that the overwhelming majority of Yemenis sought or desired. The authors of this volume thus hope that their essays will not only serve as a reminder of the mistakes committed in Yemen's post-revolution transition process, but also of the many positive values, ideas and everyday actions of which Yemenis are capable – values, ideas and actions which may yet guide the country's path through and beyond war, to peace and stability.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Amira Augustin, Marieke Brandt, Mareike Transfeld and particularly Katherine Hennessey for their comments on and edits of earlier versions of this chapter. Any shortcomings remain my own.
2. The Zaydiyya is a branch of Shiʿi Islam that was first introduced in Yemen at the end of the ninth century, when Yahya b. al-Husayn established an Imamate there, which – as system of rule based on Zaydi doctrine and as social structure – lasted over a millennium, until the 1962 revolution in northern Yemen resulted in the subsequent establishment of a republican system. With regard to jurisprudence, the Zaydiyya is similar to the Shafiʿiyya, the Sunni branch of Islam prevalent throughout the southern and eastern parts of Yemen as well as in the coastal areas on the Red Sea. The main difference between both schools of Islam is the Zaydi emphasis on the righteous rule of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, the *sada*, from among whom came the Yemeni imams as well as the administrative staff and other leaders in the imamic apparatus of governance.
3. The "Sunnization" of Zaydi doctrine, i.e. its convergence with Shafiʿi doctrine, had been promoted by some Zaydi imams since the fifteenth century, but gained particular traction during and after the 1962 revolution when the merger of these two schools (sg. *madhhab*) of Islam became part of the revolutionary project to create a new national and non-*madhhab* identity as the basis for a future republican system (Brandt 2017).
4. In 1994, political elites of former South Yemen declared secession from the Republic of Yemen, expressing discontent with the implementation of the unity agreement of 1990, which had united the formerly independent republics of North and South Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) respectively.
5. The official number of dead stands at 45, whereas the number most often cited in the media is 54. Many more were injured.
6. During the 1994 civil war, Islahi clerics had referred to the secessionist leaders of the Yemeni Socialist Party, which had ruled the socialist PDRY since the 1970s, as heretics (*kuffar*, sing. *kafir*), thus legitimizing the war against them.
7. On the struggle for control of the protest squares, particularly Change Square, and the antagonism between the Hizb al-Islah and the Huthis, see Heinze 2015.
8. On the ambiguous Huthi position on the Guarantees Document, see Brandt in this volume.
9. There are many other instances, of course, that may be considered to mark the beginning of Yemen's downward spiral, with the non-inclusion of the youth, the Huthis and the Southern Movement in the negotiation of the GCC Agreement certainly being one of them.

10. To ensure this, President Hadi set up the National Authority for Monitoring the Implementation of the NDC Outcomes.
11. By February 2014, they had captured the al-Ahmar compound in ʿAmran governorate, and in July 2014 they took ʿAmran City, killing the commander of the 310th Armored Brigade, the al-Ahmar-aligned General al-Qushaybi.
12. Cited from the concluding statement of the conference in Al-Karimi 2015.

REFERENCES

Brandt, Marieke, 'The global and the local: Al-Qaeda and Yemen's tribes', in V. Collombier and O. Roy (eds), *Tribes and Global Jihadism* (London, 2017).

Damesin, Laurent, 'La Place du Changement et la Place de la Libération à Sanaa: Espaces révolutionnaires et contrerévolutionnaires', *Arabian Humanities* 2 (2013). Available at http://cy.revues.org/2548 (accessed 22 October 2016).

Dresch, Paul, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge, 2000).

Gaston, Erica, *Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue*, United States Institute of Peace (Special report, 342) (2014). Available at http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR342-Process_Lessons_Learned_in_Yemen%E2%80%99s_National_Dialogue.pdf (accessed 7 June 2017).

Heinze, Marie-Christine, 'From the margins of Yemen into the heart of the country, from fist-fights on Change Square to control of the capital city: Spatial manifestations of the Ḥūthī ascension to power', in S. Conermann and E. Smolarz (eds), *Mobilizing Religion: Networks and Mobility* (Berlin, 2015), pp. 111–49.

Al-Karimi, Khalid, 'Opposition critical of Houthis' three day ultimatum', in *Yemen Times*, 2 February 2015. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1856/news/4852/Opposition-critical-of-Houthis%E2%80%99-three-day-ultimatum.htm (last accessed 7 June 2017; page no longer available).

al-Rubaidi, Abdulsalam, 'The concept of *shabāb* in Yemen', *Jemen-Report* 47/1&2 (2016), pp. 122–25.

Yadav, Stacey Philbrick, *Islamists and the State: Legitimacy and Institutions in Yemen and Lebanon* (London, 2013).

PART I

Competing Visions: Yemen's Imagined Futures

CHAPTER 1

Scepticism among Emerging Public Intellectuals in Post-Revolution Yemen

Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi[1]

Fill your cup with uncertainty,
And in the midday reflect on your shadow;
For it is perhaps your shape seen by the light.
Khalid al-ʿAbsi, a contemporary Yemeni poet and linguist (2015: 48)

INTRODUCTION

Since the revolution of 2011 in Yemen, emerging public intellectuals have begun to express fundamentally new ideas. The common feature of these intellectuals is that they have given prominence to discussing the most sensitive Yemeni issues in a radically critical fashion and to presenting paradigmatic alternatives to the established religious, social and political norms. By that, these new intellectuals represent a "scepticism" which has become a new feature within Yemeni society. For the sake of this chapter, I define the term "scepticism" as the critical questioning of taken-for-granted values, ideas and practices that were part of the dominant discourse of the pre-revolution regime. On the religious level, this definition of scepticism would necessarily include secular criticism and blasphemy (utterances against what has been collectively and historically thought to be "Islamic") and can also

include what some might define as heresy. On the political and social level, scepticism can connote any intellectual interrogation of the well-established normative order, for instance tribal values or gender politics. This emergence of a generation of new public intellectuals was on the one hand possible because of the breakdown of the traditional authorities, which in the past have enforced the normative order; and on the other hand due to new media, which provided alternative spaces for intellectuals to spread and discuss their new ideas, giving rise to new publics.

In the context of the revolution of 2011 and its aftermath, the triad of traditional authority – the religious authority, the social authority, and the militarized political authority – gradually broke down. With hundreds of thousands of Yemenis across the country protesting against the centralized traditional elite, the well-established normative order, that is the structure of society including gender roles, the way Islam is to be understood and practised, or the way the political order is to be interpreted, began to be questioned. According to Chalmers Johnson, it is in this juncture of the revolutionary process when the authoritarian regime loses its control over the society and that the people become able to express their suppressed positions. In the case of Yemen, generally speaking, the revolutionary individuals and movements have not only challenged the existence of the political regime but also its discursive and normative claims. According to conjunction theorists of revolutions, "political structures that over centralise power and isolate people are conducive to social movements that must, for structural reasons, challenge the very validity of the normative order" (Johnson 1989: 182). Although the traditional elite signed the internationally sponsored GCC Initiative in an attempt to uphold their own symbolic and material interests, such as positions within the military or government as well as business interests, the subsequent transition process contributed to their deconstruction (see Transfeld 2015). While the Sunni Islamists and the Huthi Zaydi Shiʿis were debating at the negotiating table of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), they were at the same time engaged with each other in deadly fighting (see Brandt's contribution in this volume for the sectarian conflicts and the parallel negotiations).With the aim of regaining the

power they perceived to have lost, the tribal federations became engaged in conflict with(in) each other, with the state, and with other political groups, which dramatically weakened social authority on a tribal, political and religious level.

It was this triad of authorities that upheld social, religious and political norms, ultimately representing the very base of the centralized authority held by former President Salih. The constant re-enactment of these norms in society has given them the form of rigid structures that seem to defy historical transformations. The revolution in Yemen was thus a historical response to what had been believed by many Yemenis to be outside the realm of possible human action. In other words, the revolutionary discourse of 2011 began to address the unaddressable and question the unquestionable humanly designed fatalism. These intellectuals found in the revolution their historical chance to make their dissenting voices heard and to deconstruct the accumulated intellectual capital that was wielded by the traditional elite. Against the backdrop of the transitional process that was initiated in the country since ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih signed the GCC Initiative in November 2011, the respective writers embarked upon a deconstructive–constructive enterprise that puts forward rational secularism (or rather freedom of conscience) versus totalitarian religiosity; a democratic political model versus an oligarchic model; and liberal social thought versus dogmatic social fideism. Hence, they opted for challenging a multifaceted power apparatus wherein religious authority is combined with the highly centralized authority of the military - tribal elite. Thus, those resentful intellectuals embarked on the difficult mission to fight the established normative order in its entirety and to further revolutionize the revolution itself by challenging the common understanding of the revolution as being an act of changing the political regime only. It can be gleaned from their writings and oral contributions that the real revolution was to change our idealized image of the past and the present. Hence, their questioning targeted the Islamic culture in general and the prevailing convictions about history, identity and traditional mores.

What distinguishes these new public intellectuals from critical voices heard before 2011 is that their controversial writings became the subject of wide debate and accordingly wielded greater influence. Most

of these intellectuals were not very widely known before 2011; they were relatively young in contrast to the age of the authoritarian regime itself and had only recently been recognized in the cultural and political scene. Their promotion and recognition did not come from the official governmental institutions connected to the traditional authorities, but mostly they were symbolically empowered by their readers and followers who themselves belonged to the opponent social and political movements. This was enabled by social media that gained traction in Yemen in the context of the 2011 uprising. In the Arab world, these new online media with their different possibilities have been a powerful alternative tool of challenging the existing conservative media owned by the traditional elite (Woo-Young 2005: 925). E-participation, according to Woo-Young, is characterized by convenient access to detailed information; free expression and exchange of opinions; online activism led by politicized agenda; and active formation of cyber groups (ibid.). In the case of Yemen, the aforementioned elements became the features of the revolutionary discussions in cyberspace resulting in the fact that in 2011 and after cyberspace had become a fertile land for planting new values and for changing the normative order in the country.

Taking into consideration the explosion of participation in new communication technologies in the urban areas in the aftermath of the revolution 2011 in Yemen,[2] the audience of these writers and poets increased and the impact of their ideas became tangible. It is evident from the comments of their Facebook followers that the audience (mainly urban youth) had become interested in the writings of the newly emerging sceptics; thus, since 2011, their voices have been competing with the conservative voices in the intellectual arena of the country.

The traditional elites could not suppress these voices. This was not only because the traditional elites were weakened and because there was a preoccupation with the power struggle on the national level: it was also due to the fragmented nature of this large group of alternative intellectuals, and due to the elusive, fluid character of the space provided by social media. New media spaces offered new, open and wide alternatives for the closed *qat* sessions.[3] Every social media user, whether in the country or outside, could

contribute her or his opinion without fearing the authorities. The sense that one is expressing her or his opinion in a virtual space and is part of a large virtual community gave many the psychological security for saying what one really believes. In the case of Yemen during the transition process, the groups and virtual alliances on Facebook can be understood as an alternative to the partisan groupings in the parallel physical spaces.

As a result of the political crises and the open moment for expressing themselves, ordinary Yemenis became more outspoken in expressing their doubtful sentiments towards the elites in a way long unseen in this conservative country. In short, since the advent of the change movement, Yemeni society experienced an earthquake of its well-established values and norms. Inspired by the ongoing social mobilization, the sceptics in question dared to question the unquestionable in contemporary Yemeni thought. In doing so, these intellectual sceptics did not necessarily make up a homogeneous group; rather, they often conflicted with each other in their opinions. Yet, at bottom, they all shared the same revolutionary vision.

Based on these premises, a number of selected argumentative theological, literary, and political texts published by the emerging public intellectuals will be investigated here. Of the three aforementioned authorities, this chapter focuses on writers challenging the dominant conservative discourse in the realm of religious (and to a lesser extent social) values and norms. Here, we can differentiate between two major orientations of scepticism: on the one side, an orientation with roots in Islamic discourse that go back to the early sceptical tendencies among traditional Muslim intellectuals; and on the other side, one that leans towards secularism in its modern sense. While the first one aims to change religious discourse in Yemen from within and is thus more compromising, the second is more confrontational in its aim to ensure freedom of belief and freedom of conscience.

CHALLENGING RELIGIOUS NORMS AND VALUES FROM WITHIN

The first orientation can also be referred to as a revisionist trend. Within this strand of discourse, revisionist intellectuals have

taken great pains to make it clear that their critical writings are neither against Islam nor, more particularly, against its scriptures, but rather against the ahistorical understandings of Islam as brought forward by influential scholars in Yemen. They also maintain that the critical tradition of *ijtihad*, which they seek to advocate, is a traditional tool of Islamic jurisprudence and thus a legitimate Islamic way of reasoning. Opponents of this attitude maintain that their arguments and critical writings are against Islam itself. Thus, in order to avoid clashing with the opposing fundamentalists[4] (i.e. individuals, sub-groups, or groups, mainly of Salafi background, who believe that they have the right to protect *shariʿa* norms), religious sceptics adopt compromising argumentative strategies to alleviate any aggressiveness in their discourse that might provoke religious sentiments. One of these strategies, for example, is to make frequent references to Islamic history in order to support their arguments, which are as much political as they are religious.

A good example of this strategy is the *fatwa* (legal opinion) of Husayn bin Shuʿayb[5] on the permissibility of secessionist movements in Islam (bin Shuʿayb 2012). Shaykh Husayn bin Shuʿayb, a Salafi *shaykh* originally from Hadhramawt, sees the "so-called Yemeni unity" (ibid.) as a sheer mythical claim. Both on a religious and historical basis, bin Shuʿayb deconstructs the dominant narrative of an inherently and naturally unified Yemen. This narrative had long been endorsed by both regimes of the South as well as the North, and had become part of the principle elements of the socialization of any Yemeni born after the revolutions that resulted in two separate Yemen republics in the 1960s. The *fatwa* of the *shaykh* is inconsistent with the deep-seated Salafi conviction about the Islamic notion of the united *umma*, i.e. the community of all Muslims worldwide. According to this view, Muslim unity, regardless of details, is an obligatory goal (al-Imam 2012).[6]

Moreover, bin Shuʿayb's *fatwa* reinterprets the famous Qurʾanic verse quoted annually at the beginning of the anniversary celebrations of Yemeni unification, which states:

> And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brinks of the pit of fire, and he saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His signs clear to you: that ye may be guided. (The Holy Qurʾan, *sura* Al ʿImran, verse 103)

Bin Shuʿayb argues that evoking this verse as evidence that Yemenis are one nation is untenable, as throughout history different dynasties and states have appeared in what constitutes Yemen today. He further argues that the metaphor of "holding God's rope" does not denote what people in Yemen understand as unification. In this verse, according to bin Shuʿayb, God does not talk about unification but rather about "God's religion" and the Qurʾan itself that every Muslim is required to uphold.

Shaykh bin Shuʿayb, who is a fairly new scholar-cum-activist in the South and known as *mufti* (jurisconsult) of the Southern Movement, has dared to challenge one of the main central Islamic notions, i.e. the *umma*, by arguing that Yemen was always divided. He seeks to dismantle the dominant discourse about Yemeni unity, which is perceived by the Southern Movement as a tool to legitimize the domination of the Northern regime and its monopolization of Southern resources. In order to do so, bin Shuʿayb employs epistemic mechanisms of the traditional Islamic *usul al-fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), namely *ʿurf* (custom), a method of reasoning that judges any behaviour of contemporary Muslims according to the historical practices of Muslims. In this line of reasoning, what has been historically known as "the South" is considered distinct in its state and identity, and hence different from the North.

One of the most salient paradigms of the Salafi school of thought is its inclination towards literalist interpretations of Islamic scriptures, i.e. its rejection of prioritizing legal reasoning such as *ijtihad* or *raʿy* (personal opinion) over the canonical scriptures. In the case of bin Shuʿayb, however, the tracing of historical experiences and an interpretation of the texts are given priority. Scholars such as bin Shuʿayb thus prioritize the dignity of human beings over the literalist significance of the religious exegeses. Due to the sensitive nature of

these subjects, these sceptic theologians carefully approach important traditional *fatawa* (pl. of *fatwa*) by attempting to reinterpret their applicability in contemporary Muslim settings.

The recourse to *ijtihad* and *raʾy* in Islamic reasoning is not a new phenomenon in Yemen, where the Zaydi school of thought is partly influenced by the Muʾtazila, a school of Islamic theology based on reason and rational thought that flourished in Basra and Baghdad during the eighth to tenth centuries. Among conservative Sunni thinkers in Yemen such as bin Shuʿayb, however, such recourse is a relatively new phenomenon and demonstrates how the political crisis in Yemen since 2011 also resulted in a crisis of the conservative religious establishment in Yemen, thus opening new pathways of thinking.

By issuing such a *fatwa*, bin Shuʿayb delegitimized Yemeni unity which the South feels was imposed by the Salih regime; at the same time, he challenged the monopoly of *fatawa* by those religious scholars who were closely connected to Salih. Furthermore, by the wide circulation of this *fatwa* in the new social media by Southern activists, the content of the *fatwa* – with its leaning towards a theology of liberation – gave the Southern issue a religious dimension and cast heavy doubts on the *fatawa* coming from the North. Southerners no longer felt that they were acting against their religion when they demanded the right of self-determination and independence. Contrary to the *fatawa* issued by Northern scholars since 1994, the *fatwa* of bin Shuʿayb, who was himself a student of ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Daylami, a well-known pro-unification Northern cleric, gave the Southern Movement more momentum by praising it as a religiously legitimate movement after having been demonized by the traditional religious authorities of the North.

On a more general level, it is due to such radically conflicting *fatawa* on political issues that a general sense of criticism, doubt and contempt developed among a not insignificant segment of the population towards politically oriented *fatawa* in the first place. Here, the employment of religious justifications for and legitimizations of political motives and endeavours by all sides was increasingly viewed as an exploitation of religion. This not only pertains to particular local issues, but also to more general controversial issues such as apostasy.

CHALLENGING THE COMPULSION TO BELIEVE

Before 2011, addressing a highly controversial and sensitive issue such as the topic of apostasy was left to the most established and renowned Yemeni scholars. This changed in the aftermath of the upheavals. In the years after 2011, a significant number of Yemeni writers, as well as ordinary Facebook activists from among the educated elite, discussed this matter openly. The choice to believe or not to believe, according to them, is a matter of individual conviction that is in harmony with a major Islamic principle according to which there is "no compulsion in religion".[7] Therefore, apostasy cannot be deemed a violation of the Yemeni constitution in which Islamic law is the main source of law.

Fahd Sultan,[8] a graduate of al-Iman University,[9] introduces himself on Facebook as a researcher in Islamic revisionism (*bahith fi-l-muraja'at al-islamiyya*), which is a recent trend in Islamic thinking.[10] It is in line with this reformist school of Islamic thought that Fahd Sultan and other modernist Islamic writers in Yemen presented their theses on such thorny topics as apostasy. In one of his Facebook posts, for example, Sultan announced his full solidarity with a Sudanese woman, Maryam Yahya Ibrahim, whose case of alleged conversion from Islam to Christianity resulted in international attention when she was sentenced to death, on grounds of apostasy, on 15 May 2014. He wrote:

> A Sudanese court issued a sentence on a woman who left Islam and converted to Christianity. It is true that this woman has infringed on the Sudanese constitution, but not on Islam, which gives human beings the full freedom to embrace or to leave what he or she wishes in accordance with his (her) free will. In any case, this woman exercised her free will in choosing what she wishes. I therefore announce my full solidarity with her and with her right to choose and to convert into whatever religion she wishes.[11]

Sultan legitimized his arguments against the orthodox legal opinion on apostasy, which entails in its most extremist legal opinion death as penalty,[12] by stating that there is no clear-cut evidence in the Islamic scriptures that calls for such a brutal punishment against any person who looks for personal salvation with his/her free will. Moreover, Sultan argued that Islam came to achieve man's happiness

and anyone who wants to apply the so-called "apostasy penalty" was acting against God's rulings. Considering human rights as the goal of *shari'a*, the writer belongs to a progressive current of Sunni thinkers who have developed great scepticism towards traditional interpretations of Islam. Their modernistic views depend equally on traditional jurisprudence and the international documents of human rights, and thus challenge the dominant discourse of traditional Yemeni scholars.

The significance of these moderate writings on such highly contentious issues stems from the fact that they have been evoked by those scholars who are considered to either adhere to the Salafi school of Muslim thinking or who have received their education in conservative religious institutions, such as al-Iman University. The fact that these ideas are circulated widely on social media gives them additional value as they reach people from very different social and educational backgrounds who would not have been aware of such alternative modes of thinking if not for social media.

As examples of the diverse reactions to Sultan's Facebook post, two different comments are listed below and give a sense of the space of debate that has been created for the conflicting opinions. Dr. ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Waʾil, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Sanaʿa University, commented on the post that "tolerating apostates would place society at risk and open wide the door for discord with harmful consequences". After a long discussion between Sultan and al-Waʾil, in which both invoked different religious texts and historical events, other commenters added their various perspectives. One of the commentators, Suha al-Qirshi, stated that she supports any one to believe what they want, and that she felt pleased to read such tolerant thoughts. The two comments by al-Waʾil and al-Qirshi reflect not only intergenerational differences, but also a conflict of two mind sets and two sets of norms in Yemen: one conservative, with an orientation towards traditional religiosity; the other open-minded, with new aspirations to be part of the global orbit with its new discourses about human rights and human dignity.[13]

Although the scope of the impact of such sceptical challenges to mainstream religious discourse in Yemen yet remains to be assessed,

the heated discussions they triggered in the social media were of obvious prominence and contributed to an opening of new spaces in regard to what is sayable.

CHALLENGING IMMOBILIZING BELIEFS

While the examples portrayed above sought to challenge the dominant discourse of traditional Islamic thinking in Yemen from within, a second orientation tended to challenge public opinion in bold, secular and non-traditional language. The actors of such a confrontational discourse put forth their arguments in a straightforward way that revolutionized the intellectual landscape in the country. Generally speaking, in Yemen, as in other Arab countries, writers of liberal and secular tendencies are inclined to use indirect language characterized by technicalities and figurativeness as they take into account that most of their readers have been brought up to hold Islamic tradition in high respect, without distinguishing between normativity, historicity, text and daily social reality. A secular and educated Arab thinker, who practises free critical thinking, would sometimes feel the need to offer implicit soothes or appeasements (*tardhiyyat dhimniyya*) to his readers in order to arrive at the ultimate objective: to liberate Islam as a religion and Islamic thought from ideological exploitations (Abu Zayd 2000: 110).

Among the few Yemeni writers who, inspired by the revolutionary atmosphere during and after the uprising, chose to embark on the risky path of confrontational discourse is Bushra al-Maqtari.[14] In 2012, she wrote what she later named a "literary article" (*maqala adabiyya*) under the title "Sana ula thawra" (First year revolution). In this article, she tacitly criticises the common belief of Yemeni people in an all-compassing metaphysical power that could lift them up from their plight. Her paper appeared in the context of the March of Life (*masirat al-hayat*), in which hundreds of protestors set off to march on foot the 264km-long road from Taʿiz to Sanaʿa in December 2011, in order to protest against the immunity granted to ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih in the GCC Initiative, as well as against the unity government that retained power in the hands of the old elites. As a result of a violent crackdown of

Salih-loyal forces on these peaceful protestors, Bushra al-Maqtari wrote the above-mentioned article, of which the following paragraph captured particular attention:

> Everything was good, "a good country and an oft-forgiving Lord", but that country is no longer good; and the oft-forgiving God is no longer available in Khidar's darkness. The Lord has left us to manage things ourselves, but we were unable to do anything in the face of our human inability. Ahh, how I will hate this region for the rest of my life [...] The animosity that has been levelled against us, the threats of the Republican Guards and their curses, the cruelty of the soldiers and the snipers who occupied the summits of mountains, and bloodthirsty tribesmen who were waiting for a green signal, a dark evening in which we could not see our feet. Thousands of youth wore Sufi clothing which could not resist the cold in the streets and mountains, their feet worn out from walking, cases of fainting and fatigue. Nevertheless, the tribes inhabiting that region did not allow them to stay there. Here, the tribe expresses once more its brutal savagery: the tribes of the collapsing regime. I still remember the voice of the man through a microphone, begging the Imam of the neighbouring mosque, asking him by all prophets and pious people to open the mosque for our young men to sleep in. Women went to a nearby school where not even the bare necessities were available. I stood looking at the young men while they were burning trees to warm themselves in that very cold night, which had reached the lowest degrees. It was a long night, a night sad and bloody. My whole body was shivering out of cold and fear. Unmerciful eyes were staring at us from afar. There were soldiers, tribesmen, a hostile environment and God, who did not see us. (al-Maqtari 2012)[15]

In the Yemeni context, on the level of form, al-Maqtari's literary style that turns something socially perceived as holy into a mundane or unholy subject, stripping it of its conventional veneration, is highly exceptional and was considered by many a profanation and blasphemy. It moreover violated the conventional norms of political writing by its sceptical literary tone.[16]

On the level of content, the text aims at dismantling the taken-for-granted image of the idealized Yemeni tribal and religious values according to which women and unarmed men are to be protected.[17] According to al-Maqtari, it is those who claim that they still adhere to these values who in reality violate them. When calling Yemen

"a good country and an oft-forgiving Lord", moreover, al-Maqtari makes reference to an often-quoted verse from the Qur'an according to which Yemen is a "good country" (*balada tayyiba*).[18] By referring to a part of a Qur'anic verse frequently quoted by Yemenis, al-Maqtari alludes to the nationally imagined virtue and perfectness of the "Yemeni collective self" that has been nurtured in Yemeni discourse throughout time and has been consolidated by narratives about Yemen's religious merits as a "country" praised in the Qur'an and the Sunna.[19] More specifically, this criticism entails a deconstruction of the metaphysical illusion that has prevented Yemenis from reflecting rationally on the problems in their country, in order to solve these issues and work towards developing their society.

Next to such more journalistic prose, poetry has also come to be used as an instrument for conveying the sceptical message of the intellectual elite in Yemen. During the revolution and the transitional period, certain forms of poetry, composed according to the traditional metric styles, were of primary importance for mobilizing the masses and criticizing the regime. These poetic styles include the standard Arabic *qasida* and the local *zamil* (pl. *zawamil*), the latter of which can wield political power and is said to have the ability to begin and end wars.[20] At the same time, however, poetry written in a post-modernist prosaic pattern, which is characterized by its ambiguous aesthetics, particularly targeted the highly educated elites.[21] Here, the author's message can be interpreted in various ways, allowing for a play on words and meanings. The young Yemeni poet Jalal al-Ahmadi[22] is one of these poets who express their religious scepticism through this medium. He writes:

> Oh Allah give me a reason to trust you,
> I am no more credulous to cover my eyes with the rag of destiny
> And walk behind you,
> Give me a reason to open the fridge of life without being slapped by its coldness,
> We have grown up but you haven't
> We've got old while we are smoking;
> We tell our children about you
> And plant you in their smiles
> Before they drink wine,
> We lost you as much as we are defeated;

As much as we loved our dead beloved;
As much as the idea you invented us for and we trusted you.
Oh Allah give me the courage to be able to choose you and love;
To find you. (al-Ahmadi 2012)

Here, God becomes the object of hard questioning, both in terms of his existence as well as in al-Ahmadi's social function of believing in him. The sceptical enterprise of the poet was staged to reach one end: to be able to freely choose his path. Al-Ahmadi's poetry reflects an individual alienated *Weltanschauung* characterized by sceptical melancholy. However, the poetic experience of al-Ahmadi bears a universal humanistic content in which the contemporary alienated man is the centre: the hero of his poems is often a man out of place and without any firm sense of belonging.

The text thus reflects the nature of discussions prevalent among the educated elites in Yemen, which struggle with the form of religiosity dominant in their society on the one hand and the dreams of freedom they long for on the other. Al-Maqtari and al-Ahmadi may choose different styles for expressing their thoughts, but they are united in challenging the ways individuals are positioned in a society that does not view a person through the lens of her/his individuality, but as part of a group believing in what the group believes and behaving as the group behaves.

CONCLUSION

Anyone who compares the political, religious and literary scene in Yemen from pre-2011 to that of after will quickly realize that the country witnessed less of a revolution in the narrow political sense of the word, but rather a great, wider revolution regarding ideas and norms. The breakdown of the religious, social and political authorities in 2011 opened up new spaces for new discussions about all relevant religious social and political issues. Although some of these issues had already been subject to debate in previous decades, they gained new momentum and influence on a scale yet unseen in Yemen in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Since 2011, the users of social media and other non-traditional modes of communication increased in a remarkable way. These new types of media became

fields for planting new ideas, as well as debating their validity and appropriateness. The culture of criticizing even the most definitive no-go areas of thought was finding its way, yet in different straits and encountering different hindrances.

A very important result of the general tendency towards secular criticism of religious and social norms in Yemeni life was the increasing decline in popular and intellectual faith in the viability of the traditional Yemeni model of polity. For some Yemeni observers, this meant that they were witnessing both the end of our social history as we have known it for centuries and the painful beginnings of a new religious, social and political formula. Although sceptical tendencies in the political realm can be traced back to the 1930s and the first generation of Yemeni revolutionaries as well as to the Muʾtazila, gnostic Sufism and the Ismaʿiliyya in the realm of the religious, the new modes of sceptical thinking among contemporary Yemeni intellectuals were more open, bold, intense and of a wider impact. Moreover, the conflict of its various types and levels (political, social and religious, as well as discursive and by violent means) and the transitional process both were of great importance for motivating the intellectual scene in Yemen to be more open, more pluralistic and more sceptical. It becomes evident from the texts quoted above that a new intellectual landscape was in the process of being shaped, and that a new language of debate and interaction was being developed. What will remain of these hope-inspiring developments after the ongoing war in Yemen has come to an end is unknown.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Marie-Christine Heinze for her help in the first steps of developing the ideas for this chapter and putting them in order. Her critical comments and the great efforts she put into editing this chapter are highly appreciated. Gratitude is due to Laurent Bonnefoy for his invaluable enlightening comments on the first and second draft of this chapter. I also would like to thank Mareike Transfeld for reading the chapter critically and for bringing to my attention some important issues concerning its theoretical and the structural aspects. Yet, having said that, any errors or shortcomings are only my own.

2. According to the Arab Social Media Report, Facebook penetration in Yemen rose from 0.37 per cent on 1 May 2010 to 2.35 per cent on 1 May 2013 (www.arabsocialmediareport.com, accessed 9 July 2015).
3. In (northern) Yemen, political discussions are generally held (and political decisions are generally made) in the framework of afternoon *qat* sessions. These are not only gender-segregated, but also socially exclusive in that the political decision-makers and those who dominate the social and/or religious discourse generally chew among their peers, making such spaces of deliberation inaccessible to those not part of the elite of their respective field.
4. While in classical Arabic, *usuli* (fundamentalist) has a positive meaning, referring to a scholar who traces the religious rulings to their *usul* (roots), the word has become laden with political and ideological connotations in the global media discourse.
5. Shaykh Husayn bin Shuʿayb was born in Shibam (Hadhramawt) in 1960. He was raised in Aden and received a B.A. degree in mathematics from the Faculty of Education at Aden University. In 1994, bin Shuʿayb was appointed educational inspector in the Ministry of Education in Sanaʿa for one year and subsequently worked as director of the Ibn al-Amir al-Sanaʿani Institute (a religious school licensed by the Ministry of Education and following the teachings of al-Shawkani and Ibn al-Amir al-Sanaʿani, with a focus on *ijtihad*) until 2003. Shaykh bin Shuʿayb was trained by prominent religious scholars of Salafi or Ikhwani (i.e. Muslim Brotherhood) background such as Husayn Ba Wazir, ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Daylami and ʿAbd Allah ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Qadasi, and became immersed in different Islamic activities, especially (but not exclusively) with the Salafi al-Hikma Islamic Society, delivering sermons, teaching students, and directing the *al-Muntada* Islamic magazine. During this period, bin Shuʿayb was arrested and tortured by the regime. In the aftermath of the 2011 uprising, he became known for his political activism in the Southern Movement (Hirak). Delivering speeches, writing legal opinions on the Southern issue, and organizing events, he has become a prominent leader in the South.
6. In his book on Yemeni unity, the influential Salafi *shaykh* Muhammad al-Imam presents the Salafis' view on unification as an essential step towards the unification of the *umma*. Moreover, al-Imam (2012: 151) quotes the abovementioned Qurʾanic verse from the *sura* Al ʿImran to conclude that unity is an obligatory Islamic deed.
7. This phrase is part of a Qurʾanic verse frequently cited by reformists as a proof of Islam's tolerance regarding the individual freedom of conscience. The whole verse states: "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects *taghut* [idolatry; AR] and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold. That never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things" (The Holy Qurʾan, *sura* al-Baqara, verse 256).

8. Fahd Sultan was born in Taʿiz in 1980 and graduated from al-Iman University in Sanaʿa in 2005. He has contributed to issuing and editing some intellectually oriented supplements of *al-Jumhuriyya* newspaper, particularly *al-Wasatiyya* and *Afkar*. He also worked as an editor of the *Fikr* newspaper (a special intellectually oriented supplement that has been issued by *Mareb Press* website), and the *al-Yamani al-Jadid* website. In addition to his public debates with different religious scholars and researchers, Fahd has published books on Islamic thought within the framework of Islamic revisionism. What is considered new in Fahd's contributions, in addition to his relatively new orientation in Yemen, is the fact that Fahd was trained in al-Iman University and is now opposed by many of his former colleagues and fellow students.
9. The al-Iman University in Sanaʿa was run by ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani, a well-known Yemeni cleric, who belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood's Salafi wing. The university was taken over by the Huthis in September 2014 and has been closed since.
10. Islamic revisionism is a contemporary current of Islamic thought which has been widely known under the title of *fiqh al-murajaʿat*. It was initiated by the Islamist group *al-jamaʿa al-islamiyya* in Egypt in 1997 and has since spread to other Arab countries. See, for example, Hamzawy and Gebroskwi 2010.
11. Facebook post by Fahd Sultan on 15 May 2014, available at https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=733026730081681&set = a.169428686441491.43798.100001230823530&type = 1 (last accessed 7 July 2015; page no longer available).
12. On the differing opinions on apostasy, see al-Qaradhawi 2001. For a critical investigation of al-Qaradhawi's treatise on apostasy, see Krämer 2006.
13. This does not designate any agreement or sympathy with those international actors who commit crimes against humanity in the name of protecting humanity itself. Rather this discourse connotes an opening towards the humanistic tendencies in the contemporary world.
14. Bushra al-Maqtari was born in Taʿiz in 1979. She is a political activist, journalist and novelist. She gained her B.A. degree in history from the Faculty of Arts at Sanaʿa University and is a member of the central committee of the Yemeni Socialist Party. In January 2013 she was awarded the Francois Giraud Peace and Global Understanding Prize for her work as an activist and advocate for women's rights in Yemen. As a result of her article 'First year revolution', Bushra was accused of apostasy and a *fatwa* was issued against her by a group of Salafi clerics who claimed she had questioned God's existence.
15. Khidar is a village in the suburbs of Sanaʿa towards the southern entrance of the capital. In this particular area, tribesmen loyal to ousted President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih attacked the unarmed protestors who had come on foot from Taʿiz to Sanaʿa.

16. It ought to be added, however, that Bushra al-Maqtari is not the first to choose such a literary style in Yemen. For example, Raʿufa Hasan (d. 2011), a well-known sociologist and journalist, wrote in a similar manner in her weekly column 'Ruʾya li-t-taʾammul' in the state-owned newspaper *26 September*. Arwa ʿAbdu ʿUthman and Huda al-ʿAttas are two further prominent figures who have been contributing to this revolutionary mode of writing.
17. According to *ʿurf* or customary tribal law, the killing of a woman or an unarmed man is considered *ʿayb aswad* (black shame), the punishment for which would be several times higher than that for the killing of an armed man.
18. The full verse reads: "There was, for Sabaʾ, aforetime, a sign in their homeland – two gardens to their right and to the left. Eat of the sustenance (provided) by your lord, and be grateful to Him. A territory fair and happy, and a Lord oft-forgiving" (The Holy Qurʾan, *sura* Sabaʾ, verse 15).
19. There are numerous prophetic sayings that applaud Yemen or the Yemenis and their alleged values, resulting in treatises on the religious merits of Yemen written by Yemen religious scholars. See particularly, but not exclusively, al-Shawkani's (2001: 56–60) treatise *Al-Qawl al-Hasan fi-Fadhaʾil Ahl al-Yaman* (*The Good Speech on the Merits of Yemenis*) where he describes Yemenis' faith, wisdom, and knowledge as "perfectly unique".
20. On *zawamil* and other forms of Yemeni poetry, see Caton 1990.
21. Though newly emerging and influenced by Western poets, this sceptical tendency in Arabic poetry can be traced back to the Abbasid and the Ottoman periods when the title *adib* (poet, writer, or encyclopedic scholar) designated a sceptic bohemian who, though well-versed in literature, history, and religion, did not believe in the social normative order (on this trend in Arabic literary tradition, see Elger 2010). It is among such a literary circle in modern Yemen (particularly since 1980s and onwards) that literary figures such as ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Maqalih, ʿAbd al-Karim al-Razihi, Wajdi al-Ahdal and ʿAli al-Muqri have been accused of violating religious norms in their literary productions.
22. Jalal al-Ahmadi was born in Saudi Arabia 1987. He is a post-modern Yemeni poet known in Yemeni and Arabic literary circles for his vivid and innovative polemic imagery. He has been awarded several local and Arabic prizes for poetry, such as the Yemeni President's Prize for Poetry 2011 and the ʿAbd al-Aziz al-Maqalih's Prize for Poetry 2014. Next to his poetry, he has also written a number of critical commentaries in well-established Arabic newspapers in Beirut, Cairo etc., such as *Okaz* (Jeddah), *as-Safir* (Beirut) and *al-Akhbar* (Beirut). He currently resides in Germany.

REFERENCES

Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid, *Al-Khitab wa-'l-Ta'wil* [*Discourse and Interpretation*] (Beirut, 2000).

al-ʿAbsi, Khalid, 'Ka-ishtibahin ma' ['Something Looks Like Suspicion'], *al-Yaman al-Yawm*, 8 March 2017, p. 7.

al-Ahmadi, Jalal, 'Taysh al-hikma' ['Recklessness of wisdom'], *Kharij al-Sirb*, 2 January 2012. Available at http://www.kharejalserb.com/?p=6204 (last accessed 15 July 2015; page no longer available).

bin Shuʿayb, Husayn, 'Bayan min al-shaykh Husayn bin Shuʿayb bi-khusus al-wahda 'l-mazʿuma wa-makanati-ha min al-sharʿ' ['A legal statement by Shaykh Husayn Bin Shuʿayb regarding the so-called unity and its status in the Islamic law'], *Aswat al-Taghyir fi 'l-Yaman*, 29 May 2012. Available at http://yemenrevolution.org/pages.php?p_id=444&theme=default (accessed 16 June 2017).

Caton, Steven Charles, *'Peaks of Yemen I Summon': Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe* (Berkeley, 1990).

Elger, Ralf: 'Mysticism and skepticism in Ottoman intellectual circles: Muhammad Kibrit's Istanbul travelogue (17th c.)', in R. Chih and C. Mayeur-Jaouen (eds), *Le soufisme à l'époque ottoman*, Cahier des Annales Islamologiques (Cairo, 2010), pp. 369–82.

Fahd Sultan, Facebook post on 15 May 2014. Available at https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=733026730081681&set=a.169428686441491.43798.100001230823530&type=1 (last accessed 7 July 2015; page no longer available).

Hamzawy, Amr and Sarah Grebowski, *From Violence to Moderation: Al-Jamaʿa al-Islamiya and al-Jihad* (Washington DC, 2010).

al-Imam, Muhammad, *Al-Wahda al-Yamaniyya wa-Dharura al-Muhafadha ʿalay-ha* [*Yemeni Unity and the Necessity of Maintaining It*] (Dhamar, 2012).

Johnson, Chalmers, *Revolutionary Change* (California, 1982).

Krämer, Gudrun, 'Drawing boundaries. Yusuf al-Qaradhawi on apostasy', in G. Krämer and S. Schmidtke (eds), *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 181–217.

al-Maqtari, Bushra, 'Sana ula thawra' ['First year revolution'], *Barakish*, 12 January 2012. Available at http://www.barakish.net/news02.aspx?cat=12&sub=14&id=24639 (accessed 22 November 2017).

al-Qaradhawi, Yusuf, *Jarimat al-Ridda wa-'Uquba al-Murtadd fi-Dhawʾ al-Qurʾan wa-'l-Sunna* [*The Crime of Apostasy and Its Punishment in the Light of Qurʾan and Sunna*] (Beirut, 2001).

al-Shawkani, Muhammad bin ʿAli, *Al-Qawl al-Hasan fi Fadhaʾil Ahl al-Yaman* [*The Correct Saying on the Good Attributes of Yemenis*] (al-Taʾif, 2001).

The Holy Qurʾan, transl. by ʿAbd Allah Yusuf ʿAli (no date/place).

Transfeld, Mareike, 'Political bargaining and violent conflict: Shifting elite alliances as the decisive factor of Yemen's transformation', *Mediterranean Politics* 21/1 (2015), pp. 150–69.

Woo-Young, Chang, 'Online civic participation, and political empowerment: Online media and public opinion formation in Korea', *Media, Culture & Society* 27 (2005), pp. 925–35.

CHAPTER 2

A Political Culture of Feminist Resistance: Exploring Women's Agency and Gender Dynamics in Yemen's Uprising (2011–15)[1]

Ewa K. Strzelecka

INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have documented the extensive role of women in revolutionary movements across the world. Yemen is no exception in this regard. Yemeni women have participated in past revolutions, in both South Yemen and North Yemen. They also became prominent leaders in the 2011 uprising. However, despite the significant role of women in revolutionary struggles, post-revolutionary analyses of gender have generally shown disappointing results with respect to an improvement in women's status and equality with men once victory has been achieved. This has created concern regarding the fate of Yemeni women in the wake of the 2011 uprising. Whilst their leadership in the struggle for revolution drew them into public life and ensured their representation and voice at the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) held in 2013–14, doubts remain over the fulfilment of promises to improve gender equality and realize meaningful change to the daily lives of women. However, the subordination and oppression of women should not be viewed simply as an historical inevitability. Attention must be paid to the mechanisms of power involved and the dialectical interactions

between social structures and women's agency. Such analysis requires an understanding of how women actively engage in resistance and opposition to the patriarchal structures of power and how they renegotiate their gender positions and roles within the contexts of state-building and socio-political change.

The purpose of this chapter is to address the gender dynamics of power in Yemen's revolutionary struggle for change. The discussion is carried out from the perspective of a new feminist scholarship, which shifts the focus of attention "from a theoretical figure of patriarchy and exclusion to an analysis of the dynamic processes of women's participation in civil society and in public political life" (Siim 2000: 2). This process must be contextualized. Therefore, my argument starts from a critical analysis of mechanisms of oppression and repression against women in Yemen and later explores the ways in which Yemeni activists respond and resist that oppression, producing what I call a "political culture of feminist resistance". It is my premise that resistance not only implies "acting in opposition" but also reflects the "potential for subversion and contestation in the interstices of established orders" (Kandiyoti 1998: 141). Feminist resistance, in particular, aims at subverting the dominant patriarchal structures of power. It implies collective and individual actions that promote social change in advancement of equality and justice for women. Although consolidation of feminist gains and the successful implementation of women's rights and freedoms in the aftermath of the Yemeni uprising have yet to be determined, my intention is to highlight the role of women's rights activists as agents of change, capable of influencing socio-political transformation and challenging gender power relations.

My study focuses on specific groups of revolutionary female activists who are highly motivated and actively dedicated to improving women's rights and gender justice, within a broader goal of seeking social change towards a new culture of democracy and human rights in Yemen. Most of them are urban and well-educated, middle or upper class women, who became women's rights activists as a result of the strength of their feminist consciousness. In their journey of personal and collective empowerment, they rebelled against patriarchal culture and enhanced their own strategies and

actions for change, which went beyond the reductive oppositions of religious/secular, Islamist/liberal, traditional/modern, but were still struggling to deal effectively with different forms of violence that contributes substantially to the oppression of women in Yemen.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 2011 YEMENI UPRISING: GENDER DYNAMICS OF POWER

Feminist resistance to patriarchal power is not a new phenomenon, but it forms part of the long history of women's struggle for justice and equality in Yemen. What changed in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising was the political context. The transition towards democracy in 2012–14 provided women with new opportunities to progress their rights and freedoms. Advancement of gender equality and justice depended on the ability of women's rights activists to rise in power through their participation and leadership within and beyond the 2011 uprising. Attention should be paid to the fact that women, along with the youth of Yemen, were the principal initiators and organizers of the first revolutionary demonstrations against the regime of President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, which started in January 2011. Although some of them were members of political parties, they took to the streets to protest against the authoritarian system as independent activists, following their own civic initiatives mobilized through social media and informal networks. Moreover, women's participation in the uprising was not casual and momentary, but it came out of the pre-existing elements of a political culture of resistance and opposition. For example, since 2007 Tawakkul Karman, one of the initiators and leaders of Yemen's revolution, led regular sit-ins and demonstrations in front of Yemen's parliament near Tahrir Square in Sanaʿa. She, along with many other members of civil society, had demanded reforms from the government for years; but as the promises of change were not implemented, their positions became radicalized. The overthrow of the Tunisian and Egyptian presidents by popular uprising in early 2011 gave momentum to the Yemeni protest movement. Inspired by the Arab Spring, Yemeni activists shifted their strategies away from calling for reforms to demanding immediate radical change towards the abolition of the

regime of President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih and transformation of its power system. The perception of the state as unjust and inefficient reached such a level that the revolution was considered by the people to be the only solution to the prolonged political crisis and social and economic hardship.

The main goal of the Yemeni uprising, shared by the youth and women's rights activists, was to establish a democratic and civil state, which would promote lasting development, human rights and social justice. Although there were always groups of women who aimed to articulate the specific demands of gender equality and justice within broader revolutionary goals, most protesters assumed that their struggles for democracy, dignity and human rights would automatically provide all citizens, women and men, with equal rights and justice when victory was achieved. This revolutionary movement led by women and youth drew on the ideas of what Margot Badran called a "new feminism". According to Badran, a Middle East and gender studies specialist, the new feminism does not go by the name "feminism", but is encapsulated by its spirit, and redefines the relations and connections between concepts of freedom, liberation, justice, dignity, democracy, equality and rights. This new feminism might simply be called "freedom, equality and justice for all", and asserts itself in actions, in straight-forwardness and in the courage of the revolution (Badran 2011).

The women and youth-driven protest movements created their own culture, evidenced by "emerging societies" in revolutionary camps, such as Change Square in Sanaʿa and Freedom Square in Taʿiz. These areas of the cities became "liberated zones", considered to be free from oppression and domination. At the beginning of the revolution, these zones served as training grounds for democracy and as vehicles of cultural transformation and social change. Within these areas there was a certain amount of permissiveness in relation to the breaking of taboos concerning the role of women and concerning gender relations. Women were encouraged to participate actively in all revolutionary activities and fight side by side with men against the regime and for democratic change. They both took part in front-line actions and worked behind the scenes. In this way, they played both leading and supportive roles. They organized marches, led

demonstrations, documented events, spread the news through social media and blogs, gave workshops and talks, formed coalitions, made decisions, prepared art programs, chanted slogans, nursed the wounded, provided food, raised funds, lived and slept outside in tends in the revolutionary squares (camps), just like the men. Their massive mobilization at the beginning of the uprising was seen as a positive input and was vital to ensure the victory of the revolution. Apparently, the rapid transformation of gender relations at this stage of the revolution was possible, at least in part, because of "the absence of elders with a stake in maintaining tradition and kin group hierarchies" (Bernal 2001: 139). Short-lived liberalization of patriarchal norms was driven mainly by values and behaviours of the emerging youth culture. In time, however, this trend was reversed by more conservative attitudes when the tribal, political, military and religious elites joined and established control over the revolutionary squares.

These patriarchal leaders rapidly infiltrated positions of power within the anti-government movement. They were able to do this as the result of their political experience and their privileged access to material resources, media channels, networks of interest groups and military forces. As a consequence, they were able to re-establish their influence over the dynamics of the uprising in a relatively short time. During the rise of the anti-government movement, which was made up of different political and social forces, ideological differences and discrepancies in interests between the progressive and conservative groups became evident. There were different understandings about the meaning of the revolution, its vision, mission and goals. In opposition to the conservative elites, the youth and women-led movements aspired to achieve not only political change, but also social and cultural revolution. At that advanced stage of the uprising, I interviewed Samya,[2] a women's rights activist, who represented progressive groups, and told me:

> We have to go through the change. We knew that we are fighting against the Salih's regime, but from the beginning we also knew that Islahi and tribes were within the regime. Now they are in the revolution, but it is not the youth revolution anymore … The youth revolution needs time, not less than five years. Unless we achieve complete

> revolution, meaning political and social change, our revolution will have failed. It has to work on both sides and find a balance. We have to make certain social changes to achieve political change. If we already have political change, we need to get social change to keep each other going. (Pers. interview Samya, July 2011)[3]

With the growth and advance of the anti-government movement, women and youth perceived that their revolution had been "hijacked". At the beginning of the uprising, the sharing of different opinions and the discussion of controversial topics was welcomed in the revolutionary camps. However, with the passage of time the ideological differences became the subject of conflict and acts of violence. At that stage attempts to marginalize feminist interests and exclude women from political power and the public sphere were first observed. A short-lived liberalization of patriarchal norms gave ground to more conservative power relations and hierarchical models. Moreover, the *Declaration of Youth Revolution's Demands*, published by the Coordinating Council of the Youth Revolution for Change on 12 April 2011, did not include specific feminist demands for gender equality and women's rights amongst its 13 points. It was the first major disappointment for the women's rights activists at the hands of their male counterparts, who previously seemed to express their commitment to gender equality and justice. For example, on 8 March 2011 women's rights activists organized a huge celebration for International Women's Day in Sanaʿa Change Square, during which they publicly presented their demands for a civil state which would guarantee women's rights and freedoms. At that time, they received positive feedback and declarations of support from other revolutionary groups, men and women (Shakir, Marzouk and Haddad 2012: 13–4). Later however, when the goals and politics of the revolution were officially defined, women's rights activists realized that their demands were not really heard or seriously taken into consideration. They became aware of the need to get together to consolidate, protect and defend their own agenda in a new political context of change. Re-capping on the women's movement in the uprising, one of the young women's rights activists said:

> At the beginning of the revolution, we, as women, did not take to the streets in protest only because of the women's rights, but we took to the

> streets in protest against the regime. It was not only about pushing Salih to step down, but above all we demanded to shut down all of the system – we wanted a modern civil state, which would recognise citizenship rights in general, including women's rights in particular. Over time, however, we realised that our voices were not heard and not seriously taken into consideration within the revolutionary movement. That is why we started transforming into a more specific women's movement. We wanted our voices to be heard and to be represented. We wanted to speak for ourselves. [...] Al-Islah pretended to control everything. The political parties wanted to represent all of us, but we didn't feel represented by them, because our demands and visions were different from theirs. That is why we started organizing our own independent movement inside the wider movement in Change Square. (Pers. interview Saʿida, March 2012)

From the outset of the uprising, women's demands were similar to those voiced by men and consisted of claiming justice, democracy and dignity. However, due to their specific discrimination and patriarchal violence, women felt obliged to take up their specific issues and call for gender-related change. In order to define their own agenda, the Watan Coalition – Women for Social Peace, the same network of women's activists who previously organized the Women's Day celebration at Change Square on 8 March 2011, brought together women from different revolutionary factions to build consensus on their gender goals. Their workshop took place in Sanaʿa on 25 April, a few days after the demands of the Youth Revolution Declaration were announced on 12 April. As a result, women revolutionaries produced a document, the *Women's Demands Declaration*, in which they outlined their vision and requests in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary process. They prioritized above all a high level of female representation in all decision-making positions during the revolution, in the political transition and in the building of a new state. Unfortunately, the impact of that document was not forceful enough to make an appreciable change during the uprising, but its political ideas concerning a 30 per cent quota for women made a difference and reflected the main priorities of the women's struggle for justice and rights during the transitional period. Women were learning from their failures and at the same time reinforcing their "political culture of feminist resistance". As

women's rights activists suggested in their interviews with me, the challenges coming from patriarchal opposition during the uprising and in the aftermath made them even more determined to fight for their rights and secure their political participation in the transitional process (see Strzelecka 2017). They claimed justice and wanted to benefit as equal citizens from the opportunities offered by democratic transition. As agents of change, whose influence and visibility were increasing, women's rights activists also became a threat to the patriarchal system of power.

My argument is that from the second stage of the uprising, after traditional powers joined the anti-government movement, not only was the youth-led social and cultural revolution jeopardized, but also women and their rights became pawns in a new political game. It became evident that the rights of women to occupy the streets and take a leading part in politics were the subject of ideological battles. The essentially public character of the streets was disputed, because it is there where the decisions over women's lives, rights and bodies are made. A key battle in the Yemeni uprising and political transition, therefore, was fought over the rights of women to remain in the public and political spheres. It was a highly challenging process for women, because of their double exclusion: first, as second-class citizens who suffered from the discriminatory politics of the patriarchal state; and second, because of their gender identity that has been subjected to culturalist discourse, which confines Yemeni women to more private domains.

VIOLENCE AS A POLITICAL ACT OF INTIMIDATION AGAINST WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

From the second stage of Yemen's uprising, cultural, political and physical violence was used against women to scare them away from the political and public spheres. The attacks of violence were targeted against those activists who spoke out against patriarchal structures of power and called for gender-related change. According to Deniz Kandiyoti, a scholar specialized in gender and development, the post-Arab Spring violence against women was not a mere manifestation of patriarchy, but should be seen as a question of politics and

governance. She argues that what remains at stake is "no longer just women and their bodies but the body politic itself" (Kandiyoti 2013). She draws attention to the responsibility of the state, which is inevitably implicated in the struggle over women's bodies, because of its decision to criminalize such acts of violence against women or, on the contrary, sanctify them under the banner of a religious–political movement. In countries such as Yemen, the holders of political power chose to "become accessories to misogynist atrocities or/and collude with individuals, groups or movements that perpetrate them" (ibid.).

While women in Yemen took to the streets to demand their equal citizenship and active democratic rights, the patriarchal powers used their operations to subvert women's political participation by moving away from the question of justice and rights to that of morality. They used different forms of violence to scare women's rights activists away from public sphere as well as damage their reputation and discredit their actions for change. Violence came from two main sources: forces related to the old regime and patriarchal groups who joined the anti-government movement. The political attacks and acts of intimidation against women's rights activists increased immediately after the inflammatory speech related to gender and Islam by President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, on 15 April 2011. This speech was used as a political tool to exacerbate ideological and cultural divisions within the anti-government movement, in order to create conflict between radical Islamists and more liberal groups in Change Square. Salih's allusion to the fundamentalist interpretation of *shariʿa*, which suggests that the "mixing of sexes is prohibited by Islam", has been a particularly sensitive topic in Yemeni society, as it explores the boundaries of religion and tradition where women are seen as symbols and guardians of family honour. The short media campaign that accompanied the president's speech portrayed revolutionary political activists as women of bad reputation, who were not good Muslims. By shifting attention from the question of democracy and rights to that of Islam and morality, violence against women became justified in the eyes of perpetrators. Cultural violence, which is an intrinsic part of patriarchal culture, was therefore used to legitimize and justify direct and structural violence against women (see Galtung 1996: 197–201).

Shortly after President Salih's speech, religious fundamentalists and patriarchal forces proclaimed themselves the enforcers of public morality in Change Square. Their mobilization aimed to re-establish conservative gender norms and remove progressive activists from the revolutionary squares, as their mere presence there was threatening patriarchal interests of power. The acts of violence intensified against women's rights and liberal activists as rumours spread they were secret service agents sent by the Salih's regime to seduce men at Change Square, demoralize them and distract them from the revolution. Such manipulation of information was used to justify and intensify politically motivated gender-based violence by encouraging the perpetrators to carry out their mission of protecting the "revolution" from these supposedly "loose women", who they claimed to be "anti-revolutionaries". These narratives followed the same argumentative patriarchal logic which had previously been used by President Salih to discredit "revolutionary" women. Whether viewed from an anti-government or pro-regime standpoint, these battles over women's bodies were related to patriarchal politics of power which intended to exclude women from the public sphere. In fact, women who were subjected to acts of violence, intimidation and defamation campaigns were mostly activists who were demanding both political and cultural revolt against patriarchal power. These women were challenging the oppressive norms of a dominant system through their own culture of feminist resistance, aimed at fostering gender equality and justice in Yemen.

President Salih's provocative statement that the mixing of sexes was un-Islamic in Change Square sparked a mass protest of women the following day. However, not all that was to follow was quite as the activists for gender equality expected. The response of the anti-government movement was directly influenced by different opposition forces. The first reaction came from women's rights activists and youth, who by the night of 15 April had agreed, through social media, that the protest march against President Salih's speech should be mixed and should bring men and women together. However, Islamist groups, who controlled the platform in Change Square from which the call for the protest march was announced, spread information that it would be a women-only demonstration. As a result, just

women were mobilized, with the exception of a small group of human rights activists of men and women, who were correctly informed and determined to march together. This group took to the streets not only in protest against President Salih's speech, but also against a fundamentalist ideology determined to impose sex-segregation in public and private spheres. In the demonstration of 16 April, this mixed group of liberal activists was attacked by the patriarchal forces within their own anti-government movement. It was a symbolic act of violence aimed at quashing the female and youth-driven cultural revolution in Yemen. One of the victims, who was beaten by Islamist radicals for "mingling with men" during that protest march, said later:

> What kind of culture is it which beats women and imprisons men who are supportive of our movement? It is the same culture of the old system. We are against that system and against that culture. We do not want to live under the old dust, we want to have a real revolution. If the old system does not change in a radical way, it will not be the real revolution. (Pers. interview Fatima, March 2012)

The idea of cultural change, which would challenge patriarchal norms and establish a more egalitarian distribution of power, has been at the heart of the Yemeni feminist movement for years. At the same time gender-related issues have been increasingly politicized and became part of a wider ideological debate about cultural integrity and social change. In this context questions of women's rights and gender equality served as boundary markers of national and religious identity and became the object of power struggles within male dominated politics. The engagement of women's rights activists in that highly politicized context made them vulnerable to patriarchal attacks, but also enabled them to take the lead in promoting transformative actions for political and cultural change in Yemen.

WOMEN FIGHT BACK AND DEMAND THEIR RIGHTS AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Before, during and after the Yemeni uprising, cultural violence was applied to justify and legitimate direct and structural violence against women. The 2011 revolution, however, inspired women's rights

activists not to remain silent and to fight back more intensely against the patriarchal acts of intimidation designed to remove them from the public and political sphere. The political culture of feminist resistance had gained new forms of visibility in recent years, as women's voices were widely heard across news and social media platforms. For example, the human rights activist Samya al-Aghbari was able to spread her critical message against the defamation campaigns against women through the use of new communication and information technologies. In December 2012 she was accused of blasphemy after she delivered a speech in one of the cities of al-Dhaliʿ province, during which she labelled the combination of politics, religion and tribal affiliation in Yemen "an ugly alliance". In consequence, her opponents accused her of insulting Islam, and attempted to justify their political attacks on her and to damage her reputation by using her supposed blasphemy in this way. The response of al-Aghbari, which was published as a blog post at *Yemeniaty* on 8 January 2013, stated:

> What is happening today to me is an extension of a long campaign launched against a number of women [...] This vicious attack confirms that without doubt there is a systematic campaign targeting liberal activists and journalists in order to silence our voices. [...] In the past, Salih and his "associates" used religion to eliminate opponents and settle their accounts with opposition. [...] Today, extremist groups – whatever their affiliation is – are using the same techniques. But we [women] will not fear their threats or their campaigns. We will continue our struggle until we win our humanity back and get the State that we want. (Samya al-Aghbari, interview by Sama'a al-Hamdani, January 2013)

Among the victims of the patriarchal violence during the uprising and political transition in Yemen are well-known women's rights activists and leaders of change, such as Amal Basha, Bushra al-Maqtari, Hurriyya Mashhur, Samya al-Aghbari, Tawakkul Karman, and Arwa ʿUthman, among others. The case of Bushra al-Maqtari, against whom a *fatwa* (legal opinion) was issued, is probably the best known, because it attracted widespread media attention. Bushra is not only a women's rights activist, but is also an internationally acclaimed writer, journalist and member of the Yemeni Socialist Party. She was one of the prominent leaders of Yemen's revolution in Taʿiz and was known for

her criticism of patriarchal forces, both within and outside the uprising movement. In January 2012, a group of 68 conservative Islamic scholars issued a *fatwa* against her on the grounds of alleged apostasy. Her words that "Allah was not present" and "was not seeing" the human hostilities and injustices committed against the revolutionaries in the village of Khidar, were deliberately taken out of the context from her literary article 'First year revolution' published on 11 January 2012, and used as a pretext to accuse her of insulting Islam (see also al-Rubaidi's chapter in this volume). Her life was put in danger as the extremists, following the fundamentalist interpretations of religious rules, called for her death. She became a target for attacks by fanatics and had to go underground for some time for her own safety.

The *fatwa* against Bushra al-Maqtari was inherently political in nature and was aimed at silencing her voice and reducing the effectiveness of her actions for change and justice. However, she did not remain silent and fought back against those who sought to intimidate and terrorize women's rights activists and restrict their freedom of speech in Yemen. She issued a complaint to the attorney general, published on 10 August 2012 in the newspaper *National Yemen*, in response to a defamation campaign against her, waged by people who claimed to speak on behalf of Islam and who acted in a way that Bushra al-Maqtari considered to be "a punishment of Yemeni women". While her accusers tried to distract public opinion by moving the debate from the issues of women's rights to those of women's morality, Bushra al-Maqtari took her case to the Yemeni courts, but justice was not seen to be done. It is of particular note that her demand for justice for women not only challenged patriarchal powers, but also the authority of the larger judicial system of Yemen. Despite al-Maqtari's allegations, public authorities did not implement the necessary measures to condemn officially the violence against women's rights activists.

The controversy surrounding politically motivated *fatawa* (pl. of *fatwa*), which are often used to accuse opponents of heresy and apostasy in order to achieve political aims, was raised in the NDC. As a result, among the NDC recommendations, there are resolutions to restrict the political use of Islam by ensuring recognition of freedom of thought and insist on restructuring the House of Fatawa (Dar al-Ifta')

and establishing its absolute authority. Following these recommendations, a new draft constitution, presented to the public in January of 2015, recognized the House of Fatawa as the only official, independent national institution in charge of *fatawa* in Yemen to be composed of scholars from different schools of Islamic jurisprudence (Arts. 295–7). Contradictory clauses in the NDC final report, however, gave rise to alternative interpretations of different provisions. The draft constitution reflected this confusion; for instance, it stipulated that "the State [...] shall criminalize the act of accusing Muslims of not being members of the Islamic faith, whether they are individuals or groups" (Art. 56), while allowing at the same time "libel of Islam and all divinely revealed religions and insulting prophets to be a criminal offense" (Art. 56). Such a formulation, which is subject to further interpretations, puts restrictions on freedom of expression and is likely to be used as a political weapon against women's rights activists and liberal intellectuals, as it is they who lead the change in Yemen and tend to be the principal victims of such acts of cultural violence fuelled by Islamic fundamentalists.

The above-mentioned examples draw attention to the interconnectivity and entwining of culture and politics, emphasizing politics as an essentially cultural phenomenon and culture as an important dimension of politics. This is why women's rights activists during 2011 and the transition phase called for a combined cultural and political revolution, which considers that a political transition towards democracy can be successful only if it is accompanied by a cultural transformation towards equality and justice. Their revolutionary struggle for rights and equality was not restricted, therefore, to demonstrations in the streets, revolutionary camps and the NDC forums, but involved a wide range of action for change within their everyday lives, including their creative and intellectual work and other forms of expressions which challenge patriarchal traditions and redefine their gender roles. As Bushra al-Maqtari said in her interview for the *Yemen Times*, published on 13 February 2014: "The revolution is not limited to places. The revolution is the pen. The revolution is the change" (Qaed 2014).

It is noteworthy that women's rights leaders, who are also artists, academics, journalists, writers, poets, cultural creators and social

activists, were able to capitalize on their public acknowledgment and their potential to introduce themselves and gain their own place within the male-dominated politics of power. Through their creative, developmental and intellectual work, they brought women's issues to public attention and were able to inspire, challenge and influence the way Yemeni society thinks and behaves. The short-lasting period of the relatively peaceful democratic transition, which followed the 2011 uprising, offered these women's rights activists an exceptional historic opportunity to push their agenda in the context of state-building, since 40 of them were chosen to represent independent women in the NDC.

CONSTITUTIONALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS: THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE CONFERENCE AND THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION

The National Dialogue Conference lasted for ten months (March 2013–January 2014) and became a landmark in the consensus-building process for the future of Yemen. Women were granted representation of 28 per cent within the 565 delegates which represented a broad spectrum of different social and political parties and groupings. Women's involvement in the NDC was a significant step towards building a new democratic socio-political order, but was not without challenges. Coming from disenfranchised and under-represented groups, new political actors, such as women, were now expected to engage on an equal footing with political, tribal and religious elites, who have traditionally embodied power and authority in the Yemeni political arena. Despite the procedural rule proscribing equal participation, there were attempts to exclude women from the centres of power and to sabotage their gender interests and full representative rights. Women, together with other new political actors, were determined to resist and challenge those power dynamics, and stand up for equal rights. Atiaf Alwazir (2013: 6), a Yemeni researcher and activist, states that these "acts of resistance in the NDC have actually triggered processes of social transformation". As an example she mentions the actions of female and male representatives of the youth within the National Dialogue, who organized themselves to arrive early for the NDC sessions in

order to occupy the front-row seats which were, due to custom and tradition, always left for the elites. As a result, the traditional leaders were forced to sit further back, behind the youth, which was an unprecedented act in Yemen. By occupying the symbolic space of the powerful elites, the position of the old powers was challenged and at the same time a new democratic system of governance was claimed by the youth. Their collective action aimed to reaffirm and consolidate their role as equal political players, and not as mere decorative figures in the political power game.

Similar acts of disobedience were related specifically to the "political culture of feminist resistance". For example, Amal Basha, a well-known women's rights activist, astonished the Yemeni public when she confronted and challenged Sadiq al-Ahmar, the head of the Hashid tribal confederation and one of the most powerful traditional *shaykh*s, over the role of women in the NDC. The reason behind their confrontation lay in the conflict over the proposed nomination of Nabila al-Zubayr as chairwoman of the NDC Saʿda Issue working group. The deal was almost closed when conservative Islamist and tribal leaders decided to withdraw their support, thus putting into question women's leadership within the political transition. This sparked anger amongst women's rights activists and led to Amal Basha's public scolding of Sadiq al-Ahmar for betraying the democratic values of the revolution and the civil state. In the heated encounter, which took place in front of TV cameras and thus became famous nationwide, Amal Basha demanded respect for women's political participation and equal rights. Women and pro-democratic factions won the argument in the end, and Nabila al-Zubayr became chairperson of the working group on the Saʿda Issue. It was an historical achievement and a symbolic demonstration of the power of the powerless: Yemen's most powerful *shaykh* was challenged and defeated by a woman, particularly so, as Sadiq al-Ahmar was a member of the NDC Saʿda Issue working group which was eventually headed by Nabila al-Zubayr. Before the 2011 Yemeni uprising, it was unimaginable and inconceivable that a powerful traditional chief would accept working under the leadership of a woman. Now women were challenging the patriarchal rules and carving out their place in male-dominated politics.

As members of the NDC, women's rights activists seized the opportunity to push for their rights and strategic interests to be officially approved as conference outcomes. Their demands were not new, but reflected the long history of women's struggle for rights and justice in Yemen. Before the 2011 uprising, there was a small group of very active female leaders who organized themselves into networks and organizations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Yemen. Additionally, the revolution revealed new faces of women from the younger generation, who were also determined to pursue their emancipation and rights. This political transition brought these women together in two major national conferences, which were held in Sanaʿa in March 2012. The first was organized by the Yemeni Women's Union, the major women's organization, and carried out under the slogan "Advocating for the Rights and Empowerment of Women in Light of the New Changes" on 7 March 2012. The second conference was held by the Ministry of Human Rights and the Women's National Committee under the banner "Together in the Path, Together in Decision Making" on 19–20 March 2012. Both conferences aimed to consolidate and strategize women's priorities and goals during Yemen's democratic transition. Despite fragmentation of the women's movement and internal conflicts, their initiatives sought unity in diversity in order to make their voice stronger. The women's national conferences also focused on attracting wider international and national attention and making their demands heard within the preparation process for the NDC. In particular, women insisted on fair political representation within the National Dialogue and on a 30 per cent quota of women within three pillars of government and decision-making positions. Apart from political empowerment, women also prioritized advances in education, economic opportunities, healthcare, rights protection and security. Special attention was paid to emerging groups and their demands, including an emphasis on the specific needs of rural women, female youth and women from areas affected by armed conflicts.

This renewed and updated women's agenda was expected to be moved forward in the NDC. After months of debate and negotiation, the approved resolutions were published in January 2014 in the NDC Final Document, laying the foundation for a new Yemeni

constitution and legal framework. Following these recommendations, the constitution draft was issued and formally presented on 17 January 2015, including the most progressive socio-political changes for women's empowerment and gender justice that any other Yemeni constitution has ever enshrined. Challenges remained, however, in the contradictory articles which allow for alternative interpretations and might be used to undermine women's equality and citizenship rights. In addition, the progressive recommendations related to gender justice are still at risk, as the approval and enforcement of the draft constitution has been paralysed by the current war in Yemen. What is more, the 21 January 2015 agreement between President Hadi and the Huthi rebels, signed before the latter took over the government on 6 February, included an allowance for revision and amendments of the draft constitution. The Huthis' initial objection to the draft constitution was mainly related to the division of Yemen into six federal regions; but their power-grab unsettled the democratic transition and created an additional concern about the future of Yemeni women.

In this context, it is particularly important to look at the role of women and how the violence and conflict contributed to their exclusion from the power centres and to the deterioration of their rights and freedoms. Previously, in accordance with the UN-backed transition process, women were granted representation of 28 per cent in the NDC, 23 per cent in the Constitution Drafting Committee (established on 9 March 2014), and 28 per cent in the National Authority for Monitoring the Implementation of NDC Outcomes (set up on 24 April 2014). Despite the fact that women have never achieved the promised quota of 30 per cent, their involvement in the NDC and other transition-related authorities reached the highest figures of female political representation in the modern history of Yemen and has had a positive impact on reinforcing their rights and freedoms. Constitutional recommendations for gender justice and equality were put forth and adopted as a result of women's rights activists' participation in the NDC and other decision-making committees, as well as their ability to build strategic alliances with international actors and male allies supporting their case (see also al-Sakkaf's chapter in this volume).

The 2015 draft constitution, based on the NDC outcomes, guaranteed Yemeni women equal citizenship (Art. 1, Art. 392) with no discrimination based on sex in exercising their rights, freedoms and public duties (Art. 75). It reaffirmed their full civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (Art. 128) and equality in human dignity (Art. 129). It paid attention to women's access to education (Art. 108), literacy programs (Art. 53), human development (Arts. 102–17), healthcare (Art. 43), welfare (Art. 57), justice (Art. 95.5) and personal and cultural freedoms (Arts. 79, 84). In addition, women gained better protection of rights during childhood, motherhood, widowhood and old age (Arts. 59, 105). The draft constitution established the duty of the state to undertake measures for women's development in the rural areas (Art. 38) and to protect efficiently the rights of female prisoners (Art. 99.3). It also reaffirmed women's rights to work (Art. 109) and stressed on enabling the reconciliation measures between their duties towards family and the requirements of their jobs (Art. 128). The draft constitution paid special attention to the development of facilities for female judges (Art. 222.6), which re-affirms the State's commitment to the appointment of women in judicial positions, despite the Islamic fundamentalist opposition to this matter. Moreover, the State is entitled to expand employment opportunities for women in the public sector (Art. 349.4), including male-dominated fields such as the armed forces, police and general intelligence (Art. 314).

During the NDC, women's rights activists were also able to win their long-standing battles against patriarchal opposition over political rights and laws against gender-based violence and child marriage. As a result, the draft constitution endorsed the establishment of a minimum age for marriage at 18 years for both sexes (Art. 124) and the protection of women from all forms of violence and inhuman practices (Art. 128). It also re-affirmed women's rights to "active participation in political life, to stand for public office and to vote in all elections and referenda" (Art. 87). It enjoined women's representation in national independent institutions (Art. 283), the constitutional court (Art. 329) and as deputy speakers of national and regional parliaments (Arts. 151, 236). In addition, it obliged political parties to include women in their leadership bodies

(Art. 13.4). It also endorsed a new electoral law which "shall provide for measures leading to representation of women in the legislative authorities" (Art. 422). According to the NDC Final Document, a new electoral law should ensure that there is at least one woman for every three candidates on the electoral lists. The goal is to achieve at least 30 per cent of female representation in political public life in Yemen.

The recommendation of a 30 per cent quota for women was heatedly discussed and eventually approved as an NDC outcome to contribute to women's political empowerment. The NDC Final Document inscribes 11 recommendations in this respect, but each one of these uses different wording which makes it unclear where and how the quota for women should be applied. This lack of precision came as a result of various consensual decisions made in different terms by five out of the nine NDC committees (the Rights and Freedoms, the Good Governance, the State-Building, the Development and the Independent Entities committees). In order to reach a consensus most of these committees had to modify their original proposals, but it was still possible to produce as an NDC outcome a recommendation that endorsed the minimum quota of 30 per cent for women to be applied "in all decision making powers of political, economic and particularly the executive bodies" (NDC 2014: 231, Art. 18). Despite this fact, the draft constitution, instead of granting women no less than 30 per cent of representation in all three branches of government and in decision-making positions, opted for a resolution that suggested that "the State should ensure women access to at least 30 per cent in various authorities and bodies" (Art. 76). Such an articulation opens the gates for contradictory interpretations and it is likely to be used as a pretext not to involve women in all of the nominated and elected national bodies, but only in some, namely those usually chosen at male convenience in the context of the still highly patriarchal political culture of Yemen.

The battle over the quota for women will thus continue. Women's rights activists are well aware that the approval and the enforcement of the draft constitution and the promotion of their agenda depend mostly on their representation in decision-making within a new state. As one of their strategies to ensure their influence in power structures, they launched an online database of Yemeni women's

leaders under the direction of Nadia al-Sakkaf in 2013.[4] To date, this database has listed more than 700 female experts in different fields and has made their CVs publicly available to prove that they are as qualified as their male peers to occupy positions of power and responsibility. The project is aimed at increasing the visibility of university-educated female professionals and to refute the old patriarchal argument that there are simply not enough skilled women in Yemen to cover and make the best of the 30 per cent quota.

Following the NDC recommendations, the draft constitution put emphasis on the state's commitment to women's empowerment (Art. 128) and in particular to enact "the laws which would ensure protection of women and advancing their status in society" (Art. 57). It also calls for the "elimination of negative cultural and social norms which demean women's dignity" (Art. 57). These constitutional proposals boost gender equality. However, on the other side, there is still a clause that puts at risk all feminist achievements as it acknowledges that "all rights and freedoms are guaranteed as long as they do not conflict with the conclusive provisions of the Islamic *shariʿa*" (Art. 135). This article is of particular concern for international human rights organizations, because it could allow room for a patriarchal interpretation of Islamic law which might perpetuate the discrimination of women in matters of marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. Yemeni women's right activists are well aware of the challenge this represents, but are relatively optimistic about the role of *shariʿa* within the new legislation. In the 1991 Constitution of Yemen, amended in 1994, *shariʿa* became "the source of all legislations" (*al-shariʿa al-islamiyya masdar jamiʿ al-tashriʿat*, Art. 3), and thus all Yemeni laws required strict compliance with *shariʿa* norms. After heated debates in the NDC on this issue, a more progressive formulation was approved. As a result, the 2015 draft constitution, based on the NDC consensual decision, made Islamic law "the source of legislation" (*al-shariʿa al-islamiyya masdar at-tashriʿ*) (Art. 4). This change of wording means *shariʿa* norms remain the principal source of legislation, rather than the only source as the Islamic fundamentalists had demanded. Women's rights activists believe that the general principle of equality and non-discrimination and the state's commitment to international

human rights law, which also were reaffirmed in the NDC and codified in the draft constitution, provide them with an advantage to interpret and re-shape Islamic law in accordance with a feminist reformist perspective, which respects gender justice and human rights. Time will tell to what extent women activists have been able to learn from previous experiences and successfully use an Islamic feminist platform and other cultural resources to conquer Yemeni politics and thwart "patriarchal operations" which put obstacles in the way of gender transformation and the enforcement of their rights and freedoms. With the war in Yemen ongoing, it is unclear whether and, if so, in what form the draft constitution will be retained when the conflict has come to an end; women and their feminist interests have been deliberately marginalized in the current power struggles as the armed and political violence intensified.

CONCLUSION

The critical analysis of gender dynamics presented in this chapter aimed to portray the complexity of Yemen's revolutionary struggle for justice, equality and dignity; a revolution in which the relationship between power and contestation were key drivers of change. In this context, instead of lamenting the situation of women in Yemen, which statistically is one of the worst in the world, my interest was to explore the dynamic interactions between dominant patriarchal culture and women's agency, to understand the feminist action for change and their contribution to greater gender equality in Yemen. The leading role of women's rights activists in the 2011 uprising, in the NDC and in other decision-making authorities made a significant difference in the gender-related outcomes of the revolutionary process as put forth in the 2015 draft constitution. Patriarchal use of violence, however, proved to be an efficient instrument of social control and political oppression, and was able not only to challenge the democratization of Yemen but also to interfere with women's empowerment and their enforcement of human rights and gender justice. The critical factors of security and developmental concerns, as well as predominantly patriarchal structures of power, are other issues which put obstacles in the way

of women's agency going forward. The positive aspect of the transition process was that the contradictory pulls of patriarchal violence and repression on the one hand and feminist resistance on the other opened up new fields of contestation for younger generations of men and women, who were more fully alert to the close relations between authoritarian rule and forms of oppression based on gender, religion and other factors. This brings hope that the "feminist culture of political resistance" will not fade; rather, it will endure, spread and reawaken in new forms, fostering a process of change towards democracy, equality and justice in Yemen – but only when and if peace, stability and public security prevail.

NOTES

1. The initial findings of this research were discussed at the "new Yemen" workshop at the University of Bonn in June 2014. An earlier version of this chapter was also presented at the Fifth Gulf Research Meeting organized by the Gulf Research Centre Cambridge at the University of Cambridge on 25–28 August 2014. I am deeply grateful to the referees and friends for their critical engagements at various stages of this essay.
2. All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms with the exception of public figures such as the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 2011, Tawakkul Karman.
3. Islah is a socio-political movement made up of a loose coalition of tribal and religious elements. As a political party, it is based on three components: Muslim Brotherhood, tribal confederacy and the Salafi movement. It is commonly described as an Islamist party due to the role of Islam in its political manifesto and program of action.
4. See: http://www.yemeniwomenleaders.org/en/static/pages/324/About-the-Project.htm (accessed 16 March 2017).

REFERENCES

Al-Arashi, Fakhri, 'Activist Bushra al-Maqtari Issues Complaint to Attorney General', *National Yemen*, 10 August 2012. Available at https://nationalyemen.com/2012/08/10/activist-bushra-al-maqtari-issues-complaint-to-attorney-general/ (accessed 16 March 2017).

Alwazir, Atiaf Zaid, *Yemen's Independent Youth and Their Role in the National Dialogue Conference: Triggering a Change in Political Culture*, SWP–German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Berlin, 2013).

Badran, Margot, 'Egypt's revolution and the new feminism', *The Immanent Frame*, 3 March 2011. Available at http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/03/03/egypts-revolution-and-the-new-feminism/ (accessed 16 March 2017).

Bernal, Victoria, 'From warriors to wives: Contradictions of liberation and development in Eritrea', *Northeast African Studies* 13/3 (2001), pp. 129–54.

Galtung, Johan, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London, 1996).

al-Hamdani, Sama'a, 'Follow up: Women seeking freedom, Samia al-Aghbari', *Yemen-iaty Blog*, 8 January 2013. Available at http://yemeniaty.blogspot.com.es/2013_01_01_archive.html (last accessed 16 March 2017; page no longer available).

Kandiyoti, Deniz, 'Gender power and contestation: Rethinking bargaining with patriarchy', in C. Jackson and R. Pearson (eds), *Feminist Visions of Development* (London, 1998).

Kandiyoti, Deniz, 'Fear and fury: Women and post-revolutionary violence', *Open Democracy*, 10 January 2013. Available at https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/deniz-kandiyoti/fear-and-fury-women-and-post-revolutionary-violence (accessed 16 March 2017).

al-Maqtari, Bushra, 'Sana ula thawra' ['First year revolution'], *Barakish.net*, 11 January 2012. Available at http://www.barakish.net/news02.aspx?cat=12&sub=14&id=24639 (accessed 22 November 2017).

NDC, *The National Dialogue Conference Final Document* (in Arabic) (Sanaʿa, 2014).

Qaed, Samar, 'Interview with Bushra al-Maqtari', *Yemen Times*, 13 February 2014. Available at http://www.islamopediaonline.org/editorials-and-analysis/"-revolution-pen-revolution-change" (accessed 26 November 2017).

Shakir, Wameedh, Mia Marzouk, and Saleem Haddad, *Strong Voices: Yemeni Women's Political Participation from Protest to Transition* (London, 2012).

Siim, Birte, *Gender and Citizenship Politics and Agency in France, Britain and Denmark* (Cambridge, 2000).

Strzelecka, Ewa, *Mujeres en la Primavera Árabe: Construcción de una Cultura Política de Resistencia Feminista en Yemen* [*Women in the Arab Spring: The Construction of a Political Culture of Feminist Resistance in Yemen*] (Madrid, 2017).

CHAPTER 3

The Mobilization of Yemen's Eastern Tribes: Al-Mahra's Self-Organization Model[1]

Elisabeth Kendall

INTRODUCTION

The messages about Yemen today appear overwhelmingly negative: violence, acts of terror, poverty, famine, corruption, secession movements, dwindling natural resources, lawlessness, a topography that naturally harbours terrorists alongside a drone strike campaign that naturally breeds them, plus a recent revolution, coup and implosion of government that ended in all-out civil war. However, on Yemen's eastern-most margins in the vast al-Mahra governorate (hereafter referred to as Mahra), despite all the challenges, we continue to see a peaceful, self-organization model emerging. Seizing the initiative against Yemen's backdrop of upheaval, it is seeking to secure and improve the future of its communities.

Little attention, scholarly or governmental, has been paid to Mahra. Yet its location is geo-strategically important, with borders to Oman and Saudi Arabia as well as a maritime border to Somalia, and its sparsely populated topography makes it ideal for smuggling weapons and drugs. In today's globally connected society, Mahra provides a striking and unusual example of grass-roots activism because internet penetration is low.[2] Of the adult population, only 3 per cent in 2013 had internet access, and many live in areas with no

cellular phone network coverage; half of all households have no television, roads are scarce and fewer than a quarter of adults have access to a car.[3]

This chapter explores how some Mahris are nevertheless actively organizing themselves across tribal boundaries to take control of their future. The future they envisage, however, is based on an understanding of Yemen that contrasts starkly with the various scenarios currently being touted by Yemen's powerbrokers and the international community as a solution to end the ongoing war. In Mahra, only 9 per cent of the population wants to be part of a unified Yemen and still fewer (only 6 per cent) support a federal solution. Perhaps even more surprising is that only 13 per cent would want to be part of a separate South Yemen. Given the choice, 72 per cent would favour an independent Mahri state. Why is this? And how are ordinary Mahris trying to achieve at least a modest level of control over their situation?

This chapter begins with a short recent history of the Mahra region in order to locate today's self-organization model in its broader historical and socio-political contexts. Next, it explains the mechanism used to guide the model: a comprehensive socio-political survey undertaken in December 2012 to January 2013 by this author at the request of a local non-governmental organization, the Mahra Youth Unity Association. Third, it investigates the root causes of today's community mobilization in Mahra, then assesses whether or not internationally-supported strategies and agreements introduced after the 2011 revolution have any resonance in Mahra. Finally, it explains and analyses Mahra's self-organization model and its suitability to a counter-terrorism agenda. By way of conclusion, the chapter discusses the implications offered by Mahra's experience, both its successes and failures, for the broader region and for our theoretical understanding of traditional Muslim societies in transition. The research in this chapter is heavily based on primary fieldwork, including a survey, meetings and interviews conducted by this author in Yemen in 2012–15.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mahra was incorporated into South Yemen in 1967, after nationalist movements inspired by Egypt's President Nasir and socialist

principles swept across Southern Arabia in the late 1960s, forcing Britain to relinquish its military and political presence there.[4] Today there is a tendency for observers to see Mahra simply as one small piece in the South Yemen puzzle, inasmuch as they notice it at all. However, Mahra has its own culture and identity that is distinct from South Yemen, and its entanglement with Yemen represents fewer than 50 years in a history stretching back over half a millennium during which Mahra operated as its own sultanate, albeit one punctuated by various power struggles and tribal rivalries. Mahra aligned formally with Socotra in 1511 after expelling the Portuguese to form the Mahra Sultanate of Qishn and Socotra, ruled by the Banu ʿAfrar dynasty. The influence of the Sultan among Mahra's tribes was fluid and likely exaggerated by Britain to suit the latter's strategic interests, but it is fair to conclude that Mahra has its own cultural and historical lineage, distinct from other regions of Yemen. It retains its own distinctive unwritten language, Mahri, that – although Semitic – is not a dialect of Arabic and is not mutually comprehensible with Arabic. Hence, a strong sense of Mahri identity persists today and is being increasingly emphasized in the light of Yemen's recent upheavals.

Mahra's incorporation into South Yemen in 1967 was not consensual. Mahra declined to join the nationalist movements that were gaining momentum in Southern Arabia during the 1960s and that were eventually dominated by the Marxist-leaning National Liberation Front. It preferred to retain its independence as the Mahra Sultanate under British protection. In 1967, Mahra's Sultan Khalifa bin ʿAbd Allah bin ʿAfrar, together with ʿAlawi bin ʿAbd Allah and ʿAbd Allah bin ʿAshur, who was the main facilitator behind a cross-tribal body known as the Mahra Tribal Council, travelled from Mahra to the UN General Assembly in Geneva. There, ʿAbd Allah bin ʿAshur, whose brother ʿUmar was meanwhile assassinated by the National Liberation Front, formally declared Mahra's refusal to join South Yemen. During their absence, Britain reneged on its Protection Treaty (which was not due to end until the following year) and evacuated all staff. This left Mahra without protection, unprepared and vulnerable to takeover by the National Liberation Front. Thus the Mahra Sultanate was overrun by militant socialism from South Yemen and

ceased to exist in 1967. ʿAbd Allah bin ʿAshur, having been denied re-entry to Yemen at both air and sea ports upon his return from Geneva (the aging Sultan was granted entry), was forced to retreat to Saudi Arabia and Dubai. When he finally made it back into Mahra by dhow boat, he was imprisoned by South Yemen's new Marxist regime before being executed in 1972.[5]

Those involved today in mobilizing Mahri communities consider the incorporation of Mahra into South Yemen to have been a military takeover. Stories still circulate about how forces under the command of the National Liberation Front entered Mahra's Sayhut province from neighbouring Hadhramawt in the late 1960s, killing and imprisoning members of the Zuwaydi tribe (located along Mahra's western border) who refused to be bought off. The young Mahri army fought the invading forces in Mahra's capital, al-Ghayda, but were outnumbered and had to withdraw into the desert to seek help from neighbouring states. Help was not forthcoming and the army was forced to disband.[6] Within Mahra, the increasingly Marxist National Liberation Front was aided by Muhammad Salim ʿAkkush, with help from ʿAli Salim al-Bidh, and by the Mahra Youth Organization, a ruthless group about which little is known (Brehony 2011: 18–20, 28). Popular street demonstrations against South Yemen took place in al-Ghayda but resulted in mass arrests. While many Mahris fled abroad, a popular resistance movement was formed among Mahra's bedouin tribes in 1971 but had petered out by 1977.

Prior to 1967, Mahra had witnessed several pioneering initiatives in statecraft to create the trappings of what we might today recognize as civil society structures, but grafted onto tribal traditions. In fact, such initiatives have not been unusual in Yemen. Detailed and still highly relevant research by Sheila Carapico (1998) gives myriad examples of civic initiatives that have emerged alongside – indeed as an integral part of – traditional tribal society, rather than in spite of it. In Mahra, the Mahra Tribal Council was created in the 1960s to bring the disparate tribes together into a leadership team styled on cooperation to protect Mahri interests. This innovation was carefully situated within the traditional rubric of a tribal council (*majlis*) and retained the Sultan as its nominal head. It was kept on track by the diplomatic skills of ʿAbd Allah bin ʿAshur (Hinchcliffe, Ducker and

Holt 2006: 137), such that by 1967 Mahra had succeeded in producing several emblems of self-identity, including its own flag, passports and postage stamps. Although short-lived, this experiment may have proved inspirational for today's self-organization model, for the latter has largely been driven by two of ʿAbd Allah bin ʿAshur's sons who were smuggled out of Mahra as children in the early 1970s. But there is an important difference: today's initiatives and agenda derive their legitimacy from objective data gathered from a comprehensive cross-section of the population.

THE SURVEY

After years of successive government representatives, self-appointed spokespeople and certain *shaykh*s claiming to speak for Mahra, locals felt it imperative to find out what Mahris genuinely need and want for their future. Therefore, from December 2012 to January 2013, this author was invited by the Mahra Youth Unity Association to compose and organize a survey of over 2,000 tribesmen and women. The sample was scientifically randomized and organized to account for gender and location distribution using official census data (CSO 2009).[7] Conducting such a large-scale survey in Mahra was riddled with challenges. First, a small pilot survey was conducted in order to ensure that the vocabulary used was generally comprehensible, and the survey was adjusted accordingly. Concepts like democracy and federalism were described in simple terms.[8] The more complex decisions were posited as straightforward choices between several statements. Fieldworkers of both genders were trained to ask the questions face-to-face in order to capture those who were illiterate. Owing to political sensitivities, speed was of the essence, so 70 field workers were trained to ensure that the survey could be completed before rumours began to circulate broadly. The Association needed to find four-wheel drive vehicles owing to the lack of roads. In some cases, fieldworkers drove up to 200 kilometres to locate the tents of nomadic groups to ensure that their views were included in the survey according to the randomization methodology. Thus, for the first time, a true cross-section of Mahris were asked about their pressing needs, the kind of political representation and participation

they desired (locally and nationally), and their vision for the future. The completed survey was driven over the desert into Oman by night, disguised as packages of photocopier paper as a precaution, and then driven to Dubai, from where it was shipped to Oxford.

WHAT GAVE RISE TO COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION IN MAHRA?

The survey revealed widespread disenchantment in Mahra with the experience of Yemeni rule, both as part of South Yemen after 1967 and as part of a unified Yemen after 1990. Nearly two-thirds of the population believe that Mahra derives no benefit from being part of Yemen. Significantly, we found support for Yemen's political system as it was in 2012 (calculated by amalgamating responses to three separate questions to give a stronger result), to be positively correlated to level of education and economic affluence. Moreover, those most supportive of the political status quo tend to be concentrated in Mahra's border provinces of Hawf in the east (next to Oman) and al-Masila in the west (next to Hadhramawt), and may therefore also enjoy spill over benefits such as better healthcare. It is perhaps not surprising then to note that Mahra's activism was originally linked to urgent development priorities and only later became political. The survey revealed that fewer than half of all households in Mahra have access to running water and only just over half have access to electricity or generators. In some provinces, these proportions drop to fewer than 10 per cent, and it tends to be in such areas that antipathy to Yemen is strongest. This supports Stephen W. Day's observation in Yemen generally that "the more imbalance is perceived in the distribution of resources, the more likely regional identities will be strengthened in opposition to a common Yemeni national identity" (Day 2012: Kindle loc 680).

Meanwhile, the pressure on resources is growing. Although Mahra is sparsely populated owing to its harsh topography, it has the highest population growth rate in Yemen outside Sanaʿa at 4.5 per cent (NIC 2013). In addition, it appears that the real population figures for Mahra are considerably higher than officially acknowledged and may have been kept artificially low to justify the allocation of minimal resources to the region. The 2004 census counted the population of Mahra at

89,093 and that of neighbouring Hadhramawt at 1,029,462 (CSO 2005: 8). Hadhramawt is indeed geographically much larger, but what is interesting to note here is the relative growth. Comparing figures from the 1973 census with those from the 2004 census shows that Mahra's population had apparently increased by fewer than half while Hadhramawt's had more than doubled. Yet if we apply the official population growth rate for Mahra to the 1973 census figure (South Yemen's first and most reliable census), its population in 2015 is in fact well over 350,000.[9] This is about three times the official estimate for 2015 and implies that Mahra merits a much greater proportion of resources than those filtering through from central government.

Mahra's marginalization is also apparent from the analysis of political appointments in Yemen over recent decades, which indicates that Hadhramawt has been much more closely connected to central government than has Mahra. In his study of regionalism in Yemen, Day concludes that Mahra and Socotra had "practically no influence on the greater national politics of Yemen". Prior to unification in 1990, Mahra was administered from Hadhramawt and it remained closely tied to governing bodies in Hadhramawt after unity. The inhabitants of Hadhramawt "have far more influence in the national economy and politics than the people of al-Mahra and Soqatra [sic.]" (Day 2012: Kindle loc 1431–4). One of the apparent justifications for failing to engage Mahris in the administration of their own lands was that they were deemed uninterested in bureaucratic work and educationally unfit (ibid.: 2002). Yet they have not been provided with sufficient resources to address this lack of education, despite generating revenue for central government through customs duties from the border with Oman and the sale of the fishing rights off Mahra's coast. Even where resources have been allocated to projects in Mahra (via the administration in Hadhramawt), this author's investigations have revealed that many of the projects officially listed have not been properly fulfilled. For example, tiny schoolrooms sit empty, either because they were built in areas with no population or because there are no teachers to staff them. Some of the projects listed cannot be found at all.

One consequence of the relative power imbalance between Hadhramawt and Mahra, and another factor behind the need for

political mobilization, is territorial encroachment. Although today's Mahra governorate is centred on the lands of the former Mahra Sultanate, there is broad awareness that parts of its former territory have been encroached upon. When this researcher first visited the north-western border lands of Mahra in 2012, locals were surprised to learn that they were in fact living in territory now marked on official maps as Hadhramawt. The locals spoke Mahri, considered themselves Mahri and even kept old Mahri flags from the 1960s. Current maps now depict Hadhramawt as stretching all the way to Yemen's north-east intersection with Oman; this was not always the case (see the maps in Carapico 1998: xv; and Brehony 2011: xvii). The potential for conflict in these deserts is heightened by the fact that they have been divided into blocks to which oil and gas exploration rights are being sold (Wood MacKenzie 2014). While locals appear unaware of this mapping exercise, they are aware of the potential value of their lands since they live among the debris of oil exploration expeditions abandoned in the 1940s and 1960s. Another potentially lucrative area is the island of Socotra, which was administratively detached from Mahra in 1967 and formally attached to Hadhramawt in 2000. A political group in Mahra known as the General Council (*al-majlis al-ʿamm*), formed in 2012 with designs to revive the Sultanate in the wake of Yemen's revolution, has re-staked Mahra's claim to Socotra. The council's figurehead is one of the sons of the former ruling Bin ʿAfrar Sultan, who has added the word president to his email address and even undertakes "state visits" on behalf of Mahra and Socotra.[10] However, there is no clear evidence that the majority of Socotris wish to be part of Mahra (Peutz 2012). Indeed, Socotra celebrated being granted the status of governorate in its own right in 2013.

MAHRA IN THE CONTEXT OF YEMEN'S UPHEAVALS

Whilst some groups such as the above General Council might be seen as opportunistic responses by existing elites to power shifts in Yemen following the 2011 revolution, it is unlikely that Mahra's population at large was following events in Sanaʿa in great detail. Mahra saw only a couple of lone protest tents set up in its capital al-Ghayda, and the

survey revealed that only a paltry 16 per cent considered the revolution to be a positive development even in 2012–13; an almost equal number considered it a negative development. The overwhelming reaction to the revolution was indifference, with over half of Mahris (54 per cent) believing that the revolution "makes no difference" to them. In short, popular self-organization in Mahra emerged instinctively in response to local contingencies and not in response to upheavals in Yemen's urban centres, ideological zeal or western influences.

But has post-revolution Yemen offered Mahra any hope of an end to political marginalization? Yemen's political transition, which centred on the full-scale National Dialogue Conference (NDC), certainly boasted a rhetoric that was inclusive and impressive. President Hadi stated that the NDC, in its attempt to reach consensus on the design of the new Yemeni state, would "not exclude any partisan, political, cultural, and social entity and sector of society from the Al-Mahrah Province until Sa'dah" and that it would be "distant from personal loyalties or partisan or tribal affiliations and so on" (Asharq Al-Awsat 2012). However, the reality of the NDC, which ended in January 2014 with over 1,800 recommendations, did not match up. Detractors have complained that greater representation was given to those who used armed force to make their voices heard (al-Muslimi 2013). There is little information about how representatives for outlying regions such as Mahra were selected. The official NDC information states, "[g]roups, parties and other entities – excluding youths, women and civil society organisations – were charged with establishing their own internal methods for selecting NDC members" (NDC 2013). Criteria were issued to guide choices to ensure inclusion of minorities, but the methodology was opaque, subjective and open to abuse.

As a result, the Mahri people do not feel that the NDC, which took place over a thousand kilometres away in Sana'a, represented them. Although Mahra was granted 14 of the 565 delegate places at the NDC and this is consistent with Mahra's small proportion of the Yemeni population, the bigger question resides in whether or not the delegates were actually representative of Mahra. Six of them (43 per cent) were from Hawf province, even though fewer than

6 per cent of Mahris live there, and, as we have seen, Hawf is more favourable to the concept of Yemen than other Mahri provinces. All were members of political parties and appointed by those parties rather than selected by the people. Fielding candidates from political parties is wholly unsuited to Mahra's situation. Most Mahris are completely disengaged from party politics, in which they have perceived little benefit over recent decades. In our survey, 63 per cent of Mahris declared that they did not support any political party, and this aversion to party politics holds true through much of Yemen (Saif 2013: 149). Clearly, the NDC could not be perfect given the urgent time pressure. The international line was generally to praise the NDC as a model for Arab Spring countries, whilst acknowledging some shortcomings. Concerns largely revolved around some factions being unrepresented owing to their boycott of or withdrawal from the NDC (Benomar 2013). However, the far more fundamental concern should have been the large swathes of the Yemeni population that were assumed to be represented simply because they were allocated delegates. The Mahri people neither refused to cooperate with nor withdrew from the NDC, but one still cannot conclude that they were represented at the NDC.

Additionally, Yemen's political transition process and its representation in the media tended to telescope the complex matrix of regional concerns into a North–South debate, inevitably pushing the worries of seemingly insignificant governorates such as Mahra off the agenda. When scholars and politicians cite support for the South, Mahra is generally subsumed into the concept of "the South". A poll by the Yemeni Centre for Civil Rights claims that 70 per cent of the Southern population supports the Southern cause. This poll is mentioned in dozens of Arabic newspaper articles and by eminent scholars such as Dahlgren (2011; 2014), yet there is no information about the sample size or reach, and links to the website of the centre that conducted the poll are broken. It is unclear how, if at all, Mahra's views have been solicited in producing this and other similar statistics. Respondents to our 2012–13 survey claimed that they had never before heard of anyone canvassing for Mahri opinions. In reality, public opinion in Mahra is radically different from that presented of "the South". Only 13 per cent of Mahris support a

separate South and still fewer, 7 per cent, support the Southern Movement.

The federal solution proposed in the NDC recommendations and enshrined in the draft constitution tabled in January 2015 appears even more unpopular than a separate South. International attention has naturally focused on powerful groups, particularly the Huthis, whose armed objections to the new federal design ultimately led to their holding the government to ransom in January 2015, such that the objections of less vocal and less powerful sectors of the population have been obscured. Our survey showed that only 6 per cent of Mahris support a federal solution, apparently fearing further domination by Hadhramawt – a prospect that looms large following the proposed merger of Mahra with Hadhramawt, alongside Shabwa and Socotra, as a single region. Many young Mahris took to the streets of al-Ghayda in February 2014 at the first mention of what they perceived to be an attempt to assimilate Mahra into Hadhramawt.[11] The newly formed Mahra Council (see below) decided to conduct a poll with this author's help. Initially, the poll was set up online to save time but it became apparent from the log that many respondents were from outside Mahra, so it was shifted to a paper-based version. This was not without challenges, ranging from the framing of a suitably neutral question,[12] to ensuring that each response was genuine and no one was polled more than once. Of the 34,666 responses received (and this author perused the poll slips in Mahra), a staggering 98.7 per cent rejected the proposed federal region with Hadhramawt (al-Majlis al-Mahri 2014). There were undoubtedly abuses of the poll that slipped through the net, particularly given the massive and perhaps slightly implausible number of responses, but it nevertheless seems safe to conclude that the federal division as currently envisaged is deeply unpopular.

WHAT IS MAHRA'S SELF-ORGANIZATION MODEL?

Given the grievances outlined above and the improbability of addressing them via formal government structures, concerned Mahris devised their own organization model. The roots of this can be traced to inter-tribal initiatives in the early 2000s to protect communities

from the spread of smuggling weapons and drugs. These then developed into collaboration on small-scale development projects, celebrations of Mahri culture and camel racing to strengthen inter-tribal bonds and foster a common sense of Mahri identity. By 2012, coinciding with ongoing upheavals far away in Sanaʿa and Aden, certain Mahris instinctively realized that if issues such as representation and participation were to be addressed credibly, then a truly objective analysis of what Mahris want would need to be undertaken. Hence the survey, which confirmed that 86 per cent of Mahris do not feel that their interests are "adequately represented or defended". What kind of representation do they therefore desire?

According to the survey, 82 per cent of Mahris want to be represented by a cross-tribal council (*majlis*), a consultative framework with a long tribal tradition. The tribal system remains the main model of social organization in Mahra. It compensates for the absence of effective state apparatus and support at virtually every level. The tribal system might be likened to a kind of traditional civil society, in which tribal institutions either mediate or dilute (depending on the *shaykh*) the government's monopolization of power (Bonnefoy and Poirier 2009: 5–7; Saif 2013: 149; Phillips 2008: 97–103). If such a council were to exist, 89 per cent believe it should be elected by the people rather than by existing tribal *shaykh*s or government officials. The preferred term of service for its members is four or five years, as opposed to ten years, life or an undetermined term, which would be traditional for tribal councils. Acting on these results, the Mahra Youth Unity Association organized and advertized public meetings in each of Mahra's nine provinces and in the northern deserts (overlapping what has now been classed Hadhramawt) to elect up to 30 delegates in each region to represent it at a congress convened in the capital, al-Ghayda, on 28 November 2013. This congress elected development committees for each province, the head of which became that province's representative on a new cross-tribal Mahra Council (*al-majlis al-mahri*), not to be confused with the aforementioned General Council. Each member of the Mahra Council and the development committees signed a simple code of conduct, pledging to eschew personal and tribal interests and work for the common good.

This represents a remarkable example of cross-tribal collaboration to forge basic civil society structures, based on geographical representation rather than kinship ties, in order to tackle urgent development priorities. This new-style *majlis* fulfils political philosopher Iris Marion Young's definition of a "civic association" and also includes several elements of what she terms "political association", in that it voices an agenda for action and seeks to represent and defend the Mahri case for change to central government. It is thus distinct from the old-style *majlis* comprising specific tribal allies and pursuing a particularistic agenda, which is closer to what Young defines as a "private association" (Young 2002: 160–3). The Mahra Council demonstrates both functions of the dualistic theory of civil society conceived of by Cohen and Arato, "defensive" and "offensive" (Cohen and Arato 1994: 523–32, in Young 2002: 164–5). The former defensive aspect is summarized as "self-organizational" by Young, in that it serves to link and develop marginalized voices within Mahra; while the latter offensive aspect operates in the public sphere to influence state policies. One example of the latter would be the demonstrations organized by this new populist council in February 2014 to reject Mahra's assimilation into neighbouring Hadhramawt as a single region in a federal Yemen.

The lengthy concept statement distributed by the Mahra Youth Unity Association in advance of the formation of the Mahra Council frames its agenda for change in terms that appealed to prevailing tribal and religious sentiment. For example, it refers to the initiative as "restoring the *umma*", the term used for the broad Islamic community, and "carrying the flag", which is the same imagery used of early Islamic fighters and also by al-Qaʿida. It also justifies change by highlighting the Qurʾanic passage that criticizes pagans who rejected Muhammad's message on the basis of being "content with what we found our fathers doing" (Qurʾan 5: 104). In other words, Islam itself could not have taken root if people had simply carried on following the same inherited structures without any modification. However, it is important to note that, whilst Islam remains of central cultural importance, it is not widely viewed as an integral part of the political realm. According to our survey, three-quarters of Mahris believe that the role of their imam is to advise on religious and

personal matters only, as opposed to only 21 per cent who believe that their imam should advise on all matters, including the political and legal. The social transition model here, therefore, is about working alongside religion and pre-empting questions over the legitimacy of the new self-organization model, rather than using religion itself to spearhead any part of the change agenda.

The Mahra self-organization model thus recognizes the need to engage with religious sentiment in a positive way. This springs from the realization that Mahra's overwhelmingly young and increasingly desperate population is vulnerable to the spread of militant jihadist ideas as a mode of resistance or even simply as a channel for their energies. President Hadi himself outlined the strong link between underdevelopment and recruitment into terrorist or other illegal activities, "We have about six million youths between the ages of 16 to 28 years [...] However, the poverty, the weak economy, and the shortage of capabilities expose some of them to temptations, deviations, and pitfalls masterminded by those who recruit them, as I said, with temptations, one of which may be acts of terrorism" (Alsharq al-Awsat 2012). In tribal areas in particular, where government underinvestment engenders currents of resistance to the state, the tribal traditions of weapons, honour and warfare are ripe for exploitation by al-Qaʿida offshoots. This harnessing of local resistance movements by global jihadism has already occurred in several other governorates, including neighbouring Hadhramawt. Al-Qaʿida appears to be trying to deepen its links with tribes, for example through marriage ties (Johnsen 2010: 6), the bribery of tribal *shaykh*s, and the development of teaching structures supervised by al-Qaʿida supporters in areas where government investment, particularly in education, is lacking (Bonnefoy 2012: 256), as is the case in Mahra. *Sada al-Malahim*, the magazine of the group Qaʿidat al-Jihad, better known as al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula, regularly congratulated jihadists on local marriages, and on one occasion commiserated directly with the tribal inhabitants of Hadhramawt and Mahra as "brothers" who receive no support from a state that simply robs Yemen of its riches (Sada al-Malahim 2008). This fits with the theory that jihadist recruits are not so much reacting to extremist ideology, but to the hopelessly marginalized situation in which they

find themselves. In other words, acts of terror are in reality driven by local and regional grievances rather than a global agenda (Kendall 2015: 259; Bonnefoy 2012: 244–5). Thus the Mahra self-organization model is also an attempt to protect Mahra against infiltration by Islamist militants.

CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS

Mahri activists are trying to regenerate pride in Mahri identity and a sense of responsibility that extends beyond the interests of the immediate tribe to the interests of the Mahri community as a whole. There would appear to be widespread support for such a cross-tribal initiative: our survey showed that 91 per cent of Mahris actively desire all the tribes to unite as opposed to "being happy just with my tribe". Decades of dictatorship (first under socialism from 1967, then under President Salih) have, from the Mahri perspective at least, seen their meagre resources exploited by central government, either directly or through the informal patronage of tribal *shaykh*s on the payrolls of Yemen or Saudi Arabia, with few returns to the region. Mahri youth now want a say in how their region should be developed for a sustainable future as their rapidly expanding communities become increasingly sedentary rather than nomadic. Emigration to richer Gulf countries is no longer an option, as the latter focus on accommodating their own burgeoning youth populations and increasingly perceive Yemeni migrants as a potential security risk bringing few prized skills. Unsurprisingly therefore, what began as an attempt to tackle urgent development priorities has inevitably become linked to a desire for political empowerment – not democratization necessarily, but better representation and some level of self-determination.

Some aspects of Mahra's initiative may have the capacity to act as a model for organizing popular representation and positive engagement (away from the temptations of illegal activities and militant Islam) in other areas of Yemen and the broader Middle East. In areas that lack strong civil society structures, using the public opinion survey model as the basis on which to shape the institutions and agenda for change can create a unifying framework that is at once

reliable, popular, legitimate and uncontroversial, being data driven. More specifically, the elected *majlis* model modifies the indigenous *majlis* tradition into a modern, youth-friendly alternative to Western-style democracy, with the potential to push back against a top-down style of governance that appears out of touch and ineffective. The Mahra experience shows that the transition and development of society means adapting traditional structures rather than dismantling them, as early modernization theory would have favoured (Black 1966: 27). Thus, whilst continuing to support the *majlis* tradition, Mahris expressed a wish for their representatives to be popularly elected rather than appointed, of fixed-term rather than for life, categorized on principles of location rather than simple kinship ties, and signatories to a clear written code of conduct that outlaws potentially corrupt practices – note that the construction of al-Majlis al-Mahri was entirely free of barter; no support was purchased.

How then does the case of Yemen's Mahra inform our understanding of an underdeveloped Muslim society in transition? It contradicts the notion of a continuum that simplifies the transition process into a linear progression from the traditional to the modern. Embedded traditions and the desire for modernization work in tandem rather than representing polar opposites, showing that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive, but interact in complex ways. Unlike the assumptions of early modernization theory and Marxist-inspired theories, "tradition is often a profound vehicle for evolutionary and revolutionary change" (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 25). In short, an equilibrium must be struck on what is actually a shifting balance weighted between tradition and modernity that takes confident account of both at once.

This is, however, a tricky balance to strike and in Mahra the challenges to success have been considerable. They reside in three main areas: tribal structures, vested interests and lack of capability, all of which – as is so often the case in Yemen – are linked to money. The Mahra model of traditional civil society did not take adequate account of the extent to which tribal hierarchies are entrenched, particularly in the regions beyond Mahra's slightly more developed coastal strip. Nadwa al-Dawsari, in her study of western Yemen, found strong tribal structures to be linked to scarcity of resources

(al-Dawsari 2014: 6), and the Mahra experience in eastern Yemen indicates the same. The model of an elected *majlis* based on geographical rather than tribal divisions and on popularity rather than status was therefore in reality invested with limited authority. In fact, our survey had hinted at this. Although 82 per cent of Mahris wanted to be represented by a cross-tribal *majlis*, only 46 per cent stated that they would turn to the *majlis* to solve major local conflicts. The above-mentioned General Council of Mahri *shaykh*s and old elites was in a stronger position, for although it did not have a popular mandate – the choreographed welcome of enthusiastic flag-wavers notwithstanding[13] – its members enjoyed direct access to state institutions and actors, including President Hadi himself.[14] The General Council did not consider it necessary to collaborate with the Mahra Council, and its patronage structure funded by vested interests enabled it to attract more educated and capable individuals with political experience. By contrast, the Mahra Council's volunteer basis and strict code of conduct may prove too constraining for long-term sustained activity in a culture with a hand-to-mouth existence, where money inevitably means power.

CONCLUSION

What is the lesson? In interrogating the "Yemen model" of political transition, Stacey Philbrick Yadav concludes that "activists will find it difficult to effect change without engaging state actors and institutions" (Philbrick Yadav 2015: 146). This is certainly the experience of Mahra's self-organization model. The lesson, therefore, appears to be to attempt to find more effective means of accommodation with existing institutions, hierarchies and elites. Yet this is precisely the kind of compromise rejected by the concept statement prior to the popular elections of the Mahra Council in 2013. The concept statement insisted that "change is resistance, not haggling [muqawama la musawama]" and, whilst expressing a willingness to work within international frameworks such as the UN, it stressed its rejection of formal Yemeni structures in which it had lost trust. However, it appears that this is what is now required if the self-organization model is to survive at all, particularly since there

are no international bodies that operate directly in Mahra to offer assistance. This accords with Young's theory of the limits of civil society, by which civil structures are compelled to reach consensus with state structures if goals of both self-determination and self-development are to be reached effectively (Young 2002: 180–95).

So, can such a self-organization model work and will this one survive and prosper? The data-collection exercise roused curiosity, enthusiasm and feelings of empowerment as people welcomed the opportunity to communicate their needs and aspirations. As a result, they felt encouraged to expend time, energy and resources to organize the Mahra Council and its development committees. Yet the Council and its committees have struggled to implement their development agenda on the ground without formal support. They need investment and guidance to build much-needed capability and to fund their community projects, out-of-pocket expenses and modest salaries. Thus the seeds have been planted and they have started to grow, but without care, cultivation and at least a little succour, they will inevitably wither and die. The window of opportunity is small. The alternative, of course, is for ordinary Mahris simply to seize control of their institutions and resources by force. Youth in Mahra's desert tribes especially are growing impatient: They have seen little traction from their peaceful initiatives, whilst at the same time observing how well-armed militias aligned with criminal and terrorist elements have seized control of lucrative smuggling routes across Yemen's east without serious backlash to date from the international community. Unsurprisingly, they conclude that, in the words of a well-known Hadhrami political commentator and lawyer, "in Yemen, violence pays" (Bafana 2015). Without careful guidance coupled with investment, the Mahra self-organization model with its laudable data-driven approach may yet end badly, snuffed out by old elites and vested interests with stronger backing.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Noel Brehony and John Shipman for their generous and perceptive comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. Any shortcomings remain my own.

2. Several Facebook pages have been launched since 2013, including the explosive *al-Mahra-Wikileaks* and the satirical *al-Mahra al-Yawm*. However, it is difficult to know how much traction such pages have inside Mahra itself. The Arabic Facebook page for the Mahra Council (*al-majlis al-mahri*), for example, had 2,489 likes by 31 January 2015, but under half of these were from inside Yemen and, of those, only 105 were from inside Mahra. Nevertheless, Mahri youth are recognizing the power of social media, as illustrated by a heartfelt Facebook plea on the page of young activist *al-Watani al-Mahri* (the pseudonym of Ahmad Bilhaf, nephew of Mahra's former governor) on 17 February 2015 for Mahra to mobilize all media platforms to protect its culture and rights. It received over 100 likes in one day.
3. Mahra Youth Unity Association and Kendall, survey of over 2,000 Mahris, December 2012–January 2013.
4. For a full account of these upheavals in Southern Arabia, see Brehony (2011); and Hinchcliffe, Ducker and Holt (2006).
5. This information is drawn from diverse sources: an interview with Karama bin ʿAshur, a former general in the Mahri army, now in his 80s and living in Dubai (Dubai, 25 March 2013); written correspondence with ʿAli and Salim bin ʿAshur (2012–14); Mahra Youth Unity Association (2013); and Hinchcliffe, Ducker, and Holt (2006: 137, 146–8).
6. Interview with Karama bin ʿAshur (Dubai, 25 March 2013).
7. It is worth pointing out that the 160-page Arabic book of statistics about Mahra (CSO 2009) contains numerous basic arithmetic errors, but there was no other available source for Mahri population figures broken down by dwelling within each individual province.
8. We decided to avoid mentioning democracy altogether, instead inserting several questions about representation preferences and who should choose leaders. Federalism was described as a group of regions that would comprise Yemen, in which central government would control only foreign policy and defense.
9. It is sometimes argued that Mahra's population is depleted because men leave in search of work in the Gulf. There is some truth in this but, since it is similarly true of Hadhramawt, it cannot fully explain the discrepancy. Moreover, Mahri men in the diaspora frequently still keep one wife and family inside Mahra. In any event, the doors of emigration to the Gulf are now firmly closed owing to the perceived security risk posed by Yemenis, their lack of sought-after skills and the need for Gulf countries to focus on accommodating their own growing youth populations.
10. In May 2014, he visited Somalia's Puntland to attend the coronation of the Kind of Darood in his proclaimed capacity as "Sultan of Mahra and Socotra" together with his "Head of Foreign Affairs", Bashir Hagi, an active young Londoner of Somali descent (Ciid 2014).
11. Video footage of the demonstrations can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KkU5RCmaQs (22 February 2014). Last accessed 8 April 2017.

12. The question "What is your opinion on the appropriate way for Mahra to participate in the federal Yemen?" was framed with only two possible responses: (1) I reject the concept of a single region with Hadhramawt; or (2) I agree to the concept of a single region with Hadhramawt. All of the proposed preamble, aimed at influencing the respondent's opinion, was removed.
13. See for example the footage compiled into the short film 'Al-mahra tu'linu istiklala-ha sultana-tan / maʿ al-sultan bin ʿafrar' ('Mahra announces its independence as a sultanate / with Sultan Bin ʿAfrar'), YouTube, (17 February 2015). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThU8vPzfK3w. Last accessed 15 October 2015; page no longer available.
14. A delegation led by ʿAbd Allah bin ʿIsa bin ʿAfrar met President Hadi in Sanaʿa in February 2014 to request a separate region for Mahra and Socotra, but the request was rejected (Shabwa al-Hadath 2014). Available at http://shabwahalhadath.net/news/6265/. Last accessed 8 April 2017.

REFERENCES

Asharq Al-Awsat, 'President Abd Rabbuh Mansur al-Hadi', *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 8 March 2012. Available at http://www.aawsat.net/2012/03/article55242916 (last accessed 20 October 2015; page no longer available).

Bafana, Haykal, 'In Yemen, violence pays', *The New York Times*, 28 January 2015. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/29/opinion/in-yemen-violence-pays.html?_r=1 (accessed 8 April 2017).

Benomar, Jamal, 'Statement to the 7,037th meeting of the UN Security Council', 27 September 2013. Available at http://www.yemenintransition.com/YetraCpanl/artImge/OSASG%20Yemen%20September%20Security%20Council%20Briefing%20FINAL.pdf (last accessed 15 October 2015; page no longer available).

Black, C.E., *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York, 1966).

Bonnefoy, Laurent and Marine Poirier, *Civil Society and Democratization in Yemen*, Knowledge Programme Civil Society and West Asia, Working Paper 3 (November 2009).

Bonnefoy, Laurent, 'Jihadi violence in Yemen: Dealing with local, regional and international contingencies', in J. Deol and Z. Kazmi (eds), *Contextualising Jihadi Thought* (London, 2012), pp. 243–58.

Brehony, Noel, *Yemen Divided: The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia* (London, 2011).

Carapico, Sheila, *Civil Society in Yemen: The Political Economy of Activism in Modern Arabia* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 1998).

Central Statistical Organization, Yemen (CSO), *Al-Nashra al-Ihsa'iyya li-l-Jihaz al-Markazi li-l-Ihsa' – Muhafazat al-Mahra 2009* [*Statistical Publication of the CSO – al-Mahra Governorate 2009*] (Sanaʿa, 2009).

—— *Al-Yaman fi Arqam 2004* [*Yemen in Numbers*] (Sanaʿa, 2005). Available at http://www.cso-yemen.org/userimages/Image/book/yemen_figures_2004.pdf (last accessed 15 October 2015; page no longer available).

Ciid, Muxyadiin Xusseen, 'Yuu ahaa Sultan Abdalla bin Sultan Issa al Afrar?' ['Who is Sultan Abdallah bin Sultan 'Isa?'], *Horseed Media: The Free Voice of Somalia*, 30 May 2014. Available at http://horseedmedia.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/YUU-AHAA-SULTAN-ABDALLA-BIN-SULTAN-ISSA-AL-AFRAR-MAHRA-IYO-SUQADARA-1.pdf (accessed 8 April 2017).

Cohen, Jean and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

Dahlgren, Susanne, 'The future will be ours, our country, South Arabia!', *The Middle East in London* 8/1 (October–November 2011), pp. 14–5.

—— 'A poor people's revolution: The Southern Movement heads toward independence from Yemen', *Middle East Research and Information Project* 273 (Winter 2014). Available at http://www.merip.org/mer/mer273/poor-peoples-revolution (accessed 8 April 2017).

Al-Dawsari, Nadwa, 'Informal actors, community and the state: An assessment of informal support structures and the social contract in western Yemen', *Oxfam Report* (December 2014).

Day, Stephen W., *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union* (New York, 2012).

Eickelman, Dale and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton and Oxford, 2004).

Hinchcliffe, Peter, John Ducker, and Maria Holt, *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden* (London, 2006).

Johnsen, Gregory, 'The expansion strategy of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula', *CTC Sentinel*, Special Issue (January 2010), pp. 4–7.

Kendall, Elisabeth, 'Yemen's al-Qa'ida and poetry as a weapon of jihad', in E. Kendall and E. Stein (eds), *Twenty-First Century Jihad* (London, 2015), pp. 247–69.

Mahra Youth Unity Association, 'Mashruʿ al-ruʾya al-siyasiyya al-mustaqbaliyya li-l-Mahra al-barr wa-l-Suqutra' ['Project for the future political vision of Mahra, mainland and Socotra'], concept statement circulated in Mahra, October 2013.

al-Majlis al-Mahri, 'Taqrir tahlil nataʾij al-istitlaʿ fi al-Mahra min 23 abril ila 13 maiyu 2014' ['Report on the analysis of the results of the poll in Mahra from 23 April to 13 May 2014'], (13 May 2014). Available at http://almajlisalmahri.com until 27 February 2015 when it was removed owing to increased political sensitivities.

al-Muslimi, Farea, 'Deadlocked Yemen', *Sada* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), (20 June 2013). Available at http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2013/06/20/surmounting-southern-stalemate/gb6g (last accessed 15 October 2015; page no longer available).

National Dialogue Conference (NDC) website, 'NDC Member Selection Mechanism', (2013). Available at http://www.ndc.ye/page.aspx?show=69 (accessed 8 April 2017).

National Information Centre, Yemen (NIC), 'Al-taqsim al-idari li-sukkan al-jumhuriyya al-yamaniyya' ['The administrative division of the inhabitants of the Yemeni Republic']. Available at http://www.yemen-nic.info/sectors/popul/ (accessed 16 June 2017).

—— 'Ittijahat namu al-sukkan' ['Trends in population growth']. Available at http://www.yemen-nic.info/sectors/popul/ (accessed 16 June 2017).

Peutz, Nathalie, 'Revolution in Socotra: A perspective from Yemen's periphery', *Middle East Research and Information Project* 42 (Summer 2012). Available at http://www.merip.org/mer/mer263/revolution-socotra (accessed 8 April 2017).

Philbrick Yadav, Stacey, 'The "Yemen model" as a failure of political imagination', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47 (2015), pp. 144–7.

Phillips, Sarah, *Yemen's Democracy Experience in a Regional Perspective: Patronage and Pluralized Authoritarianism* (London, 2008).

Sada al-Malahim editorial board, 'Al-bayan al-marsus' ['Brief statement'], *Sada al-Malahim* 6 (November 2008), p. 47.

Saif, Ahmed A., 'Void vs. presence: The "in-between-ness" of state and society in Yemen', in L. Sadiki and H. Wimmen (eds), *Democratic Transition in the Middle East: Unmaking Power* (New York, 2013), pp. 38–57.

Shabwa al-Hadath, 'Al-raʾis Hadi rafada matlab bin ʿAfrar bi-iqamat iqlim al-Mahra wa-Suqutra' ['President Hadi rejects Bin 'Afrar's demand to form the region of Mahra and Socotra'], *Shabwa al-Hadath*, 8 February 2014. Available at http://shabwahalhadath.net/news/6265/ (accessed 8 April 2017).

Wood MacKenzie, 'Middle East Oil and Gas Map', February 2014.

YouTube, 'Mahra (E. Yemen) rejects proposed Hadhramawt region 22 Feb 2014', (24 February 2014). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KkU5RCmaQs (accessed 8 April 2017).

—— 'Al-Mahra tuʾlinu istiklala-ha sultana-tan / maʿ al-Sultan bin ʿAfrar' ['Mahra announces its independence as a sultanate / with Sultan Bin 'Afrar'], (17 February 2015). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThU8vPzfK3w (last accessed 15 October 2015; page no longer available).

Young, Iris Marion, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford, 2002).

CHAPTER 4

Generational and Political Change in Southern Yemen: "The Generation of Unity" Envisions its Southern State

Anne-Linda Amira Augustin

INTRODUCTION

Youth mobilization in Southern Yemen rose to new dimensions in the aftermath of 2011, when the so-called Arab Spring and youth demonstrations throughout Yemen, with the participation of all social strata, began. Prior to the Arab Spring, older generations often considered young Yemenis apolitical and completely uninterested in socio-economic topics. By the end of 2011, the transitional process introduced by the GCC Initiative had marginalized the youth in Yemen, despite the fact that it is young people who suffer the most from unemployment and political exclusion. These repeated experiences of marginalization were the main drivers behind the increasing participation of young Southerners in demonstrations and activities of the Southern Movement (*al-hirak al-janubi*). This generation became a very active and visible part of society in transforming social and political life in Southern Yemen and it put its agendas on the political stage. In doing so, it made use of apparent relics of a time long past, such as the flag of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), as well as ideas of the re-

establishment of this former state, which these young people never experienced. I argue that these "relics" were powerful symbols for the purpose of countering the hegemony of the Sanaʿa regime and the unity narrative in Yemen.

In this chapter, I thus seek to address the question how young Southerners approached the counter-hegemonic discourse of an independent Southern state during the transitional phase. The first part of this chapter shows how young people in Southern Yemen, most of them born after 1990, are socialized into political discourses; that is, how and from where they have obtained their ideas, conceptions and beliefs of the pre-1990 era. The chapter highlights the ways in which the Southern Movement was (and remains) actively engaged in Southern Yemeni collective memory formation. Young people did not learn such conceptions in state curricula or through the state-controlled media; rather, such ideas and beliefs circulated in families and Southern Yemeni society via formal and informal communication channels. However, these young people did not uncritically adopt all narratives imparted by the older generations. Instead, as shown in the second part of this chapter, young people not only used the counter-hegemonic discourse of an independent South Arabian state,[1] but also challenged Southern Yemeni history and the former leaders of Southern Yemen.

This chapter takes a social science perspective on generational and political change in Southern Yemen. It is based on various field researches in Southern Yemen between 2007 and 2015, but is predominantly predicated on a three-month period of field research from March until May 2014 in Aden and its surrounding governorates.[2]

REMEMBRANCE AND RAMIFICATIONS OF POLITICAL AND GENERATIONAL CHANGE

In his speeches, former long-term president ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih used the term *jil al-wahda* (the generation of unity) to refer to young people born during and after the unity phase. Embodied in the phrase was the hope that the "generation of unity" would grow up as "united Yemenis" instead of Southern or Northern Yemenis. Theoretically,

the term "generation" refers to an age-defined group of individuals who are shaped and influenced by similar historical experiences and events (Mannheim 1928). From an analytical perspective, the term generation provides "a space where memory and identity, and change and transformation are problematized and performed" (Shortt 2012: 117). Yemeni unity is thus the predominant historical marker for the *jil al-wahda*. From the perspective of the South, the Sanaʿa regime intended to make Yemeni unity the space of shaping the memory and identity of future Yemeni generations. However, my interviewees used this term as an ironic self-designation. Originally meant to evoke positive connotations of Yemeni unity, the term *jil al-wahda* was now viewed with suspicion and outright rejection by young activists of the Southern Movement, as it simultaneously implies the effacement of the pre-unity past.

The Southern Movement (*al-hirak al-janubi*) comprises activists from across the entire social spectrum of Southern Yemen. Their discourse sets in motion specific ways of both remembering and forgetting in Southern society, and is thus highly effective in its construction of a collective memory. In this sense, representations of the past have become a key factor in the politics aiming at change. The groups affiliated with the Southern Movement select memories related to Southern Yemen's marginalization and reconstruct the Southern past by choosing which events should be remembered or forgotten in order to conform to the social narrative of the South. Halbwachs (1992) suggests that individual memory is constructed within social structures. It is a form of societal remembrance, because collective narratives and experiences of the past influence individual memories. Hence, representations of the past impact on a society and circulate within it through special cultural frames and political constellations (Assmann and Shortt 2012: 3).

The way Southerners have constructed their collective memories vis-à-vis a dominant Northern discourse has changed over the past two decades. In the first decade after the civil war of 1994, Southern Yemenis challenged unity in the form of a "hidden transcript" (Scott 1990),[3] i.e. an offstage, non-public discourse of speeches, gestures and practices that contradict or inflect what is said in the "public transcript" (ibid.: 4–5). One example is the renaming of *jil al-wahda*

into *jil al-shayatin* (the generation of devils) by people in the Southern governorate of Abyan, referring to the "evil" times and perceived negative transformations that started after Yemeni unity in the South. This "generation of devils" predominantly refers to young people born in the unity year of 1990.

In 2007, i.e. the second decade after the civil war and when the Southern Movement came into being, the movement then began to openly address the marginalization of Southerners and to contest the hegemonic public discourse of the Sanaʿa regime. Southern discourses in relation to unity and the pre-unity past moved from the hidden into the public, and thus developed into a struggle for independence and the re-establishment of the Southern state. Today, activists of the Southern Movement openly claim that the South has been "occupied" since the end of the 1994 war. In Southern rhetoric, "occupation" dates from the end of the war in 1994, and the onset of Sanaʿa's dominance in political, social and economic life in Yemen (Dahlgren 2008: 50; Rogler 2010: 25–6). In this way, the Southern Movement sets its own dominant narrative against that of the Northern Yemeni elites and against the former hegemony of the unity narrative.

Because of its ability to do so, the Southern Movement has major transformative potential. It plays a decisive role in inspiring dissatisfied Southerners to bring about political change in Southern Yemen through a "reorganisation of memory by ushering in a new value system" (Assmann and Shortt 2012: 7), which is visible in a "new selection of common obligatory reference points in the past" (ibid.). When protests began against the marginalization of the South in 2007, it soon became obvious that something was changing in Southern Yemen, and that the Southern Movement could be a vanguard of change. An ongoing measure of this change during the transition phase was the visibility of the Southern Movement in the streets and public spheres of Southern Yemen. These spaces were where activists dealt with Southern Yemeni history, its present and future. In this way, political change became visible in circulating memories, as well as in how narratives have been transmitted intergenerationally since 2007, and predominantly since 2011.

However, observation suggests that young people do not uncritically adopt all knowledge that older generations pass on to

the young. Rather, Southern youth contest representations of past events and try to influence current politics, and thereby attempt to create their own Southern future. This chapter deals with the question of generational change, which is characterized as a "shift in the frames of relevance and reference" (ibid.) for inserting new social visions. "Routine" occupies a very important place in the reproduction of practices (Giddens 1979: 219) and is "closely linked to tradition in the sense that tradition 'underwrites' the continuity of practices in the elapsing of time" (ibid.: 220). It will be shown that young Southerners are calling into question this continuity of practices, such as regards Southern politics and leadership.

COLLECTIVE MEMORIES: THE DISSEMINATION OF NORTH–SOUTH RHETORIC

As a source of discursive knowledge and reference, the dissemination of certain narratives connected to the Southern cause (*al-qadiyya al-janubiyya*) contributed significantly to political events in Southern Yemen since the emergence of the Southern Movement in 2007. The Arab Spring added a new dynamic to the evolution of a Southern counter-narrative as discussed above.

Family memories

In many cases of youth mobilization, family memories are a starting point for young people to receive knowledge about the former PDRY and the contemporary Southern independence struggle. In some cases, memory-based knowledge circulation is gender-specific, as is the case for ʿA'isha and her mother.[4] ʿA'isha is a young woman of 21 years who lives in Maʿalla – a strong pro-Southern Movement area of Aden. She was born in 1993, shortly after unity. She is able to narrate the entire Southern Yemeni history from the beginning of independence in the 1960s until today. Besides her studies at university, she is working as a freelance journalist for various daily newspapers in Aden. In 2007, when the Hirak protests began, she was 14 years old, namely, in the age of adolescence, which is considered the "most crucial period for identity formation and particularly for political identity achievement" (Rebenstorf 2004: 17). ʿA'isha is an

example of how the generation of unity has thus been significantly formed and influenced by the evolution of the Southern Movement. The struggle against "Northern occupation" can be said to be part of their personal (political) identity.

ʿA'isha explained that she first began to ask her mother questions when she saw Southern Movement's protesters carrying the former Southern flag with the blue triangle and the red star. This is when her mother told her about the war in 1994. In posing questions to her mother as an adolescent, ʿA'isha touched upon her mother's memories of the past. Her mother had lost her job as accountant in the army in Aden and is now *jalisa* (forced to stay at home). She is one example of the marginalization that Southerners experienced after the 1994 war, when the Sanaʿa regime forced many Southerners to retire from civil service. Her mother's views about the past are, as any retrospective reflection, highly influenced by the present situation. ʿA'isha related that it was her mother who took her, at the end of 2011, to her first Hirak demonstration. In the same vein, it was her mother's memories which introduced her to Southern Yemeni history for the first time. After that, ʿA'isha started to read books and to inform herself about the Southern past. Eventually, she herself began to write. ʿA'isha's case shows that publication of the "hidden transcript" in 2007 promoted an intergenerational transmission of narratives, with the flag of the PDRY as a trigger in the transmission.

School curricula and textbooks

One important element of the South's narrative of marginalization before the current war was the decline of the school system that started, in their opinion, with changes to the national curriculum after unity in the 1990s, when music, arts and physical education were abolished and gender segregation was introduced. Many Southerners believe that these changes came as a result of the influence of ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani and the Islah Party (Augustin 2014). But surely, the push of the Southern curricula to the margins in the educational sector was also a matter of the weakness of the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) and the political strength of ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih and the General People's Congress at that time. Many

Southerners also felt that their culture, lifestyle and dress code were not adequately reflected in school curricula and textbooks. In the latter, for example, a "typical Yemeni" is dressed in the white *thawb*, which is traditionally worn in the northern mountainous regions. A Southern history and geography teacher, who is not an active Hirak member, complained that current school curricula conceal the Southern past. The time between Southern Yemen's independence from British colonial rule in 1967 and unity between the Northern Yemen Arab Republic and the PDRY in 1990 is, she said, hidden from school children. The former socialist past is completely omitted in Yemeni history curricula. In the years since the rise of the Southern Movement, therefore, many Southerners developed an awareness of the need to teach young Southerners "their" past. This history and geography teacher, for example, mentioned that she had been teaching her classes in a different manner since the emergence of the Southern Movement; she taught them that unity had failed and that the children's real flag was the former Southern flag with the blue triangle and the red star. She also mentioned that she had written the name of the former Southern state, i.e. "People's Democratic Republic of Yemen", onto the chalkboard to explain to her students that such a state had previously existed. She also admitted to having taught in some classes that Northerners were responsible for the sandstorms in their village in an attempt to incite her students against the North. Many Southerners, such as this teacher, simply started to act alone, sometimes clandestinely. When Southerners felt that times were changing in 2007, they began to speak out more daringly, and, accordingly, sought to extend their scope of action. Such people tried to change the perceived reality of "occupation by the North". In teaching the counter-narrative in her school curriculum, the history teacher actively resisted the dominant narrative or "public transcript" of those in power. By teaching the younger generation ideas that were not reflected or represented in the state curricula, she sought to contribute to political and social change in Southern Yemen, and to assist in the formation of a young Southern generation that is aware of their Southern past and acts upon it.

The street

Next to the more confined spaces of home and school, the street, too, was a space for learning. For example, I was sitting in a living room with two Southern Yemeni women in 2014, one accompanied by her two small daughters, aged eight and one. One of the women asked the eight-year-old girl if she knew what "the South" means. The girl did not answer. Then the woman asked the girl if she wanted to stay with the North. After thinking for a while, the eight-year-old girl replied: "We don't want Dahabshe,[5] and we don't want their smell!" ("*ma nishti ad-dahabsha wa ma nishti rihathum*"). When her surprised mother asked her daughter where this idea came from, she replied: "From the street".

Before the war and the dire security situation made Aden's streets unsafe, young children and youth, predominantly male, spent entire afternoons and evenings on Aden's streets, where politics and the socio-political situation of the country were openly discussed. They picked up information and talk from the streets, but in many cases, especially the young children, did not understand the full meaning of what was being discussed. Nevertheless, this story shows that street-based knowledge can have an impact on the children's lives and has the potential to deepen reflections on the Southern cause in a later stage of their life. This episode indicates that the "anti-colonial reflex" (Fanon 1974) had already reached the minds of the young, which is in sharp contrast to the apolitical attitudes – as older generations claimed pre-2011 – of *jil al-wahda*.

Workshops, lectures, and the media

Workshops and lectures – sometimes integrated into *qat* sessions – provided the generation of unity with information about the past, as well as about present politics related to the Southern cause. Hiraki university academics, as well as newspapers such as *al-Ayyam*, organized such workshops. At times a former socialist leader would speak about the past, especially during commemoration days of past events which were intended to be (re)formalized as historical knowledge. Some of the young people who attended these meetings wrote articles about these lectures for local newspapers such as *Aden al-Ghad*, *al-Ayyam*, and *Qadiyya*. Collective Southern memories are

highlighted in the young journalists' articles that many Southerners read every day.

The Beirut-based Southern TV channel *Aden Live*, which was established in the end of the 2010s, was for many years the only TV channel that dealt with Southern topics from a Southern perspective, free of Northern interpretations of the past. *Aden Live* is supported by former PDRY president ʿAli Salim al-Bidh,[6] and is thus a strong rhetorical mouthpiece of the pro-independence ʿAli Salim al-Bidh-wing.[7] The channel showed workshops and meetings of the Southern Movement, predominantly of the supporters of ʿAli Salim al-Bidh. More importantly, however, the TV channel dealt with the Southern representations of the past many Southerners miss in the state-controlled media. Prior to 27 April 2014, the commemoration day of the 20th anniversary of the outbreak of the civil war, *Aden Live* began to show old documentaries of the war in 1994, triggering emotional reactions among many Southerners. Some Hirak activists told me that these documentaries had strengthened their willingness to attend the big festivities on commemoration day.

Miliyuniyyas and faʿaliyyas

Alongside the protests and demonstrations that took place in different quarters of Aden every day, the million people rallies, or *miliyuniyya*s, did not only gather people from Aden. Queues of cars entered Aden from its surrounding governorates and the eastern provinces to attend these mass demonstrations and the *faʿaliyya*, the resulting big street party. At a *faʿaliyya*, anyone, male or female, young or old, could go onto the stage to recite self-written poetry, to sing a song or to make a speech on any topic related to Southern independence. In between, Hirak's slogans or new Southern pop songs, played from tapes, supported these stage performances. Sometimes ʿAli Salim al-Bidh spoke to the audience from Beirut via satellite, his image projected onto a large screen.

A day before the commemoration day of 27 April 2014, a *faʿaliyya* took place in the Adeni quarter Qalluʿa. One of the stage acts performed before the audience was a quiz game with two groups consisting of six children in total – three girls and three boys between the ages of five and 13. The two groups were separated by their sexes.

The two *fa'aliyya* presenters, one man in his 50s and one young man in his early 20s, asked the children eight questions, with an additional final question about the former South and the war in 1994.

> Young presenter (YP): "When was war declared on the South?"
> Boys: "27 April 1994."
> YP: "The answer is right."
> [The older presenter (OP) explains to the audience that it is the 20th anniversary of the declaration of war being commemorated today.]
> YP: "When did the Southern revolution against the Yemeni occupation begin?"
> Girl: "7.7.1994"
> YP: "No."
> Another girl: "7.7.2007"
> OP: "Right?" [This question is directed to the audience.]
> Audience: "Yes!"[8]

Through games such as this quiz (which the girls won, with all six children awarded with chocolate at the end), the younger generation was being socialized into the Southern counter-narrative, giving insight into the formalization of memory and canonization of narrations about the past.

The examples presented above illustrate a society-wide process of coming to terms with a suppressed Southern past and struggling for a (re)formulation of identity. They demonstrate that many Southerners felt an immense desideratum for generational and youth education, as state-controlled media and school textbooks ignored the existence of a separate Southern history. The Southern Movement, with its multiple sub-groups and organizations, filled this gap, and thus initiated a new historical consciousness in the South that quickly began to translate into social change. The entire South was undergoing a social and cultural transformation, as whole generations now grew into a framework in which the Southern past was newly interpreted in relation to current events.

YOUNG PEOPLE ENVISION THEIR SOUTHERN STATE

During the *miliyuniyya* rally on 21 May 2014, in which the Southern Movement commemorated the "20 Years of Disengagement from

the North", young people displayed a large banner with the inscription: "The Comprehensive Southern Conference: real youth participation in the new leadership" ("*al-muʿatamar al-janubi al-jamiʿ: musharika shababiyya haqiqa fi-l-qiyada al-jadida*").[9] Young people continued to feel unrecognized in the political process. Because of the decrease in the quality of school and university education after unity, there prevailed a strong belief among older Southerners that the younger generations were poorly educated and trained, and, therefore, unable to rule the country. Young people, in turn, tended to regard the older generation, such as Southern university deans and academics as well as school principals and teachers themselves, as equally corrupt to their Northern counterparts, and just as responsible for the poor educational standards in Southern Yemen.

Debates in the South regarding the "historical leadership",[10] the Southern political mentality, and youth participation in general predominantly began in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring, when the entire Arab World witnessed profound social and political transformations. The deep political and generational changes taking place in Southern Yemen also came to the fore in young peoples' discourses regarding representations of the Southern past and their impact on the future of the South. Not having experienced the PDRY themselves, young Southerners' reconstruction process is directed from present times towards the past. These young people believe that certain historical events, such as the incidents of January 1986, had paralysed, and indeed continued to paralyze, the political advancement of the Southern cause.

To some extent, the dominant anti-North rhetoric in Southern Yemen during the transition process pulled a veil over contentions among Southern Yemenis. Unlike flags and slogans or open speeches on the Martyr's Squares, these contentions are difficult to detect. In the following section, I want to present the voices of some young Southerners I interviewed.[11] In doing so, I seek to highlight the existing relations between older and younger generations, as well as the generational change taking place underneath the surface of an independence awakening.

Contesting "historical leadership" and the claim for youth participation

> Concerning the leadership of an older age like al-Bidh, al-ʿAttas,[12] ʿAli Nasir,[13] and al-Jifri,[14] we wish that they go to the Hajj or to the ʿUmra and that's it. They are responsible for getting the Southern people into this slough. (A male activist and journalist)

In Southern Yemen, many young people refuse to recognize as valid leaders the old Southern Yemeni elites who ruled the country before unity, many of whom had fought against British colonial rule in the 1960s. Those who held up placards of ʿAli Salim al-Bidh in public events before the war broke out explained that they were doing so because he was the only one from the historical leadership who was paying attention to the Southern cause. For Southern youth al-Bidh was a symbol of independence, as he was the last legitimate president of the South. In general, however, young activists viewed the former Southern leaders of the Yemeni Socialist Party in a highly critical light.

Opinions, such as those voiced by the young activist and journalist in the introduction to this section, were generally not discussed openly, as the anti-North rhetoric and the re-establishment of the Southern state were felt to be more important than practical questions of future leadership. Aware of such critical views towards his involvement in the struggle for independence, ʿAli Salim al-Bidh declared that he only wanted to reverse his past failure of entering the South into unity with the Yemen Arab Republic; after Southern independence, al-Bidh claimed, he would hand power over to the younger generations. There seemed to be strong consensus in the Hirak at that time that ʿAli Salim al-Bidh should not be allowed to take power again: only a domestic Southerner, rather than a Southerner in exile, ought to be allowed to be president after independence. The above interview sequence needs to be understood in this context, as it expresses profound dissatisfaction with the divisions among former politicians of the "historical leadership" which paralysed the political process by obstructing the formation of a united Hirak leadership that could steer the South towards independence. More so, this fact embodies

the profound scepticism young Southerners felt towards the former leaders who "handed the South over to the North" by initiating and implementing unification. According to the point of view of young Southerners, the historical leadership made monumental mistakes, such as the war of 1986,[15] as well as unity in 1990. Because of these errors, and because the youth judge these leaders are responsible for the political stagnation of the Southern cause due to their inability to overcome their past divisions, young people believed that these former politicians should not rule the South in the future.

Contesting old and creating new Southern mentalities

On 13 January 1986, political conflicts among the PDRY elites escalated violently. An attack on the meeting of the Politbureau, instigated by ʿAli Nasir Muhammad, resulted in a ten-day war that swept through the whole country and killed thousands. The struggle divided the country into two factions: the faction of ʿAli Nasir Muhammad, which was backed by people from the governorates of Abyan and Shabwa and came to be known as "Zumra"; and the faction around ʿAli Salim al-Bidh, which was backed by the regions of Lahj and Yafiʿ, and was referred to as "Tughma". The political divisions of this short but highly destructive war still reverberate among the historical leadership, as well as among many Southerners, even today. The only public event dealing with the war of 1986 is Hirak's commemoration day on 13 January, which is referred to as *tasaluh wa-tasamuh* (reconciliation and forgiveness). Whenever I brought up 1986 in my interviews, people either expressed the wish that this event be forever forgotten or they pointed to the reconciliation that had since occurred. Following Connerton's (2008) seven types of forgetting, one might argue that in regard to the events of 1986 there is partial (i.e. fractional) "prescriptive forgetting" (ibid.: 61) on the side of all actors who were personally involved in the conflict. Others practised "forgetting what is constitutive in the formation of a new identity" (ibid.: 62), meaning they "discard[ed] memories that serve no practisable purpose in the management of one's current identity and ongoing purposes" (ibid.: 63). Many Southerners dismissed the 1986 incidents as a mere political struggle within the YSP, whereas others asserted that they had transformed this "dark day" into a

"colourful *faʿaliyya*". Even though the event is remembered annually in a mass demonstration, no deeper examination and debate on the events, killings and detentions in 1986 have taken place to date. Families speak at home about their memories of 1986 and the victims of that war. Some activists share the opinion that the process of coming to terms with the past crimes of 1986, as well as the crimes committed during the whole of the PDRY era, could only take place in an independent Southern state, with laws to lay the basis for transitional justice.

Especially when it comes to the question of the former socialist leaders and politicians involved in the 1986 war, the phrase *tasaluh wa-tasamuh* seems to be mere words. To date, the former socialist leaders and politicians have not yet reconciled; nor do they share a common political vision to achieve Southern demands. For this reason, a group of three students from Aden University explained:

> But what we know is that failed mentalities ruled the South after 1967 and after 1970. These same mentalities are the reason for the unity and for the war in 1994 and for the problems in 1986. These same mentalities and the same people exist in the Hirak until today. They are the reason for the problems today. We don't want to return to the former South and we don't want the revival of the old regime or the former leaders. We want new mentalities. [. . .] We don't want the South to return like [it was] before 1990. It is true there was dignity, there were state jobs, education, freedoms, but the political system failed. We want our homeland and we don't want the comeback of the people who ruled the South in the past.

These students, all in their mid-20s, formed the leadership group of the student coordination office in Aden University. At the time of the interview, this group consisted of three young males originating from al-Dhaliʿ, Yafiʿ and Abyan, students in the faculties of medicine, economy and engineering. These young men saw their work as part of the "South Arabian revolution", but they were not directly engaged in Hirak groups – even though they used Hirak's rhetoric – because of the prevalence of former elites in Hirak. The Hiraki term "South Arabian revolution" referred to the peaceful fight for state independence for the South. These activists believed that the South Arabian revolution would end once the Southern state is

re-established. In this sense, these students took part in Hirak actions and cooperated with Hirak groups, but they insisted on their autonomy from any Hirak group, as well as from any leader. "Mentalities" (*ʿaqliyya*), as used in these young people's speech, can refer to certain people, such as the former PDRY leadership and politicians, but can also refer to thoughts and ideas. In this meaning, the students believed that "failed mentalities" (*ʿaqliyya fashila*) dominated these elites' behaviours and were the reason for certain problems today.

To fulfil the "South Arabian revolution", these students suggested the following:

> To realise a real revolution, the mentalities have to be changed first, that means the mentalities and the thinking of the society are the real revolution. It is not a revolution to raise the Southern flag or the pictures of al-Bidh or ʿAli Nasir only. This is not a revolution. The revolution will happen when the entire people understand the reality and try to change it, and change their manners and their thinking.

From the point of view of these students, Southern Yemen needs "new mentalities" in the sense of new thoughts and ideas. These new mentalities would avoid incidents similar to the war in 1986 and help create a "new South" exempt from old disputes and conflicts. Some of these young people refused to speak about their origins, because the war in 1986 divided the South along regional fault lines. New mentalities did not need tribal or regional affiliation. In regard to regionalism and tribalism, these students took the same line as many Hirakis, who agitated against the encouragement of tribal affiliations in the South.

Old versus new South

Before the current war set their dreams on pause, young Southerners envisioned a glorious future in an independent Southern state, a state which would be better than the old Southern state. The creation of a "new South" was thus central to their rhetoric.

> The Southern youth today demands a new South, not in the same format like the former Southern state or the former regime. Pre-1990, the dream objective of Southerners was the hope for Arab unity and the Southern street was influenced by the former Southern leadership and

> by Arab nationalism spearheaded by Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir and many other Arab leaders.

According to this young man from Yafiʿ, the pan-Arab nationalism of the twentieth century is outdated and a morass of nationalist ideas which resulted in the present-day situation in the South, a situation in which Southerners' right to self-determination is not acknowledged as the international community considers them Southern "Yemenis". For this reason, many Southerners no longer referred to themselves as "Yemenis". In the Southern Movement's rhetoric, Southern Yemenis were South Arabians, referring to the ancient history of South Arabia (Rogler 2010: 28). According to many Hirakis, pan-Arab nationalism influenced the National Liberation Front of the South which is why it inserted "Yemen" into the name of the state (from 1967 to 1970 People's Republic of Southern Yemen and from 1970 to 1990 People's Democratic Republic of Yemen).

That the term "new South" was a matter of contention between the generations became apparent when I used the term in an interview with a male teacher from Abyan in his 50s. Angrily, he responded:

> If we spoke about the "new South" or "new Yemen" we would eliminate the revolution of 14 October and the martyrs who protested in the revolution of 14 October [beginning of the independence struggle against British colonial rule in 1963]. We speak about the re-establishment of our state. We don't speak about the "new South". We fight for the re-establishment of our state.

In this interview sequence, it becomes clear that the former PDRY relied on political capital in the sense of Ayubi (1995), who describes two types of predominant Arab state regimes. The first relies "for its survival mostly on political capital revolving around categories such as nationalism, populism, radicalism and revolution [thawra]" (ibid.: 447), whereas the other regime relies "on financial capital and wealth [tharwa]" (ibid.). Neither system is as strong as they appear. In the interview cited above, the teacher expressing his fear that people would forget the "martyrs" who had died for Southern independence, or even forget that a Southern state already existed a quarter of a century ago, not only fought for his own past to have meaning for the future: His statement was also embedded in the Southern Movement's rhetoric that called for reclaiming the lost state. For this strand of

discourse in the South, a new South corresponded to a new state, which meant that Southerners would lose their right to reclaim their lost state. Correspondingly, references of young people to a new South, or older generations to the former state always also included references to the question of legitimacy of the historical leadership – a legitimacy that would be lost in a new South.

Sociologist, women's rights and Hirak activist Huda al-ʿAttas brings these two visions together:

> The old and the young mean the same thing. The older generation looks back with nostalgia at the old state, but not the old regime. Not al-Bidh or ʿAli Nasir Muhammad or Haydar Abu Bakr al-ʿAttas, and not the Yemeni Socialist Party those men once led. The elders in our society aspire to re-establish the old state in the sense of rule of law, honest administration and industrial development. The old state had value for them, because civil rights, education, health care and housing were guaranteed. There was a system and strict laws. The older generation, like the younger generation, wants a new state that pursues the same objectives with regard to human dignity, rights, safety, and economic and political stability. The younger generation uses the internet. They want a state that is open to the world and not closed off like the PDRY. But in the end the old and the young call for the same thing and that is a sovereign Southern state. (Augustin 2014)

The generations which consciously experienced the People's Democratic Republic had or continued to have linkages to the (Southern) Yemeni Socialist Party, and/or were aware of the state which they lost and now sought to reclaim. In contrast, young people, mostly born after unity, preponderantly did not rely on linkages to the YSP. The YSP after the 1994 war was not the same party as it was pre-unity. Many activists observed that the Sanaʿa-based YSP no longer had a strong influence in the South, and consisted mainly of Northerners. This lack of influence in the South was also due to the fact that the YSP was engaged in the political field in Sanaʿa and had, from the perspective of the Hirak, failed to support the Southern cause. The YSP was also officially advocating for the restructuring of Yemen into two federal regions, separated between the North and the South. This proposed restructuring was their solution aimed at upholding the unity of the country – a stance that did not sit well with many Hirakis in the South.

One of Hirak's leaders, who was a prominent member of the YSP in the final years of the PDRY, and now had a strong audience among Aden's grassroots activists, asserted:

> The Yemeni Socialist Party renounced the Southern cause after the war [in 1994]. If the Yemeni Socialist Party had adhered to the Southern cause after the war, all Hirak would be under the party's leadership today and it would be impossible to find any other leadership [...] The people in the South waited for years until they were convinced that the party had abandoned their cause, and then they took action themselves [...] The street moves by itself today. (Lecture delivered in al-Mansura, 12 March 2014)

Many YSP members in the South were activists of the Southern Movement post-2011. Particularly for young people, socialism opposed democracy and was synonymous to one-party rule. Because young people had not experienced life in the PDRY, they had different conceptions and expectations of a Southern state than their parents or grandparents. The older generations remembered the functioning state of PDRY. The young had the social imaginary (Taylor 2003) of collective social life. On the one hand, the young demanded the return of the welfare state of the PDRY, which meant for them rule of law, administrational functioning free of corruption, as well as industrial development, jobs and good quality school education, healthcare and housing. On the other hand, they rejected the former one party rule of the YSP and its leaders and the insularity from the world pre-1990.

CONCLUSION

Political change in Southern Yemen in the post-2011 / pre-war era was ascertainable by two factors: First, by the onstage critique of power of the Southern Movement; second, by its dealing with representations of the past. The Southern Movement was actively engaged in collective memory formation in Southern Yemen. This implied the formation of a social narrative of Southern Yemen that contested the hegemonic discourse – the "public transcript" – of the Sanaʿa regime. This social narrative of the South was intergenerationally transmitted to youth and children, thus contributing to the construction of a new Southern identity by dealing with the past.

These young people struggled for their active participation in decision-making, believing that the former elites and politicians, who had led the Southern cause during the past years, were not able to bring about political change in the South due to their biased histories. Young Southerners supported the counter-hegemonic discourse of an independent Southern state, but at the same time they critically called into question the legitimacy of the former Southern leadership and the regime of the PDRY. Therefore, the "generation of unity" did not only contest the hegemonic unity narrative, but also criticized those on the Southern side who were responsible for unity. Political change, and more intensively generational change, became obvious in their discourses and in young people's dealing with these transmitted representations of the past and their influence on present politics. Based on the transmitted memories of older generations, the young envisioned a future state of justice and functioning state structures, but different in form than the past Southern state. They sought to build a "new South". The reorganization of memories thus ushered in a new value system. In how far the war of 2015 and the ensuing political and military situation in the South impacted on this fledgling new value system remains to be assessed in the future.

NOTES

1. In the Southern Movement's rhetoric, Southern Yemenis are South Arabians, referring to the history of South Arabia during British colonial rule. They seek to avoid the term "Yemen" in order to emphasize their perspective according to which Southerners are different to (Northern) Yemenis (Rogler 2010: 28).
2. Next to open structured and narrative interviews with people between the ages 19 to 35, I undertook participant observations during Hirak demonstrations, lectures, as well as during private meetings. These observed demonstrations and lectures took part in Aden's quarters of Crater, Tawahi, Qalluʿa, al-Muʿalla and al-Mansura. Furthermore, this chapter is based on the observations of two mass demonstrations – called *miliyuniyya*s (million people rallies) and their *faʿaliyya*s (parties that take place during the mass demonstration). They took place on 27 April 2014 – the commemoration day of the declaration of the 1994 war on the South – and on 21 May 2014, when Southerners remembered ʿAli Salim al-Bidh's announcement of the South's disengagement from the Republic of Yemen.

3. A transcript is a complete record of what was said and includes non-speech acts (Scott 1990: 2). Scott uses the terms "public" and "hidden transcripts" to characterize the open interplay between "dominators" and "oppressed". He states: "The hidden transcript of subordinate groups, in turn, reacts back on the public transcript by engendering a subculture and by opposing its own variant form of social domination against that of the dominant elite. Both are realms of power and interests" (Scott 1990: 27).
4. I have anonymized the names of all of my interviewees in this chapter.
5. "Dahabshe" refers to a TV figure in Yemen from the 1990s. Among Southerners, this person is considered as backward and tribal; Dahabshe is thus used to deride Northerners in general, who are considered tribal and uncivilized in Southern discourse.
6. ʿAli Salim al-Bidh was the last general secretary of the Yemeni Socialist Party of the PDRY. He became vice president after Yemeni unity, having agreed on unification with ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih during a car drive through Aden in October 1989. On 21 May 1994, during the war between the North and the South, he announced via Aden radio the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Yemen with Aden as capital, and hence the disengagement of the South from the North. When the South lost the ensuing war on 7 July 1994, he went into exile. He ideationally promotes the Southern TV channel *Aden Live*. Many Hirak activists consider him president of the South.
7. The pro-independence ʿAli Salim al-Bidh wing is one of the strongest groups inside the Southern Movement. This group advocates for the immediate independence of the South and disapproves of a temporary solution of a confederation with a referendum.
8. In southern Yemeni dialect: YP: "*Mata tam iʿlan al-harb ʿala al-ganub?*" Boys: "*27 abril 1994.*" YP: "*Al-gawaba sahiḥa.*" YP: "*Mata qamat ath-thawra al-ganubiyya dhid al-ihtilal al-yamani?*" Girl: "7.7.94." YP: "*La.*" Another girl: "7.7.2007." OP: "*Sahih.*" Audience: "*Aiwa.*"
9. Some factions inside Hirak planned to organize a conference for mid-2014 to bring together all Southern leaders, political Southern factions and various society segments such as women, youth and civil society organizations from inside and outside the South. The aim of the conference was to unite the various visions inside the Southern Movement. This conference did not come to fruition before the war in March 2015 began.
10. The "historical leadership" consists of former socialist cadres of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, most of them fought in the National Liberation Front against British colonial rule in the 1960s. The majority of them live in exile and are at odds with one another.
11. I conducted open structured and narrative interviews with young activists of the Southern Movement and the so-called "South Arabian revolution" using snowball sampling, i.e. potential interview partners were recommended by other interviewees who considered them representative.

Many of those interviewed and presented in this chapter had written articles in the local Adeni and Southern press and thus actively contributed to the ongoing Southern discourse. Other interview partners were leading student representatives from Aden University.

12. Haydar Abu Bakr al-ʿAttas served as prime minister and chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council in the PDRY. In 1990, he became prime minister of the united republic. When ʿAli Salim al-Bidh declared the Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1994, al-ʿAttas served as prime minister. He went into exile after this war.
13. ʿAli Nasir Muhammad held all three major state offices in the People's Democratic Republic in the early 1980s: general secretary of the Socialist Party, president and prime minister. His power base is in his home region of Abyan and in Shabwa. He lost the civil war in 1986 and had to leave the country. He now lives in Cairo.
14. ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAli al-Jifri served as the vice president of the Presidential Council of the government of the Democratic Republic of Yemen which ʿAli Salim al-Bidh declared on 21 May 1994. Al-Jifri went into exile after the war, returning to Aden almost 20 years later, on 5 November 2014, to support the struggle for independence.
15. The Politbureau of the PDRY was attacked on 13 January 1986, resulting in a ten-day war between competing political factions in the PDRY, during which thousands were killed.

REFERENCES

Assmann, Aleida and Linda Shortt, 'Memory and political change: Introduction', in A. Assmann and L. Shortt (eds), *Memory and Political Change* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 1–14.

Augustin, Anne-Linda Amira, 'An interview with Huda al-'Attas', *MERIP – Middle East Research and Information Project* (15 May 2014). Available at http://www.merip.org/mero/mero051514 (accessed 16 June 2017).

Ayubi, Nazih N., *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London, 1995).

Connerton, Paul, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1 (2008), pp. 59–71.

Dahlgren, Susanne, 'The Southern Movement in Yemen', *ISIM Review* 22 (2008), pp. 50–1.

Fanon, Frantz, *Die Verdammten Dieser Erde* (Reinbek, 1974).

Giddens, Anthony, 'Time, space, social change', in A. Giddens (ed.), *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London, 1979), pp. 198–233.

Halbwachs, Maurice, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992 [1952]).

Mannheim, Karl, 'Das Problem der Generationen', *Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Soziologie* 7 (1928), pp. 157–84.

Rebenstorf, Hilke, 'Introduction: The concept of political identity', in H. Rebenstorf (ed.) *Democratic Development? East German, Israeli and Palestinian Adolescents* (Wiesbaden, 2004), pp. 13–28.

Rogler, Lutz, 'Jemen versus Südarabien? Zur Entwicklung der Bewegung des Südens', *Informationsprojekt Naher und Mittlerer Osten* 62/16 (2010), pp. 24–9.

Scott, James C., *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale, 1990).

Shortt, Linda, 'Re-imaging East Germany in the Berlin Republic: Jana Hensel, GDR memory and the transitional generation', in A. Assmann and L. Shortt (eds), *Memory and Political Change* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 115–29.

Taylor, Charles, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, 2003).

PART II

Transition and Its Discontents: Visions and Strategies of Yemen's Political Actors

CHAPTER 5

Governance in Transition: The Dynamics of Yemen's Negotiated Reform Process

Tobias Thiel

INTRODUCTION

The GCC Initiative and its Executive Mechanism, which had turned the popular uprising of 2011 into an orderly power transfer with the promise of a far-reaching political transformation, failed to halt Yemen's descent into the war it was designed to avert. Despite consistent progress in its formal implementation, the process frustrated the reform aspirations of the citizenry that revolted in 2011, as it prioritized stability and political parity over retributive justice and systemic change. Most crucially, it failed to curb endemic corruption and patronage, boost public service delivery, as well as strengthen governance institutions and the rule of law. Set against the daunting challenge of balancing the inclusion of Yemen's myriad political forces with the implementation of effective reforms, the extra-constitutional transition roadmap failed to generate a genuinely inclusive power-sharing arrangement (Thiel 2014). This chapter examines the dynamics of governance in Yemen in the period between late 2011 and late 2014. It explores two themes that lie at the core of the failure of the transition process: political appointments and the rule of law. Although the transition constituted a departure from the politics of the Salih era, this chapter illustrates the failure of

successive transition governments to introduce technocratic recruitment and strengthen the legal and institutional framework. Instead, elite patronage, political quotas and heightened partisanship turned national politics into a scramble for power, while the transition process undermined constitutional provisions, existing laws and institutions. Taken together, these developments markedly contributed to the failure of the process and Yemen's search for stability by the end of 2014.

PATRONS, PARITY AND PARTISANSHIP: THE LEBANONIZATION OF PUBLIC OFFICES

With the 2011 uprising, Yemen experienced two principle shifts in the constellation of elites. The first was the defection of close regime allies, such as ʿAli Muhsin al-Ahmar (Islah) and the sons of the late ʿAbd Allah al-Ahmar (either Islah or GPC; no relation to ʿAli Muhsin), as well as hundreds of GPC members, military officers and tribal *shaykh*s. In anticipation of a regime change, these power brokers embraced the rhetoric of political reform to preserve material interests, expand their political sway and renegotiate their place in a post-transition political order. The second shift occurred in November 2011 with the power transfer from Salih to Hadi (GPC). Retirement from the presidency deprived Salih of direct control over state institutions, and thus curtailed his ability to issue presidential decrees, appoint high-ranking officials and extend public sector patronage; however, he continued to wield considerable power through loyalists, personal wealth and as head of the GPC. Without a strong domestic powerbase, President Hadi, who only counted moderate GPC members and the international community among his supporters, drew closer to prominent patrons that had formerly been allied with the Salih regime. These included such personalities as Major-General ʿAli Muhsin al-Ahmar and the family of ʿAbd Allah al-Ahmar, who came to dominate decision-making at the highest political level during the early transition process.

Widely perceived as a transitional president, Hadi's legitimacy was staked on maintaining an equitable balance between rival political forces. In accordance with the GCC Initiative, he commissioned

Muhammad Ba Sindwa (JMP) to form a unity government in November 2011. Composed in equal parts of the GPC and the JMP, the cabinet fulfilled the 50–50 quota specified in the implementation mechanism of the initiative, whereby neither side would control both the Ministries of Defence and of the Interior, and vice-ministers would be of the opposite political affiliation as the minister. Hadi continued to preserve this prescribed quota of ministerial portfolios during three government reshuffles in September 2012, March and June 2014, in which he replaced ten ministers (Republican Decrees Nos. 184/2011, 133/2012, 34/2014, 95/2014). Nevertheless, political parity remained limited to the signatories of the GCC Initiative, and thus excluded the Huthis and the Southern Movement (*al-hirak al-janubi*; also: Hirak) from the unity government. Despite this architectural defect, the GCC Initiative mandated the technical committee for the preparation of the NDC to ensure a broad representation beyond registered political parties, including the Huthis, Hirak, women, youth and civil society, as well as various political parties and national groups (al-Lajna al-Fanniyya 2012).

The analysis of a list of 221 presidential appointments in civil government institutions, the judiciary and the military between November 2011 and October 2012 reveals that Hadi applied political quotas beyond the unity government and the NDC. Out of 109 high-level presidential appointments in civil institutions, 44 members were from the GPC (40 per cent), 15 from the Islah Party (14 per cent), 11 from the YSP (10 per cent), four Nasserites, three from smaller parties and 32 independent, roughly reflecting the quota of the cabinet. The selection furthermore illustrates that regional representation played a role: 75 nominees came from governorates in the North, 29 from the South – among them at least 12 loyalists from the President's home governorate of Abyan or neighbouring Shabwa and Lahj – and five from an unspecified location. Hadi's appointments in the judiciary during the same period indicate a similar consideration for political balance, albeit revealed a higher proportion to Islah at the expense of other JMP parties. Out of 70 appointments, the GPC received 30 and Islah 24 posts, together totalling 77 per cent of new appointments. Virtually all of the 42 surveyed appointments in the armed forces, which revolved around

the consolidation of military power under the command of the Ministry of Defence, promoted either Hadi loyalists from the GPC or his home governorate of Abyan; or those under the patronage of ʿAli Muhsin or the al-Ahmar family (Jabhat 2012).

Reminiscent of a game of musical chairs, Hadi purged Salih family members – son Ahmad ʿAli, half-brother Muhammad and nephews Yahya, ʿAmmar and Tariq – as well as loyal top commanders in seven rounds of presidential decrees between April 2012 and April 2013. Although ʿAli Muhsin lost considerable influence in this military restructuring, the rotation decisions relatively favoured the major-general, who was moreover appointed presidential advisor, vis-à-vis the Salih camp (ICG 2013). Hadi deployed members of the Salih family to diplomatic posts abroad, most prominently Ahmad ʿAli as Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, a strategy the republicans had employed in the 1960s to rid themselves of the elites of the Imamate. Apart from these diplomatic appointments, Hadi did not fill the 40 or so vacant ambassadorial posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs due to a conflict between the GPC and the JMP. Legally obliged to appoint nominees from within the entirely GPC-dominated foreign service, the president thus refused to act on either a list of names prepared by Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi (GPC) or JMP demands to follow the cabinet quota. Hadi meanwhile conducted Yemen's diplomatic relations through caretakers in key diplomatic missions, foreign ambassadors in Sanaʿa or Ahmad bin Mubarak, the head of the NDC Secretariat and, from June 2014 until July 2015, the director of the Presidential Office.

Meanwhile, civil society groups, such as the National Organization for Rights and Freedoms or the General Federation of Yemeni Trade Unions, mobilized against political quotas, arguing that they undermine principles of equality, standards of competence and efficiency. In May 2013, lawyer ʿAbd al-Karim Salam filed a lawsuit against the policy of quotas in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (al-Madhhaji 2013). In contrast to these quotas, which generate some degree of parity among political parties, appointments within government institutions followed a markedly partisan logic. Amidst heightened polarization, ministers filled

upper-level positions with party loyalists.[1] The *jabhat inqadh al-thawra al-silmiyya* (Front for the Salvation of the Peaceful Revolution), a civil society organization dedicated to monitoring government performance, levelled detailed accusations of partisanship against the Ministry of Oil and Minerals (various GPC ministers); the Minister of Technical Education and Vocational Training, ʿAbd al-Hafidh Nuʿman (Baʿath Party); and Muhammad al-Mikhlafi (YSP), the Minister of Legal Affairs (al-Baydha' Press 2013; Jabhat 2013b, 2014a, 2014c).

The main target of allegations of partisanship, however, became ministers belonging to the Islah Party, and evidence indeed corroborates such claims. All 18 (deputy) directors appointed in 2012 by the Minister of Electricity and Energy Salih Sumaiyaʿ came from the ranks of Islah. A probe into Sanaʿa schools during the same period reveals that ʿAbd al-Razaq al-Ashwal, the Minister of Education, exclusively appointed Islah affiliates as directors (Jabhat 2012). Justice Minister Murshid al-ʿArshani similarly decreed dozens of high-level partisan appointments of allegedly unqualified party members, which triggered protests and lawsuits by disgruntled employees that paralysed the institution (Taha 2012). The vast majority of the 443 employees appointed by Finance Minister Sakhar al-Wajiya were affiliated with Islah, even though many of them failed to meet job requirements (Jabhat 2014b). Opposition parties and civil society groups moreover accused Minister of the Interior ʿAbd al-Qadir Qahtan of cementing party control over the ministry (Jabhat 2013a). A spokesperson of the ministry countered that political and regional quotas – rather than partisanship – were considered for restructuring the ministry in early 2013, but had no adverse effect on eligibility, integrity and capability (al-Hassani 2013). After March 2014, however, Qahtan's successor, ʿAbdu Husayn al-Tarab, introduced a new recruitment procedure at director-level in the ministry. The selection was reportedly based on transparent criteria, including a minimum of 15 years of service, the submission of a CV and motivation letter (al-Masdar Online 2014).

Under pressure from anti-government protests that gained momentum over the poor performance of the transition government, endemic corruption and deteriorating living conditions, Hadi

decreed two cabinet reshuffles in March and June 2014, in which he replaced eight ministers. One goal of the reshuffles was to prepare the ground for the reduction of fuel subsidies in August 2014 through the replacement of the oil, electricity and finance ministers. In March, Hadi appointed Khalid Mahfudh Bahah – a technocrat considered at odds with former President Salih – as Minister of Oil and Minerals and moved him in the subsequent reshuffle to the Yemeni diplomatic mission in New York – a post that deals with the sanctions committee that was established by UN Security Council Resolution 2140 (2014) with the aim of containing acts that threatened the peace, security or stability in Yemen. Even though this political move was to Salih's detriment, subsequent decrees indicated that Hadi simultaneously manoeuvred against ʿAli Muhsin al-Ahmar. Hadi replaced the interior, electricity and information posts, which were held by Islah politicians considered under the patronage of al-Ahmar, with members of Islah that were less close to ʿAli Muhsin, thereby preserving political quotas, while limiting ʿAli Muhsin's influence.[2] Another indicator of Hadi's shift away from an alliance with old regime insiders is a speech to the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) in which Hadi singled out both Salih and ʿAli Muhsin as the main obstacles to political reforms.

A fuel subsidy cut in late July 2014 – though a much needed reform measure to avert financial collapse – triggered popular dissent that was easily exploited by the Huthis to justify the takeover of the capital Sanaʿa on 21 September. The same day, Hadi and the Huthis signed the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), which, among other points, called for the appointment of a new prime minister and a technocratic government, the reformation of the national body to implement the NDC outcomes, and the reinstatement of the subsidies. A complete capitulation to Huthi demands, the agreement changed the 50–50 distribution of the cabinet into a 9-9-6-6 power-sharing formula.[3] Nevertheless, the formula was not rigorously applied in the consensus government under Prime Minister Khalid Bahah that was instated on 7 November (Republican Decree No. 140/2014). The GPC and Islah, which retained the interior, defence, finance and foreign affairs portfolios in accordance with the PNPA, continued to dominate decision-making at the

national level, even though physical control of government institutions afforded the Huthis a de facto veto on many decisions. The appointment of seven regional governors in December by presidential decree further consolidated Huthi control over governorates in the North, and placed Hadi loyalists into key positions in the South (al-Ahmadi 2014).

In mid-January 2015, however, tensions reignited when the Huthis detained the President's office director, Ahmad bin Mubarak, on his way to submit the draft constitution to the NDC implementation body, which had not been reformed in accordance with the PNPA. Both the continued grip of Huthi fighters over the capital and the constitutional move constituted breaches of the agreement. After mediation efforts failed to resolve the crisis, the Huthis took over the presidential palace by force and put Hadi and Bahah under house arrest. The subsequent resignation of the cabinet, only hours before President Hadi tendered his own resignation, marked the end of a negotiated transition roadmap and the beginning of Yemen's descent into all-out war (see the introduction to this volume).

The transition process marked a shift from the patronage system of the Salih era to a political order with multiple patrons and power centres. With his legitimacy staked on the equity of the power-sharing arrangement, President Hadi applied quotas between political parties and national groups in accordance with the GCC Initiative. Simultaneously, however, he relied on moderate GPC insiders, powerful personalities from the Islah Party – most prominently ʿAli Muhsin al-Ahmar – and promoted loyalists from his home region as a counterbalance to the Salih camp. Amidst heightened levels of political polarization and partisanship, a great scramble for power emerged among political parties and forces, as each group sought to expand its influence by planting loyalists into political offices. Relationships with key power brokers and partisan loyalties – irrespective of competence – remained the main criteria for recruitment into public offices. With ministers and other public officials beholden to powerful patrons and their own parties, the domination of old power brokers severely undermined the public legitimacy of the transition process. Although Hadi attempted to

correct imbalances in the government reshuffle of June 2014, by then the unpopularity of the transition process had already set the stage for its decline.

THE EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE TRANSITION: WEAKENING INSTITUTIONS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Apart from exacerbating patronage and partisanship, the transition process severely undermined existing constitutional provisions, laws and governance institutions. The Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC) provides a pertinent example of this effect. Within the constraints of its political environment, Yemen has made some crucial advances in the fight against corruption since the country ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2005. The UNCAC led to the foundation of SNACC in 2007, which became part of the landscape of national institutions to promote transparency and fight corruption, including the Central Organization for Control and Audit (COCA), the Public Funds Courts, the High Authority for Tender Control, the Higher Tender Board and the public prosecutor. Able to refer cases for prosecution but not prosecute by itself, SNACC transferred 97 corruption cases to the public prosecutor between 2007 and 2012. Although only few of these cases were adjudicated, SNACC investigations administratively invalidated, among other cases, several large-scale energy contracts, the contract with Dubai Port World, a construction project of the Austrian oil company OMV and corruption cases in numerous ministries. The anti-corruption body also safeguarded or recovered hundreds of millions of US dollars in damages to the state coffers (SNACC 2013b). SNACC collected financial disclosures from civil servants, even if its limited ability to sanction non-compliance hindered these efforts. In accordance with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2010–14), SNACC moreover implemented preventative measures, such as capacity building and awareness campaigns, and supported the revision of the legislative framework for anti-corruption.

SNACC established a formal organizational structure with comparatively well-defined roles and responsibilities for its

employees to ensure the continued operation after the expiration of the five-year term of its first board of trustees in July 2012. In contrast to the predominantly donor-driven working groups in other sectors, SNACC took responsibility for the coordination of activities with international development partners. As a member of regional and international networks, SNACC moreover managed Yemen's bilateral and international relations in anti-corruption matters. The Yemeni media nonetheless portrayed a mixed image of SNACC, tainted not only by the low number of anti-corruption prosecutions and unclear mandates, but also slander campaigns by those who felt threatened by its operations. Its 11-member board of trustees – each of which holds the rank of minister – moreover proved to be costly and inefficient, which led outgoing members to advocate a reduction of the board to not more than five members. In 2013, SNACC submitted a list of priorities to the NDC to address obstacles to its fight against corruption, which included the lack of harmonization between the anti-corruption and public funds laws, the immunity of high-ranking public servants, the lack of SNACC's budgetary independence, and partisan appointments to its board (SNACC 2013a). Although the success of this first term (2007–12) was limited by political constraints that are emblematic of national anti-corruption agencies established under the UNCAC, SNACC did achieve a degree of independence that COCA, which gained notoriety as a tool of the Salih regime to keep corrupt elites in line, did not (Phillips 2011).

While all major political forces adopted an anti-corruption discourse to bolster their legitimacy, especially after 2011, successive transition governments under Hadi represent a continuation of, rather than a break with, Salih-era politics towards fighting patronage and corruption it (Salisbury 2015). Beyond this lack of willingness to change the "rules of the game" (Alley 2010), however, SNACC became a casualty of the transition process as Hadi's hasty and improper appointment of a new board of trustees severely undercut its legality and legitimacy. With the five-year mandate of the board set to expire in July 2012, Ahmad al-Ansi, the chairperson of the outgoing SNACC board, informed President Hadi on 21 April about the impending expiration of its term. In his letter, al-Ansi asked Hadi

to instruct the Shura Council to initiate the reappointment process in accordance with the proper legal procedure (al-Ansi 2012).[4] However, Hadi instead sent a letter to the Shura Council and the parliament on 3 July, in which he suggested to extend the term of the current board until the end of the transition period (Hadi 2012). Although parliamentarians were unsure whether the letter expressed a presidential directive or merely an opinion, the Shura Council suspended the already ongoing process of collecting requests for nomination and proposed to set a future date to resume the nomination process. With Hadi's letter serving as a legal justification, SNACC thus continued its operations throughout the latter half of 2012.

On 8 January 2013, the government released a cabinet resolution ordering all state institutions to stop dealing with SNACC in direct defiance of the president. The resolution, which argued that the legal mandate of the predominantly GPC-affiliated board had expired, was driven by a number of JMP ministers. These included Prime Minister Muhammad Ba Sindwa; Saʿd al-Din bin Talib (a former SNACC board member, who had resigned); Sakhar al-Wajiya (Minister of Finance and Head of Yemen Parliamentarians against Corruption); and Muhammad al-Mikhlafi (Minister of Legal Affairs), who accused the board members of being *balatiga qanuniyya* (legal thugs) (pers. interview with former SNACC board member, June 2014). The cabinet resolution forced Hadi's hand, who later that day tasked the Shura Council with reopening the process for the selection of a new board. Although members of the outgoing board described the cabinet resolution as "public moral abuse" and a dangerous precedent of government interference in SNACC's internal affairs, they welcomed the president's directive (al-Ansi 2013).[5]

On 20 April, the Shura Council submitted 30 names to the parliament. During the selection of candidates, however, JMP members had withdrawn from the GPC-dominated Shura Council in protest over the procedure, since nominees were chosen by vote, rather than based on the criteria specified in the law. When the list was released, at least 60 per cent of candidates had an affiliation to the GPC. The improper selection led a number of candidates, who

had not been nominated, to challenge the decision in the Administrative Court of Sanaʿa. On 5 May, Judge Badr al-Jamara ruled that the proceedings indeed violated the anti-corruption law since the voting process had lacked transparency; none of the three civil society nominees had any background in working with civil society; and one candidate, Muhammad al-Durra, was included halfway through the process (al-Mahkama al-Idariyya 2013). The parliament announced that it would respect the court's decision to invalidate the list.

However, on 16 September – after four months of legal limbo and eight months without a SNACC board – President Hadi singlehandedly appointed a new 11-member board by presidential decree and thus infringed on the judicial decision (Republican Decree No. 54/2013). The list included nine candidates from the inadmissible Shura Council list, and two of Hadi's own nominees, Afrah Baduliyan and Hassan Shukri Ziwar. In contrast to the GPC-dominated Shura Council list, Hadi's 11-member list ensured a balance between the North and South, as well as among political parties, with a strong representation of the YSP. However, several appointees failed to meet the selection criteria: Ziwar was a member of the general secretariat of the Socialist Party, and thus not formally independent; the supposed civil society board member Muhammad Ismaʿil al-Ghashim did not have a background in civil society; and ʿAli Yahya al-Sunaydar had been convicted of embezzling public funds (News Yemen 2014). Most disturbingly, Ibrahim ʿAli Haytham – a well-connected Southerner from Hadi's governorate of Abyan – faced charges for "accessory to murder" (Mareb Press 2013).[6]

Less than a month after the appointment of the board, an expedited legal suit for the nullification of the decree was filed before the Administrative Court in Sanaʿa. Hadi's lawyers countered that the president had issued the decree in pursuance of powers bestowed on him by the GCC Initiative, which, in their opinion, superseded the constitution and existing laws. Citing a letter from the World Bank from April 2013 that linked donor assistance to an operational SNACC board, the defence moreover contended that the appointment served the public interest. On 1 January 2014, a female judge, Raghda ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Wahid, ordered the cancellation of

the decree and fined the president YR 200,000 (EUR 700) for "excessive litigation" (News Yemen 2014). The verdict rejected the argument that the GCC Initiative invalidated the constitution or Yemeni laws, except in relation to the transfer of executive authority. The judge moreover refused to accept that the decree served the public interest, but conversely argued that it was "in the public interest to respect the law". Citing the previous judicial decision concerning the Shura Council selection, the bold ruling determined that the president had failed to obey his oath to "respect the constitution and the law" (al-Mahkama al-Idariyya 2014) – and, as such, arguably constitutes one of the most significant cases of legal independence in the history of Yemen's modern judiciary.

Some political circles in Sanaʿa interpreted the unlawful appointment process as a deliberate attempt by the president to paralyse the institution (pers. interview with SNACC board member, June 2014). More plausibly, however, President Hadi – empowered by the GCC Initiative and subjected to pressures from political parties and the international community – singlehandedly issued the controversial decree only days before a high-level Friends of Yemen donor meeting in New York in order to pre-empt criticism. The political quarrel over the SNACC appointment led donors, with the exception of the World Bank, to temporarily suspend cooperation with SNACC. In April 2014, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, which had advocated compliance with proper legal procedures when it concerned the removal of the former SNACC board, appealed the court's decision on behalf of the president in defence of the legality of the decree. Due to a strike in Yemen's judiciary, however, the case was not resolved until the breakdown of the transition process in early 2015.

The legal row over the appointment of the SNACC board exemplifies a broader trend of disregard for constitutional provisions, existing laws and institutions during the transition period. The roadmap similarly failed to address the legal uncertainty surrounding the Yemeni parliament. In February 2009, the GPC and the JMP agreed to extend the tenure of the institution – last elected for a six-year term in 2003 – until April 2011, by which time the popular uprising was in full motion. The expiration of the parliament's popular legitimation subsequently sparked consistent debates and

allowed the Huthis and other political groups to question the validity of its decisions on legal grounds. Another example is the Executive Bureau for the Acceleration of Aid Absorption and Implementation of the Mutual Accountability Framework (EBAA) – a World Bank-driven effort to bolster the transition process. Established in February 2013 to fast track the absorption of close to USD 8 billion development aid pledged in September 2012 under the Mutual Accountability Framework, the EBAA severely undermined the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), whose mandate includes the coordination and management of foreign-funded development projects (pers. interview with MoPIC staff member, June 2014). The parallel structure of the EBAA, however, did not prove any more effective than the institutions it was designed to bypass. The ambiguous relationship between the Yemeni constitution and the GCC Initiative, further exacerbated by international pressure for quick results, thus undercut the rule of law and the credibility of the transition process.

CONCLUSION

Although the transition process marked a departure from the politics of the Salih era, the sections above illustrate that the transition regime failed to espouse popular demands for more transparent, effective, inclusive and rule-based public governance. Amidst heightened levels of political polarization, appointments were based on quotas or partisan loyalties, irrespective of merit or standardized criteria. The presidency moreover used the extra-constitutional transition framework to leverage existing legislation and undermine existing institutions, such as the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption, the Yemeni parliament or MoPIC. Although the reasons for the breakdown of the transition process are complex, poor governance has significantly contributed to its unpopularity and ultimate demise. In an encouraging development, however, civil society organizations at the same time increasingly took steps to put the long-held vision of monitoring and evaluating government performance into practice. The struggles of lawyers to enforce legal entitlements through judicial proceedings were also both

commendable and promising, as were some of the courageous rulings they engendered. While fundamental transitions from one system of governance to another are necessarily politicized and chaotic, it is perhaps the latter civil society-driven efforts and cases of judiciary independence that are the most promising signs for a transformation in the long term once the war in Yemen has come to an end.

NOTES

1. The Ministry of Civil Service and Insurance is in charge of recruitment below the level of general manager.
2. Hadi replaced ʿAbd al-Qadir Qahtan, Salih Sumaiyaʿ and ʿAli Ahmad al-ʿAmrani, which maintained close relations to ʿAli Muhsin, with ʿAbdu Husayn al-Tarab, ʿAbd Allah Muhsin al-Akwaʿ and Nasr Taha Mustafa.
3. Under this power-sharing formula, the senior coalition partners GPC and JMP received each nine ministerial portfolios, while the Huthis and Hirak were accorded six posts each as junior partners.
4. Article 9 of the Yemeni anti-corruption law stipulates that the Shura Council must prepare a shortlist of 30 qualified, experienced, moral and honest applicants in accordance with standardized criteria. It then submits this list to parliament, which chooses 11 among them by secret ballot and forwards the names for appointment by presidential decree.
5. Al-Ansi attributed the reasons behind the resolution to SNACC's pursuit of its various investigations into energy purchase contracts, the Dubai Port project and procurement bids; for which the anti-corruption body demanded the reversal of ministerial decisions. He moreover denounced the outstanding financial disclosures from cabinet members, including Ba Sindwa himself.
6. In January 2012, employees of the Aden branch of the Central Organization of Control and Audit (COCA) had launched a protest to remove corrupt officials, including its director Ibrahim ʿAli Haytham. When Haytham ordered armed men to disperse the crowds, a striking COCA employee was killed in the ensuing turmoil, leading to Haytham's dismissal two days later. The attorney general issued an indictment against Haytham and, when he failed to appear before the court, marked him a fugitive from justice. Nevertheless, the head of COCA subsequently appointed Haytham as director of the COCA secretariat in Sanaʿa (Mareb Press 2013).

REFERENCES

al-Ahmadi, ʿAdil, 'Al-yaman: Hadi yataqasim al-nafwadh maʿ al-Huthiyyin ʿabr al-taʿyinat' ['Yemen: Hadi shares power with the Huthis in appointments'],

al-ʿArabi al-Jadid, 25 December 2014. Available at http://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/181908a3-3cda-4f22-8cee-376a08fb2013 (accessed 1 April 2017).

Alley, April Longley, 'The rules of the game: Unpacking patronage politics in Yemen', *The Middle East Journal* 64/3 (2010), pp. 385–409.

al-Ansi, Ahmad, 'Letter to President ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi' (Sanaʿa, 21 April 2012).

—— 'Letter to President ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi' (Sanaʿa, 31 January 2013).

al-Baydha' Press, 'Jarima idariyya yartakib-ha wazir al-maliyya Sakhar al-Wajiya' ['Administrative violations committed by Finance Minister Sakhar al-Wajiya'], *al-Baydha' Press*, 6 June 2013. Available at http://www.albidapress.net/press/news.php?action=view&id=28378 (last accessed 1 April 2017; page no longer available).

Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur, 'Letter to the President of the Shura Council and the President of the Parliament' (Sanaʿa, 3 July 2012).

al-Hassani, Muhammad, 'The success of any interior ministry is gauged by the satisfaction of the population', *Yemen Times*, 15 July 2013. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1694/intreview/2630/%E2%80%9CThe-success-of-any-Interior-Ministry-is-gauged-by-the-satisfaction-of-the-population%E2%80%9D.htm (last accessed 16 June 2017; page no longer available).

International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Yemen's Military-Security Reform: Seeds of New Conflict?', *Middle East Report* 139 (4 April 2013). Available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/yemen-s-military-security-reform-seeds-new-conflict (accessed 16 June 2017).

Jabhat Inqadh al-Thawra al-Silmiyya [Front for the Salvation of the Peaceful Revolution], 'RSF unveil dividing lists in President's appointments', *Yemenat*, 10 October 2012. Available at http://www.yemenat.net/news26870.html (accessed 20 October 2016; page no longer available).

—— 'Al-taʿyinat al-amniya al-akhira takris li-saytarat al-islah ʿala al-qitaʾ al-amni' ['The latest security appointments devoted to Islah control over the security sector'], *Al-Nahar Press*, 15 November 2013. Available at http://www.annaharpress.net/2011/4430.htm (last accessed 20 October 2016; page no longer available).

—— 'Taqrir rasid bi-aham suwar al-fasad wa-juwanib al-qasur wa-l-ikhtilafat ilati rafqat adaʾ wizarat al-shuʾun al-qanuniyya mundhu tashkil hukumat al-wifaq' ['Monitoring report of the most important forms of corruption and deficiencies and imbalances that accompanied the performance of the Ministry of Legal Affairs since the formation of the reconciliation government'], *Yemenat*, 21 September 2013. Available at http://www.yemenat.net/news39997.html (last accessed 20 October 2016; page no longer available).

—— 'Initial monitoring report on performance of Oil and Minerals Ministry', *Yemenat*, 9 April 2014. Available at http://www.yemenat.net/news45782.html (last accessed 20 October 2016; page no longer available).

—— 'Monitoring & evaluative report on Ministry of Finance & its affiliates', *Yemenat*, 22 January 2014. Available at http://www.yemenat.net/news44381.html (last accessed 20 October 2016; page no longer available).

—— 'Monitoring report on performance of Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training', *Yemenat*, 29 May 2014. Available at http://www.yemenat.net/news46737.html (last accessed 20 October 2016; page no longer available).

al-Lajna al-Fanniyya li-l-Iʿdad wa-l-Tahdir li-Muʾtamar al-Hiwar al-Watani al-Shamil [Technical Committee for the Preparation of the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference], *Final Report* (Sanaʿa, 2012).

al-Madhhaji, Majid, 'Daʿuwa qadhaʾiyya tafsid musar al-muhasisa al-siyasiyya li-l-wataʾif al-ʿamma fi-l-yaman' ['Lawsuit spoils the path of political quotas in public office in Yemen'], *Al-Mafkira al-Qanuniyya*, 2 April 2013. Available at http://www.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=316&lang=ar#.UuDbANL8LIU (accessed 1 April 2017).

al-Mahkama al-Idariyya al-Ibtidaʾiyya bi-Amanat al-ʿAsima [Administrative Court of First Instance in the Capital Region], *Asdarna al-hakima raqam (97) li-sana 2013 fi 'l-qadhiyya al-idariyya raqam (238, 241, 264)* [Verdict No. 97 of the Year 2013 Issued in the Administrative Case No. 238, 241, 264], (Sanaʿa, 6 May 2013).

—— *Taʿqib ʿala radd al-mudaʿa ʿaliyya ʿala al-daʿwa* [*Comment on the Defendant's Response to the Lawsuit*], (Sanaʿa, 1 January 2014).

Mareb Press, 'Maʾrib Press yashur watha'iq ʿan taʿyin mathum bi-l-qatl ʿadhwa fi mukafahat al-fasad' ['Maʾrib Press publishes documents about the appointment of a member in the anti-corruption [authority] charged with murder'], *Mareb Press*, 19 September 2013. Available at http://marebpress.net/news_details.php?sid=59955 (accessed 1 April 2017).

al-Masdar Online, 'Afkar ghayr masbuqa li-tawli al-munasib fi al-dakhiliyya al-yamaniyya' ['Unprecedented ideas to fill positions in Yemen's Ministry of the Interior'], *al-Masdar Online*, 8 April 2014. Available at http://almasdaronline.com/article/56486 (accessed 1 April 2017).

News Yemen, 'Takwin hayʾa li-munasarat hukm al-mahkama al-idariyya bi-batlan qarar tashkil hayʾa mukafahat al-fasad' ['Formation of a body to support the ruling of the administrative court to invalidate the decree to form SNACC'], *News Yemen*, 25 January 2014. Available at http://www.newsyemen.net/news4569.html (accessed 1 April 2017).

Phillips, Sarah, Yemen: *Developmental Dysfunction and Division in a Crisis State*, Research Paper (Developmental Leadership Program, 2011).

Salisbury, Peter, 'Corruption in Yemen: Maintaining the status quo?', in N. Brehony and S. Al-Sarhan (eds), *Rebuilding Yemen: Political, Economic and Social Challenges* (Berlin, 2015), pp. 61–77.

SNACC, *Al-Jaba ʿala al-Asʾila al-Mutaruha min Fariq al-Hiʾat al-Mustaqila bi-Muʾatamar al-Hiwar al-Watani* [Answers to the Questions Raised by the Working Group of Independent Institutions in the National Dialogue Conference] (Sanaʿa, 2013).

—— *Brief Report of the Most Prominent Achievements of the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC) 2007–2012* (Sanaʿa, 2013).

Taha, ʿAbd al-Qaddus, 'Taʿyinat wazir al-ʿadl taʿtamid al-maʿiyar al-hizbi wa-taʿmid ila "tatafish" miʾat al-kafaʾat' ['Appointments by Minister of Justice based on partisan standards and to deliberately "oust" hundreds of competencies'], *Yemenat*, 21 June 2012. Available at http://www.yemenat.net/news22894.html (last accessed 20 October 2016; page no longer available).

Thiel, Tobias, 'Yemen's negotiated transition between the elite and the street' (2014) [LSE Middle East Centre Blog]. Available at http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2014/03/03/yemens-negotiated-transition-between-the-elite-and-the-street/ (accessed 1 April 2017).

CHAPTER 6

Negotiating Women's Empowerment in the NDC

Nadia al-Sakkaf

INTRODUCTION

The 2011 Arab Spring events in Yemen put more Yemeni women in the frontline of political activism than ever before – both as supporters of change or defenders of the former regime. In recognition of this, women's participation in political decision-making was explicitly mentioned in the GCC Initiative that was signed by both long-time President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih and opposition parties in November 2011 and that laid down the steps for a transition of power and the building of a "new Yemen" in the search for stability. One of the most significant steps in the transitional plan based on the Executive Mechanism of the GCC Initiative was the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). Women made up 28 per cent of the total 565 participants of the NDC, representing various political parties as well as a group of 40 politically independent women.

The NDC lasted for ten months between 18 March 2013 and 25 January 2014 and its final document included more than 1,800 recommendations of the members specifying a new political system and a social contract for the "new Yemen". These ideas were eventually to be transformed into a new constitution and relevant laws. Amongst these, one of the most important outcomes in regard to women's issues was the 30 per cent quota for women in both elected and nonelected

decision-making positions. The objective of this chapter is to identify the positions of female participants in the NDC; how women with different political and/or geographic affiliations acted politically; and the consequence of this behaviour in regard to the endorsement of women-related rights in the NDC outcomes. It aims to show that when given the choice to participate and vote, women can fundamentally contribute to political decision-making processes and to enhancing the situation of women's rights in Yemen.

DECISION-MAKING IN THE NDC

In the designing phase of the NDC structure and the criteria for the selection of participants, it was decided that there should be an inclusive geographic representation of all Yemeni governorates. This allowed for politically inexperienced women who represented remote and less-developed areas of the country such as al-Mahra, al-Baydha', al-Mahwit, Hadhramawt, etc. to be part of this significant event. Although this was a risk as these were inexperienced negotiators, it was a great learning experience for them that left many of them much more empowered in their political activism and with wider networks across the country.

In general terms, however, this chapter shows that women in the NDC worked more independently from one another rather than collectively in regard to women's issues. Nonetheless, none of the demands regarding women's rights that were put on the table for discussion was rejected, despite resistance from conservative parties and their female affiliates. All ten women-related issues studied in this chapter were passed in favour of women's rights and empowerment. Some were passed smoothly without much resistance while others faced varying degrees of resistance and required diligent negotiations by their supporters.

The working mechanism for decision-making in each of the nine thematic working groups in the NDC, made up of between 40 to 80 members each, stipulated that every issue was first to be discussed in subcommittees. Then, a report was submitted to the larger working group for voting. If it was passed, the recommendations on these issues were included in the final report of the working group, which

was then ratified by the NDC General Assembly, which included the entire constituency of the NDC's 565 members. For an article to pass the working group on first instance, it required 90 per cent or more of the votes. If it did not pass, the article was then discussed again in the subcommittee and the entire working group in order to reach a compromise and was then again referred to the whole working group for voting, where it would pass if it received at least 75 per cent of the votes. If it failed to pass again, it was referred to the Consensus Committee whose role was to mediate between the various factions in order to reach a consensus. The Consensus Committee was a political group headed by the president of the NDC and composed of representatives of political parties and the heads of the nine working groups. It was thus a political entity rather than a technical one as most of the issues that required resolving were relevant to the interests of the political parties and hence needed to be negotiated politically.

Only two of the ten issues discussed in this chapter had to go through the Consensus Committee in order to be passed. This chapter thus comes to the conclusion that the NDC was perhaps one of the best if not the best democratic event to promote women's issues in Yemen's history and that it provided women with ample space to express themselves on all relevant issues.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter is based on an analysis of the proceedings of one of the working groups of the NDC, namely the Rights and Freedoms working group. This working group had the largest female representation: out of the 79 members of this group, 37 were women, i.e. 48 per cent. The group was headed by a woman, Arwa ʿUthman (politically independent), and one of the two deputies was also a woman: Wafaʾ ʿAbd al-Fattah Ismaʿil (a member of the Southern Movement). The members of this group were mostly affiliated with the various political parties present in Yemen, including political movements such as al-Hirak (i.e. the Southern Movement) and the Huthis. It also included representatives of non-politically organized groups such as civil society, women leaders and youth activists who had been part of the 2011 uprising.[1]

The gender ratio in this group was as follows:

Gender Breakdown of Rights and Freedoms Working Group, NDC

Political Component	# of women	# of men	% of women
Independent women	6	0	100
Civil society members	0	6	0
Revolutionary youth	2	4	33
GPC and allies[2]	10	7	59
Islah[3]	4	3	57
al-Rashad Union[4]	0	1	0
al-Hirak	4	7	36
Ansar Allah (Huthis)	2	4	33
Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP)[5]	3	2	60
Nasserites[6]	1	3	25
Justice and Building Party[7]	1	0	100
al-Haqq Party (Zaydi)	1	0	100
Federation of Yemeni Popular Forces[8]	1	1	50
Others – president's list[9]	2	6	25

Methodologically, this chapter is based on (participant) observation of the discussions in this working group (as a member of the NDC and the only woman representing the independent women component in the NDC Presidency – a nine-member high level body responsible for supervising the entire political process of the conference, I was able to attend sessions of this working group personally) as well as on an analysis of the documentation of the pertinent discussions in the working group, the General Assembly and the Consensus Committee (which I was also a member of and hence participated in its discussions). This documentation included minutes, video recordings and correspondence with Consensus Committee members. Moreover, interviews were conducted with a number of the members of the working group, both men and women, on their positions regarding the issues at hand.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN LIGHT OF THE POLITICAL DEBATE

In international comparison, Yemen continues to rank low in regard to women's social and political rights. According to the Gender Gap

Report issued by the World Economic Forum, which has been issued since 2006 and which covers data relating to health, economy, education and politics, in 2016 Yemen was ranked lowest in the list for the tenth year in a row (www.weforum.org).

According to article 24 of the Yemeni constitution of 1994, "[t]he state shall guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens in the fields of political, economic, social and cultural activities and shall enact the necessary laws for the realization thereof" and Yemen is also signatory to most international agreements supporting women's rights in general. In regard to women's political participation, which is the focus of this chapter, Yemeni women were able to vote in both republics before unity in 1990 (as well as afterwards); in fact, Yemeni women gained suffrage in the South as early as 1967 (Freedom House 2005). Over the course of the different elections since unity in 1990, women voters made up at least one-third of the voting constituency according to reports of the Women's Department of the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (SCER), which was formed in 2005. SCER reported that between 1993 and 2003, the number of women registered to vote in elections has increased threefold to make up 42 per cent of the voting constituency in the 2003 parliamentary elections (Yemen Embassy 2009). However, the number of women candidates decreased over the same period by the same rate. Similarly, the number of women winning positions through elections has also decreased over the years from 11 women in the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen's parliament before 1990 to only one woman[10] in the parliament of 2003. In general, women were courted as voters by the political parties, but their active role as candidates was less welcome.

Women were always compromised in political negotiations and despite their significant role in political events such as during the 2011 uprising, "participation did not translate into tangible change in terms of political and economic transformation" (Odeh 2014: 190). For this reason, the participation of 161 women in the NDC, considered the most significant political conference in Yemen's recent history, and the fact that women headed three of its nine working groups was perceived as a welcome change for Yemeni women. It could thus be argued that the National Dialogue

Conference was the most visible platform for women's political participation in Yemen's history as women made up around 28 per cent of the conference's participants, and was "a clear break from the past" (Murray 2013: 2). The NDC was thus perceived as a golden opportunity for women to achieve their long-demanded rights as "the transition process provides a short, but timely window for women to lobby for better policies that encourage the participation of women and integrate their demands into the National Dialogue Conference" (Saferworld 2012: 12).

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS WORKING GROUP AND RESULTS

In general terms, female participants in the NDC did not see themselves as a homogenous group or as members of the same category. Even those who were categorized as members of the independent women component did not share the same feminist outlook. This component comprised 40 politically independent active women (20 from northern Yemen and 20 from the South) whose presence in the NDC was seen as a requirement to truly represent women's general issues beyond the political priorities of women affiliated to political parties.[11]

Many of these women based their decisions on their individual experiences and personal values whereas others were more persuaded by their political commitments to certain parties, which dictated their attitude towards contentious issues and sometimes also against proposals that liberal feminists considered to be in the best interest of women in Yemen. This is a phenomenon not unique to Yemen; for example, research on women's involvement in the Palestinian and Israeli political negotiations demonstrates that female activists' "differing identities and commitments have often aligned them with men of their class, religion, ethnicity, tribe or family than with women across these social boundaries" (Joseph 2000: 10). The non-alignment of women for the sake of women's rights in this working group was particularly salient in two main issues: the women's quota and the law against early marriage, the two most contended issues in the debate on women's rights over the last decades in Yemen.

Women's quota

The question of a women's quota has been one of the most heatedly debated when it comes to women's political empowerment in Yemen over the last two decades. Although the legal system does not discriminate against women in availing decision-making positions, the political, religious, and social elites (i.e. religious leaders, community and tribal leaders and senior politicians) responsible for creating the socio-cultural and religious environment do. In political debates since the creation of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) opposition coalition in 2002,[12] Yemen has seen an active political process where parties lobbied for their interests, created alliances, boycotted or competed in elections and significantly changed the political scene in comparison to what it was before. However, none of these parties demonstrated any genuine interest in promoting women's issues and committed to women's political participation. When approached by female activists in regard to a quota in decision-making positions, therefore, all political parties acknowledged women's rights to political participation but none of them, including the liberal YSP, committed to taking action to make it happen. Many female political activists thus continued to advocate for the quota system as a tool to break through the barriers against women's political empowerment. Without quotas, activists fear, women will continue to be seen as electorate, but not as electable.[13]

The issue of the women's quota was discussed in the Rights and Freedoms working group on 2 June 2013. According to the minutes of the session, of the four female members of the Islah Party voting on this issue, two, Huwayda ʿAbbas and Ilham Najib, flat-out rejected the article. When interviewed, Ilham Najib explained that she was following her party's position and that she believed there was no guarantee that if there was a quota good women would make it to decision-making positions (pers. interview, January 2014). Therefore, the quota was not a priority for her or her party. Sumayya al-Sharjabi of Islah (pers. interview, January 2014), in contrast, did not reject the quota system altogether and instead asked for it to be limited to parliament only. She explained that it seemed more reasonable to have more women in the parliament considering that we had only one woman among 301 members and that this would be a safe place

to start advocating for more female political participation without having to confront the conservatives.

Men from Islah were more vocal providing an explanation for why they as a party rejected this article. The head of the Islah component in the working group, Qasim al-Maflihi, who is also head of the Social Unit in the Hizb al-Islah, maintained that quotas in general are undemocratic. This position was also documented in the minutes of the General Assembly session on 16 June 2013. Here, the representative of Islah, Shakir al-Hitari, reiterated his party's long-standing position in regard to women's political participation in general and the quota specifically as follows:

> The group [Rights and Freedoms working group] wants quotas for women, youth, and marginalized Yemenis, why then have elections if more than half of the seats will be [given away by] quota? Will the rural woman benefit from this quota? What is the use of such a quota when we know that most Yemeni women are in the rural areas and most of them there are illiterate and unqualified to run the country? We should first focus on educating women and improving their well-being and then consider a quota. Finally, this quota contradicts the value of equality between men and women, which many international conventions emphasized.

In line with well-known arguments in regard to debates on such a quota worldwide (Cornwall and Goetz 2005: 783–800; Dahlerup 2007: 73–92) he continued his statement saying:

> I suggest we take the spirit of the GCC Initiative and ensure a fair representation of women in its institutions based on qualifications. Having a quota system is discrimination and violates the voters' right to choose whomever they want regardless of gender. The quota is also a direct insult to women because it implies that they are not strong enough to compete with men and need extra measures to support them. Also, this encourages other groups in society to also demand quotas and this would start a dangerous precedent. And finally, the Yemeni traditions do not accept this and many could reject the constitution [resulting from the NDC] because of this article.

Similar to this was the position of the Salafi al-Rashad Union, whose representative in the working group rejected the quota. The party reiterated its position in the General Assembly on 16 June 2013 when its representative, Muhammad Tahir Anʿam, too, argued

against the quota by referring to "the principle of the equality of genders, which is a core principle of the constitution". He added that "advanced countries do not have quotas for women because these are undemocratic practices as they impose restrictions on the public's free choice".

But resistance did not only come from conservative parties such as Islah and al-Rashad: Echoing the above sentiment in the General Assembly, civil society representative Salih al-Mundhiri stated that a quota might limit the opportunities for independent men to run because the number of available seats up for competition would be smaller. He therefore suggested to reduce the quota for women to 10 per cent and to limit it to proportional list constituencies because a quota in an individual names-list system "did not work".

Reflecting the diversity of opinions on this matter in public discussions before the NDC, Lamya Sharaf al-Din, representative of al-Haqq Party, demanded that the 30 per cent quota be enshrined in the future constitution while a woman from the revolutionary youth, Amira al-ʿArasi, suggested revisiting the quota after two electoral terms and ensuring that the quota be based on qualification. Moreover, Nabila ʿAbd Allah, a researcher and a representative of the Southern Movement, demanded that the quota be increased to 50 per cent.

Ultimately, however, the resisting participants did not make up more than 10 per cent of the number of participants present during the voting on this issue. Therefore, despite the heavy resistance from some actors across the spectrum, the recommendation regarding the quota that was eventually passed stated: "The state commits to a 30% representation of women through a constitutional quota system so that women are able to effectively participate in various state authorities and bodies and both elected and appointed councils." This outcome was later written into the draft constitution presented January 2015, in which article 76 reads: "To give effect to the principle of equal citizenship, the State shall enact legislation and take measures, to achieve effective political participation for women to ensure access to at least 30% in various authorities and bodies" (International IDEA 2015).

Law against early marriage

Criminalizing child marriages has been a central demand of many Yemeni women activists ever since the minimum age for marriage that had been set at 15 years in the 1992 version was deleted from the Personal Status Law in 1999. Instead of this provision, legislators introduced a more general condition that allowed girls to be married at an early age if they were "fit for sexual intercourse".[14] As a consequence, many Yemeni girls were married off at an early age depriving them from completing their education or enjoying their childhood and putting their (physical and mental) health at risk.[15] According to the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 32 per cent of Yemeni girls are married before reaching the age of 18 and 9 per cent of them marry before reaching 15 years of age (UNICEF 2016; data from 2013).

In the years before the 2011 upheavals, the demands of women activists had gained particular traction through the case of Nujud ʿAli, who sought divorce at ten years of age in 2008. Using the international media's attention for Nujud's case, Yemeni women activists furiously lobbied for a law to ban child marriages bringing forward arguments that were based on internationally recognized children's and human rights. Yet, they faced a strong counter-campaign led by religious and tribal conservatives many of whom were affiliated with the Islah Party.[16] Conservative scholars such as ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani, a prominent leader in the Islah Party, former head of its Shura Council and president and founder of al-Iman University, argued that the Prophet Muhammad had married ʿA'isha at a very young age.[17] A legal marriage age was thus against *shariʿa*. Others, such as Muhammad al-Hazmi, an Islahi MP, were quoted in the press saying that the law to ban early marriage was a "Western plot aimed at westernizing our culture [. . .]. The West wants to teach us how to marry, conceive and divorce. This is cultural colonization that we reject" (Associated Press 2009).

Given the long-standing heated discussions and entrenched fault lines in the debate on the minimum age of marriage, creating alliances across the political spectrum when discussing child marriage legislation in the NDC was particularly difficult. In order to pass a respective recommendation, female activists lobbied alongside men from non-religious parties (such as YSP, the

Nasserites and GPC) in order to arrive at a majority during voting rather than trying to convince opposing women from Islah and the Rashad Union.

During the working group's session on 18 September 2013 when this issue was discussed, three of the four women from Islah opposed the recommendation which stipulated that the minimum age of marriage be 18 years of age, whereas the fourth supported it. The rationale of the opposing women was that 18 was too old and that if a law must be made it should set the age at 15 or 16 maximum. This was explained by Sumayya al-Sharjabi of Islah with the fact that already 50 per cent of Yemeni women who marry under 18 years marry at an average of 15 years and above. Accordingly, this seems to be an acceptable average for society and is a reasonable one to accomplish (pers. interview, January 2014).

The matter was discussed again in the General Assembly on 2 November 2013. During the debate, the Islah Party demanded that the decision on defining the minimum age of marriage should be referred to specialists including medical practitioners, religious scholars and social scientists rather than a group of politicians and activists who are participating in the NDC and therefore demanded that the recommendation be rejected. The representative of the Rashad Union also rejected this recommendation, which was then referred to the Consensus Committee as per procedure. The Consensus Committee ruled in favour of the recommendation, which ultimately stated that "[t]he State should define 18 as the legal age for marriage for girls". It is worth mentioning that in the draft constitution presented in January 2015, it is stated clearly in article 124 that the minimum age for marriage is 18 years of age.

Blood money

Paying blood money refers to the practice of financially compensating a murdered person's family. Article 42 of the Yemeni Crimes and Penal Code No. 12 of 1994 states that a "woman's blood money is half of man's". Article 40 of the same law addresses the financial compensation for bodily harm and gives an upper ceiling in regard to how much compensation for a physical injury a woman is entitled to while there is no such limit for a man's compensation.

Yemeni women activists have advocated against this discrimination for many years and the topic was especially taken up by the Women's National Committee (WNC), which is the government body responsible for empowering Yemeni women through the development and implementation of respective strategies and policies.[18] In 2002, the WNC developed a three-year advocacy campaign against these provisions as part of a list of other discriminatory laws against women.[19]

Seeing the NDC as an opportunity to remove such discriminatory articles in the law, female activists of the Rights and Freedoms working group proposed to equate the blood money for men and women. All women in the working group, including those affiliated to conservative political parties, supported this motion. Their united stance during the discussions in the working group on 2 June 2013 was not organized beforehand, but came as a result of the fact that this demand does not clash with either their religious, cultural or political beliefs, hence passing it without questioning.

There was only one objection from the Rashad Union's representative, ʿAbd al-Hamid al-Harithi, who according to the minutes of this session argued that "this article must be deleted because it is based on the wrong assumption that the blood money is about the worth of the human soul, which is wrong. This money is for the people left behind and since the man is usually the breadwinner, this money is double. Also, making the blood money equal for men and women goes against the consensus of the Islamic scholars."

As resistance to this issue was limited to the Rashad Union, the recommendation to equate men and women in blood money and injury compensation was passed. The 2015 draft constitution did not mention this detail; however, technically, it ought to be included when the new Penal Code is drafted, based on the new constitution and NDC outcomes.

Divorced women's right to housing for their children

In cases of divorce, Yemeni law does not oblige the husband to provide suitable accommodation for his divorced wife even if she is in custody of the children (Yemeni Personal Status Law 1998). Given

that most women in Yemen do not have an income of their own, this lack of support is considered detrimental to the welfare of the children and their mother. Female activists in the group proposed to amend this law and to oblige the husband to provide adequate housing for his divorced wife if she is taking care of their children. One of the primary advocates of this motion, Nura al-Shami from the group representing the allies of the GPC, said that she was personally a victim of this law and wanted to use the NDC to right a wrong.

Resistance to this provision again only came from the Salafi al-Rashad Union. In the General Assembly on 16 June 2013, Muhammad Taher Anʿam demanded that this recommendation be deleted as it promotes family disintegration and encourages divorce.

Except for the Rashad Union, all other members of the working group did not reject this recommendation. In interviews, the women in this group and the external facilitator,[20] Shaymaʿ al-Raʿy, explained that there were no lobbying meetings or coordination among the women in advance of the voting session to ensure that their position was united. That their positions were in line nonetheless was explained by the head of the working group, Arwa ʿUthman, with the fact that this issue is on every woman's agenda regardless of her political or social background (pers. interview, February 2014). The women activists in the group thus did not feel the need to lobby other women to support it, particularly so since the men of their respective political parties did not seem to take specific interest for or against the issue.

In other words, women from various political backgrounds derived their position on this issue independently and without knowing what other women's positions were. They risked a rejection of the recommendation with this lack of coordination, which was nonetheless passed stipulating that "[t]he State must guarantee divorced women's right to the family home when in custody of the children". Again, this legal right was not included in the 2015 constitution, but should be incorporated in the new Personal Status Law to be drafted after the new constitution is approved.

Nationality of husband and children

Although this, too, was not a controversial issue in the NDC or in the Rights and Freedoms working group, this topic is highlighted in this

chapter because of its significance for Yemeni women's empowerment. Up to date, Yemeni women are discriminated by the law when it comes to their right to pass on their Yemeni nationality to a non-Yemeni husband or their children from a marriage to a non-Yemeni husband. Law No. 6 of the year 1990, amended by Law No. 24 of 2003, regarding Yemeni citizenship provides the wife and children of a Yemeni man with the right to attain Yemeni nationality. Article No. 9 of this law states that a wife of a Yemeni man avails of the Yemeni nationality if she applies for it and publishes her application in a local newspaper and if the couple has at least been married for four years, while his children become Yemenis at birth if they are staying with their father in Yemen. However, the same does not apply to a non-Yemeni man marrying a Yemeni woman. A 2009 amendment of article 3 of the Nationality Law gave Yemeni women the right to pass on their nationality to their children. However, the executional regulation has limited this right to children born after the amendment was enacted or to those whose foreign father abandoned them.

No real objection to women passing on their nationality to their non-Yemeni husbands was made in the working group although suggestions for amendments were brought forward by both male and female members of the group. For example, Bilqis al-Hadhrani from the GPC allies suggested that only Arab husbands should get the nationality after five years of marriage while "foreign" (i.e. non-Arab) husbands should receive it only after ten years of marriage. Amal al-Makhidhi, a member of Ansar Allah (Huthis), argued that the Yemeni nationality should be revoked if divorce occurs. Another suggestion came from Liza Haydar from Hirak, who argued that before Yemeni nationality is granted, the applicant should provide evidence that he is not charged by Yemeni authorities for a criminal or moral offense. The recommendation that was ultimately passed stated: "Children of a Yemeni woman receive the Yemeni nationality at birth while an Arab husband receives it after five years and a foreign husband after ten."

Violence against women

According to the August 2010 *Country Assessment on Violence Against Women*, "women in Yemen are subjected to various forms of violence,

including physical and psychological abuse within the family, deprivation of education, early marriage, forced marriage, exchanged marriage, exaggerated dowries leading to missed opportunity for marriage, sexual harassment, abuse and violence, restrictions and control over freedom of movement, exclusion from private and public decision-making roles and processes, forced pregnancy, polygamy, denial of inheritance, deprivation of utilizing health services, and female genital mutilation/cutting" (Women Watch 2010: 7).

Similarly, an exploratory survey (BaObaid and Bijleveld 2002) on violence against women in Yemen combined with information on official statistics from the police indicates that three-quarters of Yemeni women have been subject to verbal violence, in many cases from male intimates in their family such as the husband, father or brothers. Almost half of the sample investigated here had been victim to beating, while one out of five interviewees had received death threats at some point in her life.

Most of the participants in the Rights and Freedoms working group realized the prevalence of violence against women and there was thus no objection against illegalizing it. There was, however, some criticism against the Convention of Eliminating all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the religiously affiliated members of the group, who wanted to demonstrate that their approval of this article is based on *shari'a* principles and not on the blind copying of Western values. The recommendation that was passed stated: "A law must be created to protect women from all types and forms of violence, especially domestic violence." It is yet to be seen how this outcome will be manifested in legal terms in the relevant laws.

Equal citizenship

The discussion on the topic of equal citizenship between men and women centred on the understanding of the concept of equal citizenship itself. In general, all Southern women participating in the NDC strongly spoke for women's rights on all platforms. They often mentioned the 1974 Family Law of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), which is known to have had one of the Arab World's strongest pro-women legislations. In the General

Assembly on 16 June 2013, Intisar ʿUmar from Aden claimed that while the South had brought such empowering legal provisions to the table during unity in 1990, hence positively influencing the political participation of Yemeni women in the North, the patriarchal society in the North had ultimately overwhelmed the achievements of Yemeni women in the South. Southern female participants in the NDC thus blamed the North for the gender inequality that Yemeni women are experiencing today.

All women in the working group either supported the recommendation to promote equal citizenship of men and women or abstained from voting. While three of the female members of the Islah Party did not vote or comment, its fourth member, Sumayya al-Sharjabi, objected to the provision and requested that the word "equal" be removed. When asked to explain her rejection, she stated that her position was based on the party's position expressed by the Islah component leader in the group, Hadi Tarshan, who said that "a woman should practise all equal citizenship rights in accordance to her nature and composition". He explained that according to his opinion, there are many activities women cannot do due to their physical and emotional make-up and that therefore the notion of absolute equality does not exist.

Despite these objections, the following recommendation was passed: "The State ensures all civil and political rights for women and commits to enabling women to practise all rights of equal citizenship." The spirit of this outcome was beautifully translated in the 2015 draft constitution, according to which article 75 states that "[c]itizens shall have equal rights, freedoms and public duties without discrimination due to sex, skin colour, race, origin, religion, sect, belief, opinion, economic or social status, disability, political or geographical affiliation, occupation, birth, or any other considerations" (International IDEA 2015). This is a drastic change from the current constitution, in which article 31 stipulates that "[w]omen are the sisters of men. They have rights and duties, which are guaranteed and assigned by *shariʿa* and stipulated by law."

Sexual harassment

The matter of sexual harassment has become one of increasing concern to women over the course of the last years. According to the

2010 *Country Assessment on Violence Against Women* (Women Watch 2010), for example, 90 per cent of the women interviewed had been sexually harassed in the streets. Another study finds that "[n]ext to verbal and physical harassment (the latter referring to the touching, pinching, hitting or kicking of women), of course, rape or the attempt of raping by strangers is a danger increasingly faced by women and girls in Yemen" (Heinze and Ahmed 2013: 11). Sexual harassment is a manifestation of what is known as gender-based violence as it targets women or girls for their gender. In patriarchal societies such as Yemen, "[m]ale violence against women is not only tolerated by Yemeni traditional beliefs and customs; it has also been perpetuated through official institutional practices such as the law" (BaObaid 2006: 137).

Therefore, when a motion was made to criminalize sexual harassment in the Rights and Freedom's working group, all women either supported or at least did not object to this recommendation. The only reservation came from a man, Islah Party leader Hadi Tarshan, who was quoted in the minutes of the session demanding an additional sentence to be added to the end of the article stating: "according to *shari'a* law".

Only one woman commented on this issue: Bilqis al-Hadhrani from the GPC allies asked to remove references to physical abuse and sexual harassment and instead formulate a more inclusive text that would mention the exploitation of women in any form. Her arguments for this request remained inconclusive as she only argued that it was "a matter of using the best language to describe the issue, nothing more" (pers. interview, December 2013). Further interviews conducted in the course of this research indicate that there was a concern among the men that Yemeni women might include marital rape in this context. This was explained by Arwa 'Uthman, head of the working group, and Antelak al-Mutawakkil, who quoted article 40 of Yemen's Personal Status Law according to which a woman must obey her husband in all matters (pers. interview, February 2014 and December 2013 respectively). However, because this was not clearly discussed in the working group, the request for the amendment made by Bilqis al-Hadhrani was not taken into consideration or discussed further. The recommendation that was passed thus stated:

"Criminalizing physical abuse and sexual harassment and the exploitation of women in commercial use."

Female prisoners' rights

Findings from the policy report *Integrating Women's Security Interests into Police Reform in Yemen* show that the policing system in Yemen is significantly lacking in terms of protecting and rehabilitating women (Heinze and Ahmed 2013). Data in this report shows that Yemeni police stations are not equipped to host female prisoners nor are they equipped to host female police officers as there are no separate washing rooms for women. There are also no separate prisons for women except one in Hajja (in contrast to women's sections in central prisons), which is also lacking in terms of qualified personnel. Female prisoners often face various difficulties including lack of proper hygiene, lack of legal advice or educational opportunities. Prisons do not provide adequate healthcare for pregnant women and most detain convicted and suspected women together (ibid.). Moreover, female prisoners in Yemen face a stigma against them that stays with them for life as society, including their own families, shun them and force them into social isolation. When leaving prison after spending years of their lives behind closed bars, they become socially outcast and incapable of providing for their own needs often forcing them into crime and prostitution (ibid.).

There are only a few projects supported by international organizations that aim at creating shelters and rehabilitation centres for former female prisoners in a way that protects their dignity and prepares them to becoming productive members of the society. Existing shelters also do not have a sustainable financial mechanism. Moreover, there is no obligation as per law on the authorities responsible for women detention centres and prisons to create such facilities. There thus remains a strong need for reforming the policing system and legislation in order to protect female prisoner's rights (ibid.).

Therefore, activists in the working group demanded a clause to amend the existing law in order to add the aspects of special services and rehabilitation centres for women once they complete their sentences. There was no objection at all against this issue, and the article that was passed stated: "The state must dedicate special prisons

for women and must create special rehabilitation centres to accommodate women after they have completed their sentences." Details of this obligation should not only be included in the relevant laws regulating policing as well as in the Penal Code, but also thereafter in the internal regulations and executive mechanisms of state security systems. In this regard, the outcomes of the NDC provide general guidelines for what the rights of women should be; and, if taken seriously, substantial gender-driven reforms in the policing and security systems must occur.

Right to choosing a husband

This topic, as explained by the working group's facilitator Shayma al-Raʿi, was introduced into the group's discussions at a later stage. When mention of the CEDAW as an international agreement for women's rights which Yemen has ratified was made, some of the conservative men in the group argued that this international agreement encourages same-sex marriages. Women in the group then complained that Yemeni women do not even have the right to choose their husband in normal matrimonial conditions. Because it was not among the initial topics on the agenda, it was decided that the respective recommendation would not be included in the main text of the group's outcomes final report but in an additional section under the title "Recommendations".[21]

Resistance to having a law that gives Yemeni women the right to choose a husband can best be explained through the power of agency that in many Arab cultures has been given to men on behalf of women. Therefore, challenging men's agency over women in the private sphere of marriage received much resistance as some Yemeni men see this as another way of being stripped of their gender-based power.

Within the working group, there was some relative resistance to this motion both by the Islah Party and al-Rashad Union, although they eventually accepted it since it was passed as a recommendation only. This means that it will not become a law, but perhaps a recommendation for the new government, which is to be formed after the constitution has been accepted in a referendum to take into consideration.

Interestingly, despite the fact that the men from Islah eventually accepted it, Ilham Najib, a female member of Islah, objected stating that *shari'a* gave this right to the guardian, which was the same reason given by two men from Islah, Hadi Tarshan and Awsan Muhammad. Bilqis al-Hadhrani from the GPC allies argued that the clause "according to *shari'a* law" ought to be added. Despite these objections, the recommendation that was passed on this issue stated: "Women's right to choosing her life partner is a basic right that she alone decides on, and others can influence her decision on consultative basis."

CONCLUSION

Political positions on women-related issues in the National Dialogue Conference were generally not made in a collaborative manner whether within the parties or between various political components. Moreover, according to my observations, there was often a deliberate isolation of the female members within the political parties when it came to developing and articulating the political position of the party towards the issue at hand – even when it was only discussed in the working group and even if the issue was relevant to women's rights. The party leadership, which is generally always made up of men, decided on what the party's position on a certain issue should be and imposed this on the members asking them to vote in a manner that supports the party's position, regardless of the member's interests or opinions.

Experience from the working group also demonstrates that because of the requirement to have women representing all governorates in the NDC, there was a visible difference in the expertise among the women in this conference. In other words, parties had to bring in inexperienced female members from remote areas to meet the criteria. These women almost always followed the lead of stronger and more experienced women from their party and acted accordingly, without daring to develop or voice their own opinion on the matter or being too afraid to voice it if it was different. This also became apparent in the interviews conducted with independent women in the course of my research for this chapter.

The women's rights advocates among the participants explained that it was hard to convince the "less experienced" women that supporting the issue at hand is in fact in their best interest as women. It was usually when the reluctant woman came to know that there are men from their own party supporting this issue that they agreed.

In contrast to the women, who were expected to vote along party lines, the conservative or religiously affiliated male members from parties such as al-Rashad and Islah were acting on their personal opinions and not always representing the collective position of the party when voting or objecting to recommendations promoting women's rights. This was evident in the differing positions of the members of the same party regarding issues on which the parties did not have a strong position. The only two issues where there was a strong visible consensus in behaviour by the religiously affiliated parties' members were the women's quota and the early marriage law. Particularly the quota issue was quite important to Islah, for example, as it was still seeking to wrest political space and influence from the more dominant GPC. With the rise of relatively new political entities such as Hirak and Ansar Allah, it was wary of having to give up seats for others and hence did not want women to be another group to compete with over decision-making positions.

A further observation that can be drawn from analysing the working group's discussions is that although the Huthis are a political group with a distinct religions affiliation (Zaydiyya), they demonstrated an impressive position on all fronts supporting women's issues. Interviews I conducted with Amani al-Makhidhi and Mohammed al-Bukhayti (both in November 2013) demonstrate that they did not consider women's issues a priority for them and thus did not have any problem with the working group's outcomes. They focused all their energy and lobbying on promoting their own issues as a political group with grievances and used their positive attitude towards women's rights to win support from other factions towards the issues that concerned them. This became evident from the fact that they did not object to any of the women's rights issues proposed in the working group and created a good impression among the independent members in the group, especially among the women.[22]

Hiraki women particularly were also supportive of their priorities as a political group and not just as women in other working groups, as explained to me by Wafaʾ ʿAbd al-Fattah Ismaʿil, a member of Hirak and vice president of the Rights and Freedoms working group (pers. interview, November 2013). However, across all working groups, male and female members of Hirak, because of their liberal background, promoted women's rights in general. To them, it was a natural cause to support.

Overall, Yemeni women negotiated significant wins through their participation in the National Dialogue Conference setting a precedent and paving the way for other important women's contributions to the country's current and future political processes in Yemen's search for stability. An important milestone in Yemen's recent history as part of the larger context of the Arab Spring and its aftermath, the NDC outcomes relating to women's empowerment demonstrate what women can achieve if they are put on an equal footing with men. Findings from this research provide insight into the socio-political context of the country's development and should also be considered as a benchmark when analysing Yemeni women's empowerment in the coming years. Given the events of the years 2015 to 2017, however, the real challenge will not be to translate these recommendations into legal texts (whether in the constitution or relevant laws), but to ensure these recommendations will still be heeded by the parties that will decide the future of Yemen.

NOTES

1. The delegates of the NDC were selected through two mechanisms; one for political parties and another for independent participants representing youth, women and civil society. The political parties were asked to submit the names of their candidates keeping in mind that each list has to comprise 30 per cent women and 20 per cent youth under 40 years of age. Independents were selected through an open application system whereby interested candidates who proved to be independent and politically active were shortlisted and compared against each other according to geographical allocations. The selection committee was made up of members of the Preparatory Committee of the National Dialogue Conference, which I was a member of. The President's List according to which President Hadi nominated 62 further participants was his choice

alone and was meant to include social and tribal leaders, clerics and marginalized groups so as to cover gaps in social, political and demographic representation.

2. The GPC was founded on 24 August 1982 by former President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, who remained the party's leader until his violent death on 4 December 2017. It defines itself as a nationalist party and was essentially created to contain politically active individuals who could have become a threat to Salih's regime (al-Yemeni 2003: 24). In the last 15 years, as part of Salih's system of autocratic governance, the GPC supported the creation of several other political parties, which in essence followed the same mandate and direction of the GPC. By 2013, there were 13 of these parties which collectively came to be known as the GPC allies.
3. Formed in 1990 by the leader of the Hashid tribal confederation, Shaykh ʿAbd Allah bin Husayn al-Ahmar, who was close to Salih, the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, commonly known as Islah (reform), was for many years an ally of the GPC and sustained Salih's system of governance. Made up of businessmen, tribal leaders and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the first article of Islah's basic law defines it as "a popular political organization that seeks reform of all aspects of life on the basis of Islamic principles and teachings".
4. The Salafi al-Rashad Union was established in March 2012. See also Kuschnitzki's chapter in this volume.
5. The Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) was established in Aden in 1978 as part of a unification process of revolutionary groups many of which had fought against British control of Aden in the 1960s. It had a Marxist-socialist outlook. After 22 May 1990, when the unity agreement united South and North Yemen, the YSP shared power with the GPC.
6. The Nasserite Unionist People's Organization, simply known as the Nasserites, is the Yemeni version or branch of the socialist Arab nationalist political ideology based on the thinking of Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir, one of the two principal leaders of the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, and Egypt's second President. It received legal status as a political party in Yemen in 1989.
7. The Justice and Building Party was established in 2012 after the popular youth uprising. Many of its founders, e.g. Muhammad ʿAli Abu Luhum or Yahya al-Shami, were former members of the GPC who felt the need to distance themselves politically from the GPC and to build a new platform for political participation that was more inclusive.
8. The Union of Popular Forces is a party of liberal Zaydi intellectuals, which received legal status in 1997 and is headed by Muhammad al-Rubaʿi. One of its most prominent members, Dr. Muhammad al-Mutawakkil, was assassinated on 2 November 2014.
9. This is a list of 62 participants whose names were decided by the president to include social and tribal leaders, clerics and marginalized groups.

10. Awras Sultan Naji, a member of the GPC, passed away on 25 February 2015.
11. The women participating in the NDC were selected through an open application system whereby interested candidates who proved to be independent and politically active were shortlisted and compared against each other according to geographical allocations. The selection committee was made of members of the Preparatory Committee of the National Dialogue Conference, which I was a member of.
12. The Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) was established in 2002 when Islah, YSP, the Nasserites and four other smaller parties formed an opposition coalition to gain more political leverage against the GPC. The other four members of the JMP were the Hizb al-Haqq (Party of Truth) established in 1990 by conservative Zaydi politicians; the Arab Socialist Baʿath Party – Yemen, affiliated to the parent party initiated in Syria in 1947; the Federation of Yemeni Popular Forces established in 1960 as a resistance to British occupation in the South; and the Democratic September Organization established in 1962.
13. In their endeavours, they feel supported by the fact that, contrary to the political elites, there is broad support for more active political participation of women in Yemeni society. A survey implemented by the Yemen Polling Center in 2010 among a gender-balanced sample of 1,000 respondents in 12 Yemeni governorates thus found that 45 per cent of the male respondents and 59 per cent of the women supported a quota of 20–30 parliamentary seats to be reserved for women (YPC 2010: 31).
14. In contrast to the law of 1992, in which article 15 clearly stipulates the illegality of marrying boys and girls younger than 15 years old, article 15 of the amended version of the law from 1999 states that "the marriage contract of a young girl is valid, but she is not to enter into marital intercourse until she is ready for it". The same article has a clause for boys stating that "marriage of young boys is not valid unless it is for a good cause".
15. Early marriage has been prevalent in Yemen, especially in the north and in tribal areas of the south, even before the amendment of the Personal Status Law in 1998. However, the problem is that with the new amendments child marriage became legal, thus depriving young girls of any chance to fight an early marriage.
16. Other members of the party, including parliamentarians such as Fuʾad Dahaba and Shawqi al-Qadhi were quite supportive of such a law, but they were a minority within their party.
17. There is accordingly much debate among Muslim scholars on ʿAʾisha's marriage age: According to some scholars, she was as young as nine years old, while others, e.g. Dr. ʿIsam Bihayri, Director of the Islamic Research Center in Egypt, argue that she was 17 years and ten months old when married.
18. The Women National Committee was established in 1996 per decree by Prime Minister ʿAbd al-Aziz ʿAbd al-Ghani and has mainly been made up of women in or close to the GPC.

19. The gender strategy 2003–2005 can be found on the CAWTAR website at http://www.genderclearinghouse.org/Pages/Home2.aspx (accessed 27 November 2017).
20. Each working group in the NDC had at least one external facilitator whose role was purely technical. The external facilitator helped moderate discussions when there was an issue, provided participants with follow-up information or reports relating to their discussions and helped focus the sessions so that they would lead to results.
21. At the end of the outcomes report of each working group in the final NDC document is a section with recommendations. The recommendations in the report were added so as to include items members of the working group had agreed on even if they had not been part of the original list of debated topics;so in a sense they were not obligatory. They were included so that they would be taken into consideration when new laws would be drafted in the future.
22. The Huthis' oppressive position towards women's rights and civil liberties in general (US Department of State 2016) became much more obvious after they had taken over the capital and many northern governorates in 2014. Their position towards women in the NDC was a political tactic not to distract its members' attention from the political priorities of the group.

REFERENCES

Abiad, Nisrine, *Sharia, Muslim States and International Human Rights Treaty Obligations: A Comparative Study* (London, 2008).

Associated Press, 'Islamists fight Yemen law banning child marriage', *Associated Press*, 16 April 2009. Available at http://www.foxnews.com/story/2009/04/16/islamists-fight-yemen-law-banning-child-marriage.html (accessed 16 June 2017).

BaObaid, Mohammed, 'Masculinity and gender violence in Yemen', in L. Ouzgane (ed.), *Islamic Masculinities* (New York, 2006), pp. 161–83.

BaObaid, Mohamed and Catrien Bijleveld, 'Violence against women in Yemen: Official statistics and an exploratory survey', *International Review of Victimology* 9 (2002), pp. 331–47.

Cornwall, Andrea and Anne Marie Goetz, 'Democratizing democracy: Feminist perspectives', *Democratization* 12/5 (2005), pp. 783–800.

Dahlerup, Drude, 'Electoral gender quotas: Between equality of opportunity and equality of result', *Representation* 43/2 (2007), pp. 73–92.

Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa – Yemen* (14 October 2005). Available at http://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b712f.html (accessed 12 April 2017).

Al Hamdani, Samaa, 'Yemen's quota: Success for international community or Yemeni women?', *Fikra Forum*, 27 September 2013. Available at https://

samaa-alhamdani-rgoo.squarespace.com/allposts/2013/10/yemens-quota-success-for-international.html (accessed 12 April 2017).

Heinze, Marie-Christine and Sarah Ahmed, *Integrating Women's Security Interests into Police Reform in Yemen*, Yemen Polling Center Policy Report 1 (Sanaʿa, 2013). Available at http://yemenpolling.org/Projects-en/English-YPC_Policy_Report_June2013.pdf (accessed 12 April 2017).

International IDEA, *Yemen: Draft Constitution of 2015*. Unofficial translation carried out by the United Nations and reviewed by International IDEA.

Joseph, Suad, *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Syracuse, 2000).

Murray, Christina, *Yemen's National Dialogue Conference* (2013). Available at http://www.academia.edu/5925389/Yemens_National_Dialogue_Conference (accessed 12 April 2017).

Odeh, Lody, 'The Arab Spring and women's dreams in Yemen', in M. Olimat (ed.), *Arab Spring and Arab Women: Challenges and Opportunities* (London, 2014).

Al-Sakkaf, Nadia, 'Yemen's women and the quest for change: Political participation after the Arab revolution', *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Perspective*, October 2012. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/09434.pdf (accessed 12 April 2017).

UNICEF, *Child Protection and Child Marriage Database* (2016). Available at https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/ (accessed 12 April 2017).

US Department of State, *Yemen: 2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (2016). Available at https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2015/nea/252955.htm (accessed 12 April 2017).

Women Watch – United Nations, *Country Assessment on Violence Against Women: Yemen (*2010). Available at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/vaw/Country_Assessment_on_Violence_against_Women_August_2_2010.pdf (accessed 12 April 2017).

Yemen Embassy, 'Congressional, democracy, human rights & gender office', (2009). Available at http://www.yemenembassy.org/issues/democracy/Democracy.htm (last accessed 15 August 2015; page no longer available).

Al-Yemeni, Ahmed A. Hezam, *The Dynamic of Democratisation: Political Parties in Yemen* (Bonn, 2003).

Yemeni Nationality Law No. 6/1990, Republic of Yemen. Available at http://www.yemen-nic.info/db/laws_ye/detail.php?ID=11266 (accessed 12 April 2017).

Yemeni Personal Status Law No. 20/1992, Republic of Yemen. Available at https://alialansi.wordpress.com/2009/12/05/قانون-الأحوال-الشخصية-اليمني/ (accessed 20 April 2017).

Yemeni Personal Status Law No. 24/1999, Republic of Yemen. Available at http://yemen-lo.blogspot.co.uk/2014/06/1999.html (accessed 25 April 2017).

Yemen Polling Center, *What Do Yemenis Know about the Parliament? Public Knowledge and Awareness* (Sanaʿa, 2010). Available at http://yemenpolling.org/Projects-en/YPW_First_Survey_Results_EN_April%2026_2010.pdf (accessed 12 April 2017).

CHAPTER 7

The Huthi Enigma: Ansar Allah and the "Second Republic"

Marieke Brandt

INTRODUCTION

The question of the changes prompted by the Arab Spring upheavals in the northernmost regions of Yemen – the Saʿda province and its adjacent areas – can be easily answered: The republican order, as it evolved during the 34-year reign of former President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, no longer exists. The changes in the structures and the socio-political composition of power in Yemen's North are of such breadth that a reintroduction of the regime-periphery relations of the republican period seems impossible. In Yemen's North the transformation process triggered by the Arab Spring thus reinforced the continuation of the changes in regime-periphery relations which originally had been set in motion by the onset of the Saʿda Wars in 2004 (Salmoni, Loidolt and Wells 2010).

These profound changes were generated through the rise of a Zaydi Shiʿa movement called Huthis or, as they have referred to themselves since 2011 in official contexts, Ansar Allah (Partisans of God). Since their inception in the Saʿda area during the first years of the new millennium (their various local predecessor organizations date back to the 1980s), the Huthis have undergone a series of changes in political, organizational and programmatic areas, which turned their original educational program oriented toward Zaydi

revivalism successively into a mass movement whose agenda addressed a significant part of the population of the former North. Their enormous increase in importance and their expansionist impetus became particularly obvious since the beginning of the Arab Spring movement in 2011 and the ensuing National Dialogue Conference (NDC) in Yemen. In 2011 the Huthis began to push forward their military expansion at all costs. In 2013 they also utilized the NDC as a vehicle to extend their political influence at the national level. After they had managed to integrate their vision of statehood – namely, the "participatory state" or "second republic" – in the decisions of the NDC's final report, a few months later they used their considerable military capabilities to extort the implementations of the NDC decisions by the transitional government. As we know, this process ultimately led to the flight of Interim President Hadi to Saudi Arabia, the takeover of the Huthi–Salih coalition and, in spring 2015, the start of the Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen. Operating under dire wartime conditions, the Huthis failed to demonstrate convincingly that they were willing or able to live up to their own visions as formulated during the NDC.

After a brief review of the history of the Huthi movement, this chapter examines the group's role during the NDC within and beyond the conference venue. It analyses how the group asserted its interests and positions against their political and sectarian opponents during the NDC negotiations, and describes the dramatic events of autumn 2014. Their contradictory and almost incommensurable approaches – on the one hand, the use of military force, coercion, and intimidation; on the other hand, their moderate and rather liberal demands for the establishment of a participatory state, tolerance and the separation of state and religion as advocated for in the NDC – suggest that the Huthis were no uniform movement and still lacked a unequivocal ideological superstructure. Just as a picture puzzle shows different images, which depending on the preconception of the onlooker flip from one shape to the other, the Huthis have given rise to a variety of interpretations, hopes, and concerns, depending on the vantage point of the observer.

THE "SAʿDA ISSUE"

The emergence of the Huthi movement in Yemen's extreme north is a complex process which cannot be reduced to its sectarian component, but also features political and social aspects. In the Saʿda area, the elite transformations which were triggered by the 1962 revolution have led to the empowerment of certain *shaykh*s (tribal leaders) at the expense of the *sayyid*s (title for the descendants of the Prophet), the religious and administrative elite of the former Shiʿa Zaydi Imamate. This new tribal elite has subsequently been reinforced and cemented through the politics of patronage exerted by the central republican government. In the Saʿda area, the political and economic patronage of certain *shaykh*s and the development ostracism of large parts of the average population resulted in economic imbalances and a vastly unjust distribution of economic resources, mainly because a small group of people began to control a disproportionate amount of wealth and political power.

Social unrest was further aggravated by the spread of radical Sunnism. Zaydis and Salafis have come increasingly into conflict with each other in recent decades, as the Salafis tried to incite the local population against the still prominent position of *sayyid*s in the Zaydi religious community and took violent actions against centuries-old Zaydi traditions which the Salafis considered un-Islamic (Haykel 1995; 2003: 127–38). During the escalating confrontations, which began in the 1980s, the state took a predominantly Sunni-friendly position. Therefore, the evolving perception of the Yemeni state as a hostile power collaborating with their sectarian rivals contributed to the fact that the Zaydi resistance against Sunni proselytism merged at an early stage with an opposition to the state – not in opposition to the idea of the state and statehood, nor in opposition to the Yemeni republic as such, but rather in opposition to the state as embodied in the Salih government.

The marginalization and economic neglect of the province, unjust distribution of economic resources and political participation, and the spread of radical Sunnism in the Zaydi heartland ultimately led to the emergence of a complex Zaydi countermovement. From 2004 onwards, the most influential wing of this movement, the Huthis,

waged six wars (the so-called Saʿda Wars or *hurub Saʿda*) against the Yemeni government. These wars escalated from round to round due to tribal involvement (Brandt 2012, 2013, 2014a), but ended in 2010 in a draw. Since 2004, the Huthis have been exclusively led by members of the eponymous al-Huthi family, *sayyid*s from the Marran Mountains southwest of Saʿda city. Since 2006, their leader has been ʿAbd al-Malik al-Huthi, a younger half-brother of Husayn, the first leader of the rebellion, who was killed in 2004.

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring upheavals, the Huthis have been able to transform the resulting power vacuum in the northern parts of the country into an enormous territorial expansion which has led to the establishment of a shadow state. The Huthi shadow state had its heyday between 2011 and 2014, when it came to comprise almost the entire Saʿda governorate and parts of the governorates Hajja, al-Mahwit, al-Jawf, Maʾrib and Dhamar, thus stretching from the Saudi border to the outskirts of Sanaʿa. In September 2015 the Huthis even conquered the capital (we will return to this). Although the Huthi shadow state remained only nominally connected to the rest of Yemen, the Huthis carefully avoided any formal signs of autonomy.

A TURBULENT DIALOGUE

The NDC, which started on 18 March 2013, was a landmark event in Yemen's political transition. Its work was divided according to nine thematic subcommittees or working groups that ran the portfolio of political, institutional, and social issues facing the country (al-Wazir 2013; Heinze 2013; Gaston 2014; Schmitz 2014). The complexity of the conflict in Saʿda and its sheer territorial dimension justified the establishment of a separate subcommittee.

The position of the Huthis with respect to the GCC Initiative and their participation in the NDC process was initially ambivalent. Although the Huthis rejected the GCC Initiative and despite their immense reservations, they participated in the NDC, where they met with Sunni Islamists at the negotiating table while at the same time engaged with them in deadly fighting. The Huthis justified their politically inconsistent position (on the one hand, rejection of the

GCC Initiative; on the other hand, participation in the NDC) on the grounds that the conference had "greater legitimacy" than the GCC Initiative, and that the idea of engaging in dialogue was not a result of the GCC Initiative but rather a human and national need (al-Hassani 2014a).

As expected, the dialogue between the Huthis and their nemeses from the ranks of the Sunni Islamists was fraught with difficulties. During the NDC, the discussions at times developed into physical conflict between some of the delegates; speakers were shouted at during the sessions, and outside the conference venue three assassination attempts on Huthi envoys to the NDC took place (two were successful). These shootings temporarily brought the Saʿda working group to the brink of failure. Even from outside the NDC the Saʿda working group came under enormous pressure: Different groups of powerful stakeholders were formed, which either tried to influence the course of the dialogue or threatened a boycott of its outcomes. In addition, the negotiations were accompanied by the resumption of military conflict between Huthis and Sunni Islamists in ʿAmran and al-Jawf.

The equitable representation of the various stakeholders involved in the Saʿda working group was of utmost importance for the attempt to reconcile the deep political, sectarian and tribal cleavages in Yemen's North. The allocation of seats by the NDC management presidium called forth serious argument, which later, in the final report of the Saʿda working group, has been carefully described as *ʿadam al-tawfiq fi al-fariq*, i.e. "incompatibilities within the team". The nominees list assembled representatives of various parties and groups: the Huthis; representatives of the General People's Congress (GPC); the (Salafi) Islah Party and al-Rashad Union; and the Nasserite Party; as well as youth representatives. At the same time it excluded important groups and individuals. Surprisingly, ʿAli al-Bukhayti, at that time one of the most active and eloquent representatives of the Huthis, was assigned vice chair of the Southern Issue subcommittee; a decision that was revised after vehement protests. Yahya al-Huthi, still in exile in Germany at the beginning of the NDC, was nominated for the Saʿda subcommittee, but was unable to attend for security reasons.[1] Further dispute erupted over the nomination of Nabila

al-Zubayr as chair of the Saʿda working group, because representatives of al-Rashad and Islah (notably Sadiq al-Ahmar) did not accept the nomination of a woman.[2] ʿAli al-Bukhayti's demand, on behalf of the Huthis, that Saʿda's Jewish minority should also get a seat went unheard.

One of the most contentious and certainly the most consequential issue was the exclusion of key representatives of Saʿda's and ʿAmran's tribal elites. The NDC management excluded ʿUmar Mujalli (standing for his brother ʿUthman, who was exiled in Saudi Arabia)[3] from Saʿda, and Saghir bin ʿAziz from ʿAmran from the Saʿda subcommittee. Mujalli and ʿAziz, both GPC envoys to the NDC, were enormously important figures for the desired reconciliation process. They did not only represent the tribal GPC elite of the Saʿda and ʿAmran regions, which had been bolstered for decades through the Salih government's patronage efforts in the area, they were also among the most prominent tribal Huthi opponents of the area (Brandt 2013). Having been exiled from their tribal constituencies since the power seizure of the Huthis, Mujalli and ʿAziz also represented tens of thousands of internally displaced persons from the Saʿda and ʿAmran regions, populations who remained in a state of limbo. Observers regarded the exclusion of Mujalli and ʿAziz as a desperate attempt of the conference management to not jeopardize the success of the Saʿda subcommittee, as it was feared their inclusion would "add fuel to the fire" and deliberately create insurmountable tension within the committee. When Mujalli attempted to protest in the NDC plenary against their exclusion in the subcommittee, his microphone was turned off.

The exclusion of these crucial tribal elites deprived the NDC of the support of the influential bloc of pro-government and anti-Huthi *shaykh*s from the Saʿda and ʿAmran regions since the very beginning (this was, in fact, not the government's first manoeuvre which rebuffed these important stakeholders.) Their spokesperson Faysal Manaʿ[4] condemned the "exclusion and marginalization" of these tribal elites. He complained about the conference management's "desire to dilute the thorny and fateful national issues rather than to search for serious, fair and equitable solutions" (al-Jaradi 2013) and announced the rejection of any outcome of the NDC. While it is true

that other tribal *shaykh*s from Saʿda and ʿAmran were among the members of the Saʿda subcommittee (Fayiz al-ʿAwjari and Salih Abu ʿAwja for the GPC; Sadiq al-Ahmar and ʿAbd Allah Saʿtar for Islah; and Muhammad Shabiba for al-Rashad), Faysal Manaʿ suspected that they were acting on partisan politics rather than "public" (i.e. tribal) interests. The exclusion of Mujalli and ʿAziz, and the spin-off of the allied tribal bloc behind them, from the NDC process had serious repercussions during the evolving ʿAmran crisis (we will return to this subject below).[5] It also strengthened the Huthis' position and enabled them to influence the course of the National Dialogue.

The negotiations of the Saʿda subcommittee were accompanied by turbulent events. On 25 March 2013 an assassination attempt on Huthi representative ʿAbd al-Wahid Abu Ras took place near the conference venue, in which three of his bodyguards were killed. The incident prompted the Huthis to announce a 24-hour suspension of their participation in the NDC, not only in protest against the assassination attempt, but also against the negligence of the security personnel who were at the scene during the incident. On 5 June, after a huge funeral in Saʿda city which resembled a Huthi mass rally, the mortal remains of Husayn al-Huthi (whose identity had been verified by a forensic DNA test in Germany) was laid to rest in a dedicated mausoleum in the Marran Massif.[6] In June 2013, Huthi protesters stormed the podium in protest after dramatic events in front of the National Security building, events which left 11 Huthi activists dead and tens more injured. In response, the Huthis began to attack Interim President Hadi, accusing him of discrimination and conspiracy against them. The Huthis began to exert enormous pressure on the conference management; in response, President Hadi informed Huthi representative Salih Habra that if the Huthis wanted to withdraw from the dialogue, the door was open and they were not compelled to stay (Mareb Press 2013). Tensions reached a new height on 22 November 2013, when two unidentified gunmen riding a motorcycle assassinated ʿAbd al-Karim Jadban, a member of parliament and Huthi representative to the NDC, in Sanaʿa. His death dealt a great blow to the Huthis, because Jadban was one of their few experienced representatives who was able to operate confidently in the political arena of the capital.

The NDC negotiations at the Mövenpick Hotel were accompanied by the outbreak of a new round of conflict between Huthis and Sunni Islamists in ʿAmran, the latter also being supported by parts of the Yemeni military. The confrontations (described by observers as the "seventh Saʿda War" due to the magnitude) soon degenerated into an unprecedented Huthi show of force. In December 2013, the Huthis conquered and demolished the first of two large Salafi educational centres in the Saʿda area, the Dar al-Hadith in Kitaf, which also hosted a significant number of militant Salafi *jihadi*s and was used by al-Qaʿida operatives as a base and relay station (Brandt 2017). In January 2014 the embattled Salafi teaching center Dar al-Hadith al-Khayriyya in Dammaj near Saʿda city was also vacated, following an evacuation recommendation by President Hadi to its leadership.

On 21 January 2014, Ahmad Sharaf al-Din, a university professor of law and Huthi representative to the NDC, was gunned down by armed militants in the heart of the capital as he was on the way to the final plenary session of the NDC. The motive for his assassination remains unclear (we will return to this below). Although Islah representatives strongly condemned the second assassination of a Huthi envoy to the NDC, Huthi leaders have pointed an accusing finger toward them, especially as the evacuation of Dammaj and the dispersal of the Kitaf camp had turned the capital city into a haven for thousands of local and foreign *jihadi* militants. The assassination was followed by hours of confusion and uncertainty, as Sharaf al-Din was to sign the final document of the NDC on behalf of the Huthis on that same day, and now the Huthis were once again considering the suspension of their participation. The Huthis' retreat from the NDC would have been tantamount to the failure of the National Dialogue.

Ten days after the end of the NDC, the Huthis conquered and demolished the Khamri-based ancestral home of the al-Ahmar family, who had already been abandoned by many of their former tribal supporters and *shaykh* allies. This event was certainly a game-changer: The destruction of their familial home was a highly visible and humiliating event for the al-Ahmar family that perfectly symbolized the shift in the balance of power in Yemen's North, likened by the Yemeni press to the "fall of the Pharaohs" (*suqut al-faraʿina*).

REPORTS AND GUARANTEES

Despite these obstacles and threats, the NDC was concluded on 25 January 2014, the day of the joint signing of the final report. The NDC final report is a compendium of the final reports of the nine subcommittees, and includes nearly 1,800 resolutions (pl. *qararat*), as well as several appendices which define the mechanisms for the implementation of the resolutions (Republic of Yemen 2014).

The final report of the Saʿda subcommittee is a joint document agreed on by all its members, but its preamble and the vast majority of the 59 resolutions bear the signature of the Huthis. Even in regard to points of contention – such as the disarmament of the conflict parties and the re-opening of the province to state influence – formulations were found which met the demands of the Huthis. There were different views as to why the Sunni Islamists managed to incorporate only a few of their demands into the report. Some observers suggested a connection with the Islamists' recent domestic vulnerability in the new national environment. Others indicated that the Sunni Islamists, who were being excessively harassed and humiliated by the Huthis outside the conference venue, had been largely flying blind throughout the crisis. In addition, the NDC process was under the close surveillance of the UN and the GCC, which rendered the introduction of Islamist formulations in the report virtually impossible.

The bargaining power of the Huthis and the relative weakness of their opponents were already apparent in the introduction of the final report, which turned the resolution of the "Saʿda Issue" into the resolution of the "Huthi Issue", as critics from the ranks of Saʿda's Sunni Islamists complained (al-Sabahi 2013). The wording of the whole report mirrored the rhetoric of the Huthi envoys to the NDC: By appointing, amongst others, ʿAli al-Bukhayti, Ahmad Sharaf al-Din, and ʿAbd al-Karim Jadban, particular emphasis had been placed on the moderate, rather leftist spectrum among the Huthis, whose remarkably liberal consensus positions advocated the reconciliation with their opponents and the establishment of a civil state, based on freedom of belief, political pluralism and balance of

power, thus aligning their positions with those of youth, women, and civil society representatives.

The final report identified the following causes of the Saʿda problem: incomplete state formation and developmental grievances in the province; external interference, particularly with regard to the spread of ideas which impacted on the historical coexistence between Upper Yemen's basic doctrines (Zaydism and Sunnism); and the politics of divide and rule (*al-idara bi-l-azmat*) pursued by the Yemeni government. The introduction stated that in 2004 the repression and detention of the supporters of Husayn al-Huthi by the government eventually led to the outbreak of the first of six Saʿda Wars. Against this background, the final report argued for the creation of a *watan yatasiʿ li-l-jamiʿ* (a homeland which belongs to all) in which "citizens must live in complete freedom in terms of intellectual and religious and personal freedoms".

The struggle for formulations and interpretations during the NDC was exemplified in the insertion of a preamble at the request of the Huthis which determined the following 59 resolutions: The preamble defined the Huthis' notion of the term "state". Here, the working group's members agreed that the phrase "state", wherever it appeared in the final report, denoted a "state of national partnership in all organs and institutions". Not only did the preamble influence the meaning and validity of the subsequent resolutions, it also enabled the Huthis to take ad hoc decisions on their commitment to the implementation of the resolutions.

The Huthis' understanding of the "participatory state", as formulated in the all-determining preamble, was tantamount to a counter-version of the existing Yemeni state. To understand the Huthis' demands for a participatory state, we should recall the recent history of the region as outlined in the first section of this chapter. In recent decades, the state had exported to the Saʿda region a system that was corrupt, was based on nepotism, and favoured certain individuals and groups while leaving the majority of the community, notably the local Zaydis, deprived of basic services and development. Consequently, since 2011 (the Huthis' power seizure and commencement of their territorial expansion), both Saʿda's tribal elites and Sunni Islamists frequently demanded the "return of the state" to the

Saʿda region, as both of these groups had been promoted and unduly favoured by this state for decades. At the same time, the return of this state was no option for the Huthis and their numerous followers from among the average population, because they had been marginalized for decades and, since 2004, had even been brutally persecuted by this same state.

Huthis thus considered the project of the "first republic" as having failed, because the first republic was not able to achieve the goals it set for itself during the revolution in 1962, namely, to remove inequalities and privileges of certain groups. On the contrary, they said that the revolution had even aggravated the gap between privileged and underprivileged groups. The republican system initially focused on equality, but in practice cemented a system of inequality on the ground, which caused even more damage to the region's average citizen. Thus, the Huthis repeatedly demanded the establishment of a "participatory state" (*dawla al-sharaka al-wataniyya*), or "second republic" (*al-jumhuriyya al-thaniya*). As Huthi envoy ʿAli al-Bukhayti explained it, the "second republic" was neither the Imamate of the *sayyid*s nor the *shaykh*s' republic that has governed Saʿda in recent decades, but rather a republic which ensures participation and representation of all people and groups (al-Bukhayti 2014).

The following resolutions of the final report resembled a veritable wish list of the Saʿda region towards the state – a wish list which conveyed a pragmatic readiness of Saʿda's representatives to create a cooperative relationship with a state which part of them had recently violently opposed – on condition they benefit and that local supremacy is preserved. In the resolutions, the "participatory state" was offered far-reaching access to the Saʿda province, which had virtually gravitated out of the state's grip during the last decade. The state was requested to guarantee freedom of religion; to ensure the neutral and non-sectarian nature of the government (in effect, separation of religion and state); to stop flaming sectarian conflict through open or covert intervention; to release political prisoners and to compensate the region's victims of war and political persecution; and to disclose the information needed for a scientific review of the Saʿda Wars. The resolutions also demanded the

cancellation of all public or secret agreements that allowed American forces or other troops to carry out air raids or reconnaissance operations throughout the country; the criminalization of any infringement of national sovereignty under any pretext or the use of external forces in internal conflicts; the restructuring of the state's military security apparatus; and ensuring the participation of the "sons of Saʿda" in the government and armed forces. Other resolutions called on the state to meet its national responsibilities in providing security, education, and development to the region.

Wherever the resolutions implied obligations vis-à-vis the citizens of Saʿda, they hit the Sunni Islamists harder than the Huthis. This was demonstrated, for instance, by Resolution 13 and 14 which outlawed illegal financial or arms support from "foreign powers". This had to be read and seen against the background that Sunni Islamist institutions and activities, as well as a very large number of tribal leaders and politicians in the Saʿda region, have been financed by Saudi Arabia for decades. At that time direct Iranian support for the Huthis in the form of financial aid or the provision of weapons, however, though often suspected, was difficult to prove (Terrill 2014).

Also, the calls for the creation of a *watan yatasiʿ li-l-jamiʿ*, in which "citizens must live in complete freedom in terms of intellectual and religious and personal freedoms", and the ending of discrimination which "offends any natural or legal person or incites against it because of colour, sex, lineage, race, doctrine, sect, place of birth, profession or activity" was certainly harder to swallow for the Sunni Islamists, notably the Salafis, than for the Huthis. Salafis, who insist first and foremost on purifying the creedal beliefs and practices of "errant" (i.e. non-Salafi) Muslims, have an obsession with preventing Shiʿi practices which they consider *bidʿ* (reprehensible innovations); the Salafis in Saʿda regularly stigmatized their Shiʿi-Zaydi neighbours as *kuffar* (unbelievers) or referred to them by the derogatory label *al-rafida* (heretics). The call to put an end to discrimination contained, however, multiple warnings. It can also be read as a call to remove the discrimination against the *sayyid*s, which has been present since the 1962 revolution by the republican state, while simultaneously relaying a kind of warning towards Huthi hardliners who are suspected to pursue a reinstitution of *sayyid* suzerainty.

Resolution 20 of the subcommittee report aimed at the Huthis and urged them to return all heavy and medium weapons seized from the government. Resolution 55 required them to "withdraw their checkpoints to the extent that their members are integrated in state institutions and organs", a very vaguely formulated resolution which was open to interpretation.

Whereas the Huthis apparently took the lead in the drafting of the Saʿda subcommittee's final document, serious disagreements between them and the conference management erupted regarding the so-called Guarantees Document (*damanat makhrajat muʾtamar al-hiwar al-watani al-shamil*, abbr. *wathiqat al-damanat*). The Guarantees Document is an appendix of the NDC final report and defines the mechanisms to ensure a correct implementation of the resolutions of the various subcommittees' reports. The Guarantees Document provided for an extension of transitional President Hadi's term for at least one more year (under the rationale of the time necessary to implement the NDC outcomes), and officially set Yemen on the path to becoming a federal state. The document also stipulated the restructuring of the Yemeni cabinet. The Shura Council, an advisory board for the Parliament, would be reorganized to include 50 per cent representation from Northerners and 50 per cent from Southerners. Elections would be held at future, yet to be announced dates. The Guarantees Document also extended the mandate of the Consensus Committee, a group which played a pivotal role as a tiebreaker and vetting committee in the NDC. An expanded consensus committee would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the NDC recommendations, both in the constitution drafting phase and through other measures (Gaston 2014: 4).

The Huthis considered the provisions of the Guarantees Document a violation of the NDC's general aim to give way to the creation of a participatory government involving all parties and groups. They argued that the Guarantees Document instead reinforced the patterns inherited from the Salih era and reduced the NDC's hard-won gains to a small cabinet reshuffle. In addition, the Guarantees Document allowed the Parliament and the Shura Council to keep their full powers. As the Shura Council was mainly composed of old regime cadres, the Huthis feared that the members

of the Shura Council would not allow any of the NDC outcomes pass if they were against their personal and partisan interests. Huthi spokesperson ʿAli al-Bukhayti rejected signing the Guarantees Document by arguing: "We believe the [Guarantees] Document aims to extend the term of the current, failed government and security institutions. Even if the NDC's outcomes were positive, they would fail because they rest on failed institutions" (al-Hassani 2014b).

Thus, on 21 January 2014, when the NDC's final report, including the Guarantees Document, was due to be signed by all parties, the situation was already very delicately and dangerously poised. It was completely derailed when on the same day Huthi envoy to the NDC Ahmad Sharaf al-Din was assassinated on his way to the plenary session. The reasons for his assassination and the possible perpetrators remain enigmatic, as the range of possible explanations was large – and full of contradictions. To this day, it has not even been conclusively clarified whether Sharaf al-Din actually intended to sign the Guarantees Document on behalf of the Huthis or not; that is, whether he was killed because he planned to sign the document, or whether he had to die because he did not intend to sign it. Was it the assassins' aim to sabotage the conclusion of the NDC and to drive the Huthis out of the transition process? Or did hardliners among the Huthi leadership consider the liberal and conciliatory resolutions of the Saʿda subcommittee as going too far? Rumours abound.

After the assassination, the Huthis, as expected, withdrew from the final session and some Huthi delegates, spearheaded by ʿAbd al-Karim al-Khaywani, even rushed ahead with the request to cancel the entire NDC. In another interview, spokesperson ʿAli al-Bukhayti stated that the Huthis "did not and will not sign the Guarantees Document, even adjusted" and that any approval of this document during their withdrawal from the NDC would be considered illegal (ʿAyyash 2014). Yet, amid all the confusion and horror of the assassination, the Huthi Politburo in Saʿda kept its head and issued a written statement in which the Huthi leadership agreed on the final document of the NDC, but expressed its reservations on the clause in the Guarantees Document which provided for a mere cabinet reshuffle rather than

the formation of a new government. But because this statement was apparently only referenced but never officially released, the details of the Huthis' signing of the Guarantees Document remained murky.

TOWARDS THE "SECOND REPUBLIC"?

The demands for fundamental change (*taghyir*) and the creation of a participatory state were not met during the NDC. Two weeks after the conclusion of the NDC, a small, fairly unrepresentative committee – hand-selected and led by President Hadi – announced the creation of a federal state comprising six regions. The decision of this committee, without consultations with other stakeholders, was followed by nationwide protests and rejection, not only by the Huthis, but also by key Southern leaders. The post-NDC committee had proposed a federal province of Azal, which combined the governorates of Saʿda, ʿAmran, Sanaʿa and Dhamar. Conversely, the Huthis had favoured a solution which would have joined Saʿda with the governorates of Hajja and al-Jawf, the first because of its access to the Red Sea and the latter because of its suspected oil wealth (Brandt 2014b).

After the decision regarding the federal regions, things quieted down for the NDC. The elections were postponed indefinitely. Political life in the capital seemed to focus on day-to-day business, and the broad political talks again fell apart into (semi-)secret negotiations behind closed doors, mostly by established political actors who had regained control (Bonnefoy and Poirier 2014). The desired profound political transition advocated by the National Dialogue, albeit cherished by both Yemenis and the international community, began to stagnate and threatened, as so many ambitious reform programs before it, to founder.

Other issues began to make headlines in the Yemeni media. In the south, al-Qaʿida affiliate Ansar al-Shariʿa continued to spread and launched terrorist attacks in the heart of the capital, confronting the state with the vulnerability of its infrastructure. The north witnessed an unprecedented territorial expansion of the Huthis. Under the leadership of their ruthless military genius ʿAbd Allah al-Hakim (also called Abu ʿAli), the Huthis brought large parts of ʿAmran under their control, effectively extending the borders of the Huthi dominion

from the Saudi frontier to the outskirts of the Yemeni capital. Driven by political calculations of their tribal leaders and tribal feuds, many tribal areas virtually fell into the Huthis' lap without a fight (Brandt 2013; International Crisis Group 2014: 7–8). The Sunni Islamists were additionally weakened by the absence of Saudi aid, for the Kingdom was at that time keeping its distance from all parties (International Crisis Group 2014: 8–9). One of the most significant events, after the evacuation of Dammaj and the demolition of the Kitaf camp and the al-Ahmar compound, was the capture of the provincial capital ʿAmran in July 2014 by the Huthis. After they announced the liberation of ʿAmran city from "Salafi terrorists and their affiliates", the Huthis withdrew from the city, which however remained under their influence. Sanaʿa was then encircled from all directions via the presence of Huthis in ʿAmran, Arhab, Bani Matar, Khawlan al-Tiyal and Sanhan. Also inside Sanaʿa, the Huthis had a vast base of support. Not all Huthi sympathizers, however, were staunch defenders of Huthism; many of them were simply frustrated by the transitional government's inactivity (Heinze 2014).

Since its military successes in ʿAmran, the Huthi leadership appeared increasingly confident. In his long speeches, spread in ever shorter intervals by the Ansar Allah-owned TV station *al-Masira*, ʿAbd al-Malik al-Huthi demonstrated to the government in Sanaʿa that the Huthis were now a powerful, well-organized force to consider. Even though the discourse of self-defence (*al-difaʿ ʿan al-nafs*) still determined their political rhetoric, the Huthis had already begun to shift their focus from ʿAmran's arid landscape towards the Yemeni capital.

The looming confrontation between the Huthi leadership and the transitional government was sparked to life in July 2014, on the occasion of a fuel subsidies reduction (*jarʿa*) required by the structural adjustment programme of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In the crisis-torn and impoverished country, the subsidies reduction resulted, virtually overnight, in a 60 per cent increase in the price of gasoline and a 95 per cent increase for diesel. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Huthi was able to seize the moment of national outrage over this enormous price hike and submitted a list of demands to the government which encompassed, inter alia, the

sacking of the cabinet and its replacement by a competency-based government that would include all factions, and thus also the Huthis; partial restoration of the fuel subsidies cut in July; and the implementation of the NDC outcomes. His demands were initially rejected by the government.

As a result, the country witnessed a political thriller whose events were controlled by a carefully elaborated and orchestrated master plan of the Huthis, which provided a series of concerted measures or escalation levels (*marahil al-tasʿid*) to gradually increase the pressure on the government in Sanaʿa and so to force it to meet the political demands of the Huthis – claims which found broad support among the people and which were covered (except for the subsidies restoration) by the resolutions of the NDC.

The Huthis started the "first escalation" on 18 August by setting up camps at the entrances to Sanaʿa. The "second escalation" began a week later, when Huthis extended their presence by pitching tents close to key ministries along the road leading to the airport and staging sit-ins on other arterial roads, thus causing major traffic jams throughout the city. The "third escalation" included organized sit-ins in front of public institutions and ministries to prevent public employees from performing their jobs. Tens of thousands of Huthi members and supporters marched the streets in the ʿAmran, Saʿda, Dhamar, and Taʿiz governorates, pressing for their demands to be met, and promising to persist until the government was sacked. Projecting ahead, ʿAbd al-Malik announced further, "painful" escalations in order to tighten the thumbscrews on the government in Sanaʿa – a fourth, fifth and sixth round of escalation, and, if necessary, on to an infinite number of levels (Ansaruallah 2014). During this crisis, Huthi representatives insisted that their actions would stay peaceful and rest on civil disobedience (*ʿisyan madani*) rather than violent actions, but nonetheless reserved the right to defend themselves if attacked. Although most Huthi supporters gathering in Sanaʿa for daily anti-government marches and sit-ins were unarmed, eye witnesses reported that the encampments set up around the outskirts of the city were filled with well-armed Huthi fighters and a staggering arsenal of light and medium weapons deployed from their battlefields in ʿAmran and al-Jawf (Salisbury

2014). The Huthi leadership itself seemed inebriated by its new scope for manoeuvre in the national arena.

The government reacted in a sudden and hectic fashion. After months of stalemate, frantic political negotiations took place. While transitional President Hadi took counsel with ambassadors of the GCC and UN Security Council on the way forward, government delegations were dispatched to Saʿda to negotiate with the Huthi Politburo. The efforts seemed at times uncoordinated, and the delegation members gave conflicting statements after their return. On several occasions the government announced a solution to the problem, while the Huthis bluntly rejected the offers of the government, even though the president accommodated many of the Huthi demands, notably to dismiss the cabinet, to sack the prime minister, to reduce fuel prices, and to increase the minimum wage in an attempt to resolve the crisis.

Huthi representatives refused these offers, calling the fuel price reduction insufficient, demanding broader economic reforms and criticizing the proposed method of forming the government. In addition, the Huthis disliked the government's demands associated with the proposed solutions, notably to dismantle their camps in and around the capital and pull back from the areas in the ʿAmran province that they were occupying. While the Huthi leadership had often expressed its willingness to lay down its weapons in exchange for political participation, they had always argued that they would first need to be confident that their political nemeses, essentially from the ranks of Islah and Salafis, would refrain from attacking their people. Given the charged situation in the country, disarmament of the Huthis was unlikely to happen under present conditions.

On Sunday, 21 September 2014, the inevitable happened: After violent confrontations between security forces and Huthi protesters, Huthi militias literally overran Yemen's capital, seizing the campus of the ultra-conservative Sunni al-Iman University and a number of government institutions, including the Central Bank and Ministry of Defence, homes belonging to members of the Islah Party, and properties owned by the al-Ahmar family. They also gained strategic advantage over a number of army units and overpowered parts of

the former First Armoured Division, a military faction headed by their opponent ʿAli Muhsin (Carvajal 2014). At this point of Yemen's post-2011 history, its GCC Initiative-led "transition process" was over.

CONCLUSION: THE HUTHI ENIGMA

Summing up, the actions of the Huthis at this point in time gave rise to a variety of interpretations, depending on the vantage point of the observer. Since their emergence (their various predecessor organizations date back to the 1980s), the Huthis have undergone a series of transformations in the course of which they were able to expand their agenda and broaden their popular support. While up to the turn of the millennium their work was initially limited to religious education and Zaydi revivalism in the Saʿda area, during the first years of the new millennium and under the influence of the late Husayn al-Huthi, they developed an ideology critical of the Yemeni state. Since 2004, the confrontation with the state's military apparatus has pushed ahead the development of their military organization. Since 2011, the Huthis were able to transform the power vacuum resulting from the Arab Spring upheavals into both a consolidation of their rule in their home are in Yemen's North and an enormous territorial expansion throughout large parts of Upper Yemen. The events of 2014 then showed that the Huthis' popularity and influence had continued to grow throughout the transition phase. After the conclusion of the National Dialogue, the group successfully tapped into the frustration of Yemeni citizens over the slow pace of change, persistent corruption, and the poor economic and security situation. By demanding the implementation of the NDC outcomes and the creation of a participatory government as agreed on in the final document of the NDC, and, last but not least, positioning the Huthis as a bulwark against al-Qaʿida, ʿAbd al-Malik al-Huthi understood how to respond to the political likes and dislikes of the people, formulate a formidable military and political base, and enter the national arena with significant prowess.

However, suspicion continued to linger in the minds of local and foreign observers. The Huthis' inclusive and sophisticated rhetoric during the NDC and their demands for a participatory state was

starkly contrasted by their obvious tendency to assert their interests by coercion and military force. Their military conquest of vast territories and their de facto capture of the capital were compelling evidence for their tendency to impose dictations on their political opponents, including the state, and foreshadowed the violence of the years to come. Anecdotal evidence of human rights abuses and repression in Huthi-controlled areas was abundant (International Crisis Group 2014: 11). The Huthis until now have made a poor job of defining what they stand for or how their approaches differ from those of their contenders. The events of autumn 2014 rather suggested that within their ranks various and even competing factions and currents were striving for influence behind the scenes. Whereas the Huthi envoys to the NDC represented the moderate and consensus-oriented spectrum of Huthism, the Politburo in Saʿda was strongly influenced by hardliners. Despite the sophisticated and inclusive rhetoric of their supreme leader, the hardliners tended to oppose reconciliation with their opponents and simultaneously spurred the group's expansion by force.

Undoubtedly, their bold actions can in part be explained as a consequence and compensation of the years of degradation, persecution and brutal suppression the group had to endure. The Huthis were far from being the only group in Yemen which felt marginalized and neglected by the central government. They were, however, the only group that had been torn by six years of protracted war. Countless of their senior cadres had been exposed to detention and torture. And having been shaped by a decade of devastating war, the Huthis knew very well that in Yemen's political environment only groups that wield considerable military power can survive, persist and make their demands heard. Their actions of the past years testify to this belief.

If they intend to survive the ongoing war as a political (and not only a military) force and if they want to be viewed as a reliable partner on the national and international level, the Huthis need to clearly formulate the central points of their political agenda and vision of statehood – and implement it on the ground. Instead, however, the Huthis have demonstrated an apparent inability to shake off the stigma of obscurantism. Until today customs and habits

inherited from the years of resistance and persecution still prevail among the Huthi leadership in Saʿda: a culture of obfuscation and secretiveness, arcane diplomacy hidden from the public gaze, the cover-up of internal cleavages, the use of aliases and noms de guerre even among their senior cadres, and mystification of their supreme leader. Their continuous demand to build a consensus government that includes them vividly underlines the Huthis' need to live up to their own commitments and to work towards the implementation of political participation, non-discrimination, and reconciliation not only on the national, but also on the local level, in their own dominion.

NOTES

1. Yahya al-Huthi is a full brother of the late Husayn al-Huthi, the rebellion's first leader. While still a member of Parliament, he had his immunity lifted in 2005 as he was on a trip abroad. As a result he spent several years in exile in Germany. When he returned to Yemen in July 2013 to participate in the NDC, he was fired at by unknown assailants upon arrival at the airport.
2. The debate on the nomination of Nabila al-Zubayr as the chair of the Saʿda subcommittee led to a verbal confrontation between Sadiq al-Ahmar and Amal Basha, the spokeswoman for the Conference's technical secretariat. TV cameras captured "Yemen's most famous feminist screaming incandescently at the country's most powerful tribal sheikh" (al-Muslimi 2013). In the following vote, the subcommittee's majority confirmed the nomination of Nabila al-Zubayr. On this, see also Strzelecka's chapter in this volume.
3. ʿUthman Mujalli, *shaykh* of al-ʿAbdin in the tribal area of Sahar near Saʿda city, was one of the most prominent Huthi opponents during the Saʿda Wars. In 2011, after clashes with the Huthis, he sought refuge in Saudi Arabia, where he is still settled.
4. Faysal Manaʿ is *shaykh* of the al-Talh region north of Saʿda city. The former governor of the Saʿda province, Faris Manaʿ, is a relative. The Manaʿ clan is a good example of different political orientations within the same family.
5. Manaʿ said that he was "surprised and shocked" in regard to the "betrayal" and "non-assistance" exerted by Sadiq and Hamid al-Ahmar during the NDC. According to Manaʿ, the al-Ahmars had assured him they would ensure the participation of the GPC tribal elites in the Saʿda subcommittee, but then dropped the case. A few months later, during the ʿAmran battles, many GPC *shaykh*s of the ʿAmran region paid the al-Ahmars out in the same coin. In addition, the GPC's decision to exclude Mujalli and ʿAziz from the Saʿda subcommittee reinforced early rumors about a clandestine

GPC–Huthi coalition, because it gave greater weight to the Huthis during the NDC.

6. The government had buried the body of Husayn al-Huthi, who was killed in 2004 during the first Saʿda War, at an undisclosed location. In January 2013 his mortal remains were exhumed and handed over to a Huthi delegation.

REFERENCES

Alwazir, Atiaf Zaid, 'Yemen's independent youth and their role in the National Dialogue Conference triggering a change in political culture', *SWP Comments* 2013/C 23.

Ansaruallah, 'Al-sayyid ʿAbd al-Malik al-Huthi yadʿau ila al-ihtishad ghadan fi sahat al-taghyir bi-l-ʿasima' ['Sayyid ʿAbd al-Malik al-Huthi calls for a demonstration tomorrow in the capital's Change Square'], *Ansaruallah*, 1 September 2014. Available at http://www.ansaruallah.com/news/9755 (last accessed 20 September 2014; page no longer available).

ʿAyyash, ʿAbduh, 'Al-huthiyyun yanfuna al-tawqiʿ ʿala wathiqa al-hiwar al-yamani' ['Huthis refuse to sign the Yemeni NDC document'], *al-Jazeera*, 23 January 2014. Available at http://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2014/1/23/ (last accessed 12 September 2014; page no longer available).

Bonnefoy, Laurent and Marine Poirier, 'The structuration of the Yemeni revolution: Exploring a process in motion', *Revue Française de Science Politique* 62/5 (2012), pp. 895–913.

Brandt, Marieke, 'Friedens-Shaykh und Kriegs-Shaykh: Der Übergang von Kriegsführerschaft bei den Banu Munebbih im Huthi-Konflikt in Nordwest-Jemen', *Anthropos* 107, pp. 49–69.

—— 'Sufyan's "hybrid" war: Tribal politics during the Huthi conflict', *Journal of Arabian Studies* 3/1 (2013), pp. 120–38.

—— 'The irregulars of the Saʿda War: "Colonel shaykhs" and "tribal militias" in Yemen's Huthi conflict (2004-2010)', in H. Lackner (ed.), *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition* (London, 2014), pp. 105–122.

—— 'Iqlim Saʿda wa l-Jawf: Das problematische Erbe einer möglichen föderalen Provinz', *Jemen-Report* 45/1&2 (2014), pp. 32–9.

—— 'The global and the local: Al-Qaeda and Yemen's tribes', in O. Roy and V. Collombier (eds), *Tribes and Global Jihadism* (London, 2017).

al-Bukhayti, ʿAli, 'Ma bayn mamlaka al-sayyid wa jumhuriyya al-shaykh' ['Between the Sayyid's Kingdom and the Shaykh's Republic'], *Barakish Net,* 8 January 2014. Available at http://www.barakish.net/news02.aspx?cat=12&sub=14&id=61418 (accessed 16 June 2017).

Carvajal, Fernando, 'The new power balance in Sana'a: Houthis overrun Yemeni capital', *Muftah*, 23 October 2014. Available at http://muftah.org/new-power-balance-sanaa-houthis-overrun-yemeni-capital/#.VE9vABZNahv (last accessed 24 September 2016).

Gaston, Erica, *Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue*, United States Institute of Peace (2014), Special Report 342. Available at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR342_Process-Lessons-Learned-in-Yemens-National-Dialogue.pdf (28 December 2017).

al-Hassani, Mohammed, 'The rise of the Houthis', *Yemen Times*, 14 January 2014. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1746/intreview/3349/The-rise-of-the-Houthis.htm (last accessed 16 June 2017; page no longer available).

—— 'Houthis throw a wrench in NDC final document', *Yemen Times*, 23 January 2014. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1749/news/3391/Houthis-throw-a-wrench-in-NDC-final-document.htm (last accessed 16 June 2017; page no longer available).

Haykel, Bernard, 'A Zaydi revival?', *Yemen Update* 36 (1995), pp. 20–1.

—— *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muḥammad al-Shawkānī* (Cambridge, 2003).

Heinze, Marie-Christine, 'Dialog mit beschränkter Wirkung', *Welt-Sichten* 10 (2013), pp. 42–4.

—— 'The triumphant advance of the Houthi rebels', *Qantara*, 24 September 2014. Available at http://en.qantara.de/content/political-upheaval-in-yemen-the-triumphant-advance-of-the-houthi-rebels (accessed 26 September 2016).

International Crisis Group, 'The Huthis: From Saada to Sana'a', *Middle East Report* 154 (10 June 2014). Available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/huthis-saada-sanaa (accessed 16 June 2017).

al-Jaradi, Muhammad, 'Al-shaykh Faysal Manaʿ: La taʿnina qararat muʾtamar al-hiwar ma lam yatimm iʿadat al-iʿtibar li-abnaʾ Saʿda' ['Shaykh Faysal Manaʿ: The resolutions of the NDC do not concern us unless the sons of Saʿda are rehabilitated'], *Nashwan News*, 26 March 2103. Available at http://nashwannews.com/news.php?action=view&id=24304 (accessed 8 September 2016).

Mareb Press, 'Al-raʾis li-Habra: idha arada al-huthiyyun al-insihab min al-hiwar fa-al-bab maftuh wa lan natahawun fi himayat al-muʾassasat' ['The President to Habra: The door is open if the Huthis want to withdraw from the NDC, and we will not relent in protecting the institutions'], *Mareb Press*, 13 June 2013. Available at http://www.marebpress.net/news_details.php?lng=arabic&sid=56648 (accessed 16 June 2017).

al-Muslimi, Farea, 'Negotiating chaos: Yemen's National Dialogue is already faltering', *Executive Magazine*,16 April 2013. Available at http://www.executive-magazine.com/opinion/comment/yemen-national-dialogue-debate (accessed 16 June 2017).

Republic of Yemen, *Wathiqat al-hiwar al-watani al-shamil* [*Complete Document of the National Dialogue*] (2014).

al-Sabahi, Ahmad, 'Adhw muʾtamar al-hiwar muhammad ʿaydha: Al-mubadira al-khalijiyya nassat ʿala hall qadiyya saʿda wa laysa qadiyya al-huthi

(hiwar)' ['NDC delegate Muhammad ʿAydha: The Gulf Initiative provides for resolving the Saʿda issue and not the Huthi issue (interview)'], *Nashwan News*, 11 April 2013. Available at http://nashwannews.com/news.php?action=view&id=24780 (accessed 16 June 2017).

Salisbury, Peter, 'Yemen's rival protesters speak out', *al-Jazeera*, 22 August 2014. Available at http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/yemen-rival-protests-houthis-islah-201482511541954918 4.html (accessed 16 June 2017).

Salmoni, Barak, Bryce Loidolt and Madeleine Wells, *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon* (Santa Monica, 2010).

Schmitz, Charles, 'Yemen's National Dialogue', *MEI Policy Paper* 1 (2014).

Terrill, W. Andrew, 'Iranian involvement in Yemen', *Orbis* 58/3 (2014), pp. 429–40.

United Nations, 'Security Council condemns actions of Houthi militants to derail Yemen's transition', *United Nations*, 29 August 2014. Available at http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48593#.VAggTWNa_HY (accessed 16 June 2017).

CHAPTER 8

Reversals of Fortune: The Islah Party in Post-Salih Yemen

Laurent Bonnefoy

INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, politics in the Middle East and North Africa have been shaped by constant reversals of fortune. Month after month, liberals, Islamists, soldiers, women, *jihadi*s, youth, Sunnis, Shiʿis and others have all at some point been depicted by journalists and analysts as the great winners of the Arab Spring and then of subsequent wars, before being later considered as likely losers; or the opposite, manifest losers becoming kingmakers or even "kings".

Over the last few years, stability has surely not been a characteristic of political fields in the Arab world. The pace of these shifts has left many puzzled and others, first and foremost most citizens of Arab countries, intersperse between optimistic and pessimistic analysis. Changes from hope to disillusion have been a necessary reminder of how much time revolutionary processes require, be it in a world where information technology has created the illusion of speed.

Probably more so than other groups, reversals of fortune have been a striking characteristic of Sunni Islamist movements, in particular of the Muslim Brotherhood, since 2011. While some analysts had seen them as doomed by their so-called absence during the first days of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, they later were the clear victors of elections before being pushed out of power in a number of countries

by an odd conjunction of popular mobilization, military coups and regional pressures, and finally the object of extensive criminalization and repression. The Islah Party, a hybrid structure deemed the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood,[1] has apparently witnessed in the years following the 2011 "Yemeni Spring" a similar trajectory to that of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and the Ennahda Party in Tunisia. Islah was first depicted as an alleged hijacker of mobilizations on Change Square in Sanaʿa, then a kingmaker before finally being side-lined both by the rise to prominence of the competing Zaydi-based Huthi movement and by the Saudi-led military intervention. The object of this chapter is to contextualize Islah's own reversal of fortune, in particular by taking seriously the idea of the internal diversity of the party. Far from considering that such a trajectory implies the final marginalization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen, the chapter will highlight the variety of the resources of Islah and its likely resilience in post-war Yemen.

A SINGULAR BRANCH OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Much more than ideology, local contexts are a central variable of the evolutions of Muslim Brotherhood affiliated movements. The singularity of Islah is based on its deep roots in Yemen and its historical trajectory. Contrary to their counterparts in other countries, Sunni Islamists of various shades have been granted a manifest latitude in the political, religious and social spaces since the 1960s (Dresch 2000), with numerous consequences in terms of political and social integration.

Established in September 1990, three months after the unification of North and South Yemen that legalized a multiparty system, the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (*al-tajammuʿ al-yamani li-l-islah*), commonly referred to as the Islah Party or Islah, is a highly composite movement that attracts a large contingent of members and supporters throughout the entire territory. Exact numbers of members are unknown; results in ballot boxes have varied over time but the significance of these results has not always been relevant in a context of unfair elections. Internal diversity is one of the party's most striking features. From the outset, the party is based on a

non-explicit alliance between three generally distinct (but not systematically homogeneous) segments: conservative tribal elites, business networks, and a branch shaped by the ideological doctrine of the Muslim Brotherhood or whose representatives are directly members of the Brotherhood.

The emergence of the Brotherhood in Yemen predates Islah by a few decades. By the 1940s, contact was established between some Yemeni intellectuals and the Muslim Brotherhood, who were mainly based in Egypt. In 1947, Algerian activist al-Fudhayl al-Wartilani had been sent out by Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, to Aden, Taʿiz and Sanaʿa (al-Ahnaf 1999). Mahmud al-Zubayri, one of the inspirators of the Yemeni republican revolution of 1962, was educated in Cairo and allegedly strongly influenced by the writings of al-Banna. Although al-Zubayri's affiliation to the Brotherhood was even claimed by some of his comrades, including controversial figure ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani, it nevertheless remains uncertain. The single party systems that pre-existed between the 1960s and the early 1990s, both in North and South Yemen, did not put the Muslim Brotherhood in significant jeopardy, even though it had no legal existence. In the socialist South, repression of religious clerics was a reality; however, they easily found refuge in the North where Islamist activists were directly integrated in state structures and even holding some key ministries, such as the Ministry of Education in 1967. Beginning in the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood developed, thanks to a major Saudi budget allocation, a parallel educational network: the Scientific Institutes (*al-maʿahid ʿilmiyya*). The initiative, which received a green light from the government, aimed to cope with the ideological offensive of the leftists supported by South Yemen in the Southern regions of North Yemen. These teaching infrastructures, present in many villages, had a conservative religious curriculum and would later serve as a significant resource for Islah. The network was ultimately "nationalized" in 2002, when the Saudi budget which was dedicated to them was officially transferred to the Yemeni Ministry of Education.

The significance of tribal structures in the Yemeni highlands and the connections between some tribal clans and Saudi Arabia are another structuring feature of Islah. At the time of its creation, the

various tribal, Islamic, business-oriented fringes appear to have rallied around a set of symbolic figures: the first being ʿAbd Allah al-Ahmar, the party chairman and paramount chief (*shaykh al-mashayikh*) of the Hashid tribal confederation; but also Muhammad al-Yadumi, then General Secretary; Sinan Abu Luhum, a prominent tribal *shaykh* of the Bakil tribal confederation; and ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani, who headed the advisory council (*majlis al-shura*) of the party. As well, members also united around a platform that explicitly valued traditional tribal and religious values and rejected power-sharing with the Socialist leaders of former South Yemen. Although articulation between the three segments of the party was not always easy, all shared this minimal platform. They however resorted to different modes of mobilization and had distinct trajectories, perhaps indicating a division of political labour: the tribal component appeared as a reservoir of men and voices and most often prevailed in the orientation of the party's relationship with power; the Islamist component provided an ideology, a structure, media and activists while merchants offered networks, respectability and funding (Dresch and Haykel 1995).

In a largely conservative Yemeni society, Islah did not operate in an environment in which religion was a significant source of political cleavage. Reference to Islam was thus largely unanimous and did not create significant polarization between parties (Burgat 2000). As such, Islah's position was generally perceived as conservative but not revolutionary; consequently, the "Islamization" of society or of the state was hardly at stake, and President Salih's party, the General People's Congress (*al-muʾtammar al-shaʿbi al-ʿamm*) would often engage in episodes of state-sponsored Islamist policies or campaigns against liberals.

Islah's alliance with ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih during the 1990s created a kind of hybrid, distinct from other branches of the Muslim Brotherhood elsewhere in the Arab world. The role of conservative tribal elites within the party hindered its independence while at the same time saving it from repression. Some of its members were part of the coalition government between 1993 and 1997, including ʿAbd al-Rahman Bafadhil and ʿAbd al-Salam Karman. ʿAbd Allah al-Ahmar, founder of the Islah Party, was elected as speaker of the Yemeni

parliament with support of the ruling General People's Congress. Al-Islah was consequently not fully an opposition party and certainly not a full-fledged Islamist party. It was neither a strictly Sunni party as many of its leading figures were originally Zaydi and maintained an "uneasy relationship" with many of the *'ulama'* (religious clerics) (Heibach 2015); rather, it represented the convergence of religious identities that was a characteristic of Yemeni society of the 1990s and 2000s.[2] These party characteristics, such as diversity of partners, have had a direct impact on the attitude of Islah during and after the revolutionary uprising of 2011.

THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATION

Political and social integration came with a number of benefits. Through these transactions, and in spite of the increasing monopolization of resources of power by Salih and his party throughout the 2000s, Islah was able to gain a certain experience of government which probably would not have been possible elsewhere in the Arab world where repression is often a central feature. Hence, experiences of imprisonment or torture were never structural within Islah. Such a dimension is central to understanding the dynamics at play within the party (Bonnefoy and Poirier 2010). Although executives and activists of Islah have certainly not systematically moderated by working openly,[3] many of its leaders developed an ability to interact with other segments of society and the political spectrum.

Such expertise became manifest in the early 2000s through the development of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) (*takattul ahzab al-liqa' al-mushtarak*) (Browers 2007). The JMP was an innovative platform of six parties, including the Yemeni Socialist Party, Arab nationalists and Islah, which opposed the dominium of the General People's Congress (GPC) headed by President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih and shared a common platform (Philbrick Yadav 2013). Although such a step has never been unanimously accepted amongst Islahis (in particular because in 1994, Islah had been at the forefront of the armed offensive against the Southern socialists, which generated a deep mutual distrust), this approach has been driven and supported by many of the leading figures of Islah. Proponents of the JMP

included Muhammad al-Yadumi, head of the party since the death of ʿAbd Allah al-Ahmar; Muhammad Qahtan; ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Ansi; Shaykhan al-Dubaʿi; as well as the alleged leader of the Brotherhood in Yemen, Yassin al-Qubati. Internal resistance to the process had triggered the December 2002 assassination of Jarallah ʿUmar, leader of the Yemeni Socialist Party, by ʿAli Jarallah, a former member of Islah. The latter had opened fire as the respected socialist figure was attending the bi-annual congress of Islah (Yahya 2003). Also indicative of such internal resistance was the fact that during the presidential election of 2006 leading figures of Islah refused to support the JMP candidate, indirectly campaigning for ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih.

Beyond tribal connections, the Islah Party benefited from a number of resources that would prove useful to mobilize citizens, in particular in 2011. Their networks of scientific institutes, as well as their charitable sector, were key elements in the popularity of the party. Al-Islah Charitable Society, although formally independent from the party, was considered the largest NGO in the country (Alviso Marino 2010). It was headed by Tariq Abu Luhum, who also served as dean of the University of Science and Technology, a prestigious private institution with a large hospital, and the heir of a prestigious tribal clan. The Haʾil Saʿid Anʿam family, based in Taʿiz and active in banking and trade, funded various charitable activities or media outlets affiliated to Islah. Finally, the al-Ahmar family, especially Hamid, son of ʿAbd Allah al-Ahmar and probably his most charismatic and wealthy successor, also took part in integrating the Muslim Brotherhood into a larger galaxy composed of NGOs, mosques, schools, businesses and media outlets, such as the *al-Nur* paper or the *Suhayl* television station, as well as transnational networks. While these structures and actors did not systematically match with the party and the Muslim Brotherhood, they nevertheless constituted significant resources and were put, for some time, to the credit of Islah.

All these resources were evidently central in 2011 (Tahir 2012). Islah as a party (much like the JMP in general) appears to have been rather sluggish in supporting the anti-Salih uprising launched by the so-called revolutionary youth (*shabab al-thawra*).[4] It nevertheless

quickly regained control and evidently gave anti-Salih mobilization its critical mass and a number of organizational assets. For instance, the Science and Technology hospital took care of those who were injured by police repression, al-Islah Charitable Society's head office was located only meters from the heart of Change Square in Sanaʿa and *Suhayl* TV broadcast calls for the fall of the Salih regime. Additionally, Islahi tribal *shaykh*s, such as Hamud al-Mikhlafi in Taʿiz, along with defected officers deemed close to the Islamists, such as General ʿAli Muhsin, vowed to defend the revolutionaries. Islah's own tribal and military connections then served to protect the revolutionaries and favoured a kind of professionalization of the uprising, granting it important access to a number of resources. Such moves, however, also constrained the revolutionary process, imposing a certain number of conservative dynamics. The most visible constraint, on Change Square, was the gradual gender segregation enforced by the Islah-dominated organizing committee. Speakers that were given access to the central stage in the sit-in were more and more being seen as favourable to the Islamists, while the independent youth felt that they were being dispossessed and alienated (Longley Alley 2013). Islah appeared as both a capacitating and constraining force, which in the end directly contributed to bringing change and forcing ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih to resign (Bonnefoy and Poirier 2012). The Islamist party, however, was increasingly perceived by many activists as the main hijacker of the revolution, emerging through the JMP's participation to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) brokered transition deal and the subsequent exclusion of the revolutionary youth as the new kingmaker, able to determine which segment of the political spectrum would embody state power.

For some time, Tawakkul Karman, born in 1979, a member of Islah and co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2011, appeared in the capacity to bridge the gaps between both the institutionalized former opposition parties and the youth (Philbrick Yadav 2011). She was often critical of the options pushed forward by her party's leadership and developed a human rights based approach, rejecting for instance the immunity granted to former President Salih in the framework of the GCC deal that had been signed by Islah. As a liberal-leaning young woman with experience in civil society organizations,

she embodied many of the internal fault lines of a party dominated by elderly conservative men which coexisted with radical Islamists like ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani. Throughout 2011, Tawakkul Karman remained ambiguous about her resignation from the party's ruling structures, thereby maintaining links with the allegedly apolitical *shabab al-thawra*. Due to her ill-managed popularity, she lost much of her popular credit throughout 2012, and never managed to transform the internal equilibrium of Islah in favour of a new generation of activists.

EMERGING AS A RESPECTABLE ALTERNATIVE

The capacity of Islah to benefit from a mobilization it had not initiated, and that it later allegedly hijacked, generated an evident misunderstanding. Opponents of Islah, in particular supporters of former president Salih, liberals as well as Zaydi revivalists of the Huthi movement, were accusing the Islamist/conservative/tribal party of slowly but surely taking control of state infrastructures, protecting its own interests and developing new corruption mechanisms. In November 2011, Islah became part of the unity government. The security apparatus was increasingly seen as a new battlefield between Islamists and others. However, few signs of significant Islahi gains could be pinpointed by the party's adversaries inside the numerous military and intelligence agencies and the army. For instance, accusations of the "Islahization" of the Ministry of Interior were hardly substantiated. The rapidity of the fall of Sanaʿa into the hands of Huthi militias in September 2014 was also an indication of the weakness of Islah's control over the security apparatus. Such was not the case at the local level, where various newly appointed governors were allegedly close to Islah, including those in Aden, Shabwa and ʿAmran who performed rather poorly when it came to mitigating tensions with the Southern Movement (*al-hirak al-janubi*) and Huthi activists and in fighting corruption.

Beyond these steps, Islah's leadership moved cautiously, as it allowed its allies to appear in the forefront and claimed to defend the legitimacy of the revolution as well as the transition, in particular the unity government and its new president ʿAbd Rabbuh

Mansur Hadi. The main ministries were kept in the hands of independents or of representatives of the old regime, while Islah members, mostly with a technocratic profile, gained control of more marginal ones. President Hadi's advisors included individuals such as Faris al-Saqqaf, Nasir Taha Mustafa and ʿAli Muhsin, who were all perceived as close to Islah.

Islah as a party did not want to be seen in any way as the spoiler of the transition process. Similar to their former framework with the JMP, Islah let representatives of minor parties, for instance Hassan Zayd of the al-Haqq Party or Yassin Saʿid Nuʿman of the Socialist Party, emerge as key players. Such a strategy became even more evident after the anti-Brotherhood coup in Egypt during the summer of 2013 and the subsequent marginalization and repression of Egyptian Islamists by the al-Sisi regime.

In the framework of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the 51 Islahi representatives willingly played according to the rules set by the United Nation's representative, Moroccan Jamal Benomar. They generally followed a consensual line, preferring to leave certain questions un-answered for the time being and neglecting the internal diversity of strategies within the party. Such was the case in the instance of the role of *shariʿa* in defining Yemeni law. While ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani had claimed in early 2011, on Change Square, that the revolution should be seen as an opportunity to establish an Islamic caliphate, his radical project was marginal within his own party. Much to the contrary, ideas put forward by the Islahi leadership for a "new Yemen" in the party's media and during the NDC were consistent with a moderate and gradual transition to democracy. No comprehensive platform or party guidelines had yet been published, and leaders of Islah appeared to walk along a largely pragmatist line that was similar to that of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt under Muhammad Mursi's short-lived presidency. In Yemen, the federalist option that was advocated in the framework of the NDC by the majority of the 565 representatives and the international community was initially opposed by Islah and triggered much debate. Islahi representatives at the time stressed the need to maintain a unitary state, since fragmentation induced by a federal system would further weaken the state and leave it open to foreign

influence and competition. However, the Islah Party in the end accepted to officially endorse federalism. It then published a statement stressing that the quest for political unity and stability justified that they accept compromise. Such a move was a clear indication of the will of party leadership to appear as a responsible political force.

For Islahis, however, things did not always go smoothly and according to their plans, both inside and outside of Yemen. As they were appearing as the likely victors of the transition process and the "kings" to be, their political credit was falling. Delays in the transition process, economic difficulties, corruption and insecurity were putting Islahi leaders on the front line. An odd and informal coalition between Islah's numerous opponents was favouring a new form of polarization of the Yemeni political field. ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih had been the pivotal figure of Yemeni politics in 2011, generating allegiance or antagonism amongst activists, tribal figures; now, it was increasingly Islah that was playing that role in 2013 and 2014, becoming the new bogey-man for many of the country's players.

The identity of Islah as a conservative party sometimes clashed with its willingness to appear as the "good guy" or "grade A student" of the transition in the eyes of the international community. For instance, matters linked to women's rights or debates on child marriage were highly controversial within the party and risked creating a rift between the party itself and the image it projected of itself, through its leadership. Islah had to deal with internal divisions and the emergence of a new Islamist competitor. Although Salafi leaders of the Rashad Union never adopted a strictly anti-Muslim Brotherhood platform like the al-Nur Party in Egypt, they nevertheless were challenging Islah as the sole incarnation of Sunni Islamism in the political field.

The alleged corruption of a number of Islah's leaders and allies, in particular the al-Ahmar family, highlighted a number of the party's contradictions – political change could not be achieved with the same elites, and Islah evidently embodied a segment of the "old regime". Controversy emerged when a prominent member of the Islah Shura Council, ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani, published, along with some representatives of the Salafi al-Rashad Union, a list of 37

participants to the NDC who, they claimed, were working against Islam. Such a move was reminiscent of steps that had been taken in the early 1990s by certain Islamists to legitimize the political assassinations of socialists during a campaign that had left hundreds of leftists dead. As such, it clashed with Islah's new post-2011 strategy. Faced with polemic, and steps taken by the secretariat of the NDC against those practising *takfir* (accusation of apostasy),[5] the main leaders of the party and Muhammad Qahtan in particular expressed unease and condemned such an approach. Nevertheless, such events spread the idea of collusion between Islahis, Salafis and *jihadi*s.

SHIFTING WINDS

In March 2014, moves by the Saudi and Emirati governments to criminalize the Muslim Brotherhood (*ikhwan al-muslimin*) both inside these countries and abroad came as a surprise to many Yemenis, and highlighted how much the winds were shifting. The wide spectrum of Muslim Brotherhood related structures, comprising hundreds of parties, associations and charity organizations across the world, were all directly classified as terrorist organizations. The Saudi Ministry of Interior was however quick to clarify its position: this decision did not target Islah as a party, or even the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood, whose relations with different segments of the Saudi leadership were long-standing and sound. Sadiq al-Ahmar, successor of his father as paramount chief of the Hashid tribal confederation and Islahi member of the Yemeni national Shura Council, the high chamber of parliament, issued statements critical of Qatari encroachment in Yemeni politics. In 2014, in the context of rivalry between Qatar, which was then deemed pro-Muslim Brotherhood, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who were waging a campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood, Shaykh Sadiq's move could be seen as a way of indirectly showing its Saudi and Emirati sponsors his credentials and that of his tribe and party. Thereby, he was trying to escape from the fate of other branches of the Muslim Brotherhood who were being put under direct pressure by the regional powers. Nevertheless, the political scene in Yemen could

hardly be seen as polarized between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as was at times claimed. Regional alliances remained complex and were not always centralized or controlled by governmental actors. Connections with the Yemeni diaspora in these countries, the role of religious charities, matrimonial ties and parallel diplomacies suggested that concrete relations at the regional level did not quite equate alleged geopolitical interests as defined in the media or by lazy diplomats.[6]

National and regional pressure on Islah was however increasingly evident throughout 2014. The forced expulsion in January of that year of around 10,000 Salafis from the Dar al-Hadith Institute of Dammaj, in the suburbs of Huthi-controlled Saʿda, was traumatic for many Islahis despite tensions that existed between them and the Salafis (Bonnefoy 2011). Such an event became the sign of the Huthis' rise and of the incapacity of Islah's military and tribal allies to prevail over the Zaydi rebellion.[7] During the successive Saʿda wars between 2004 and 2010, military operations against the Huthis had been conducted by army battalions deemed close to Islah, in particular the First Armoured Brigade of ʿAli Muhsin and the 301st Brigade of Hamid al-Qushaybi. In between each of these military operations, the al-Ahmar family had supported the establishment of anti-Huthi tribal militias while religious figures of the Islah Party, along with Salafis, were active in stigmatizing Huthi mobilization as a mere Shiʿa movement, alien to Yemen and controlled by Iran.[8] While Huthi rebels had seized Saʿda and its surroundings in 2011 following the Yemeni Spring popular uprising, skirmishes between them and so-called "Islahi tribes" became more and more frequent in Saʿda governorate, as well as in al-Jawf, ʿAmran and Hajja. Tensions with Salafis of Dammaj had also increased in 2012–13, with the Huthis imposing successive blockades on the religious institute. Skirmishes became increasingly intense as the Huthis accused Dammaj of harbouring al-Qaʿida militants and of training them in one of the local branches of Dar al-Hadith in Kitaf, east of Saʿda.

A few weeks after the fall of Dammaj in February 2014, the house of the al-Ahmar family in their home village of Khamir, ʿAmran governorate was destroyed by Huthi militiamen. This local

event highlighted how much the balance of powers within the Hashid tribal confederation was changing. Paramount chief of Hashid, Sadiq al-Ahmar, was clearly being contested in the very cradle of his clan's power. A "city-*shaykh*", Sadiq al-Ahmar, had lost his grip over developments unfolding in his original territory. This disconnection signalled the depth of the crisis of the tribal associates of Islah. The fall of ʿAmran in July and the subsequent assassination of Brigadier Hamid al-Qushaybi under Huthi fire were yet another indication of how much the structure of Islah, as an alliance of various groups, was becoming shaky.

When the Huthis seized control of Sanaʿa in late September 2014, they first targeted ʿAli Muhsin and his First Armoured Brigade located in the northern part of the capital. They also took over the neighbouring al-Iman University headed by ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani, a religious institution that had once been accused by the United States of harbouring al-Qaʿida militants. Both al-Zindani and ʿAli Muhsin escaped and allegedly left the country. Figures of Islah, including Muhammad Qahtan and Tawakkul Karman, saw their houses sacked by Huthi militiamen. While they stayed in Sanaʿa, they nevertheless remained discreet in the face of the Huthi's advance. Spaces for free expression became evidently constrained. ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Ansi, secretary general of Islah, became part of a presidential mediation committee with the Huthis and toned down any criticism. Some of the al-Ahmar brothers, in particular Hamid and Husayn, fled the country while Sadiq stayed, nevertheless put under pressure after being accused of protecting the assassins of Zaydi intellectuals and politicians ʿAbd al-Karim Jadban, Ahmad Sharaf al-Din and Muhammad ʿAbd al-Malik al-Muttawakil. Leaders of the Salafi al-Rashad Union also adopted a low profile, being put under pressure by the Huthis on one side and American accusations of connections with al-Qaʿida on the other. Former leader of the Salafi Dammaj institute, Yahya al-Hajuri, remained out of formal politics and continued to criticize fellow Sunni Islamists who, like Islah and al-Rashad, were endorsing the transition process and democratization. Following the closure of his institute in January 2014, al-Hajuri moved south, engaging in an increasingly radical

campaign of stigmatization of the Huthis that had potentially dangerous sectarian implications.

By late 2014, the whole Sunni Islamist spectrum was facing a severe crisis. The 20 January 2015 fall of transition president ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi only confirmed their precarious situation. The Huthis' rise to formal power, taking the form of an odd alliance with their former enemy ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, was a clear defeat of Islah's strategy. It embodied the revenge of both the Huthis and of Salih against those who, after taking part in the popular uprising of 2011, had overestimated the reality of their power.

CONCLUSION: ISLAMIST RESILIENCE?

The launch of Operation Decisive Storm in March 2015 only confirmed that Islahis were in a precarious situation. Their leadership had already fled the country, either to Qatar, Turkey or Saudi Arabia. Other members were imprisoned by Huthi militias or subject to forced disappearances, such as Muhammad Qahtan. The leadership in exile was compelled to support the military strategy carried out by Saudi Arabia and its allies. In the Southern governorates of the country, the party was perceived as pro-unity and dominated by northern figures. Mismanagement of local political issues by the Islahi governor of Aden, Wahid ʿAli Rashid, in 2012–13 generated vivid tensions. Islah's opposition to federalism during the NDC highlighted a disconnection between an allegedly Islamist project and Southern independence. As a consequence, the party was gradually sidelined by the Southern Movement as well as by Salafis.

In the North, Islah access to funding and media has been hindered due to Hamid al-Ahmar's incapacity to manage his business empire from exile in Turkey, as well as his tense personal relations with Saudi Arabia over the course of the war. The Hashid tribes are increasingly fragmented and in quest of a charismatic leader. Freedom of expression and of movement, granted to the Muslim Brotherhood since the 1960s, has been affected negatively by the war.

At the regional level, increased distrust expressed by Islah's traditional Saudi ally initially created further difficulties, yet the rupture is far from final. ʿAli Muhsin and ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani,

fleeing the Huthis' takeover of Sanaʿa, have taken refuge in Riyadh, highlighting yet again the persistence of historical ties between Sunni Islamists in the peninsula and the Kingdom. The war has even improved the ties between the party leaders and the Saudi leadership, as Sunni Islamists remained loyal to President Hadi. ʿAli Muhsin was named vice president in April 2016, a move that aimed to reinforce the so-called legitimate government's stand in the northern highlands and among tribes that had long been close to Islah, but were now aligned with the Huthis.

While Saudi Arabia has gradually mitigated its opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen in the course of the conflict, such is not the case of the other significant foreign power which intervened militarily in Yemen, the United Arab Emirates. Its strong anti-Islahi bias and its blunt criminalization of the Muslim Brotherhood have clashed with the Saudi strategy and continue to generate strong diplomatic tensions between the two allies in the military anti-Huthi coalition.

However, it would be wrong to consider that the collapse of Islah's strategy and of its political integration project will automatically lead to the long-term marginalization of Sunni-leaning Islamism and of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen. Islah is clearly under pressure in the ongoing war in Yemen. However, it still has a number of resources to mobilize and is likely to remain a resilient movement. Rather than its Muslim Brotherhood core, it is the tribal and military branches of the party which are in crisis in the Yemeni context and which have allowed the party to lose a variety of resources. The internal diversity of Islah explains both its crisis and its potential for survival. It is not the core of Islah that has emerged as polemical or cleaving, but rather its allies, both tribal and military, and its radical branch in the guise of ʿAbd al-Majid al-Zindani. In the fight against Huthi encroachment in Sunni-populated regions, fighters affiliated with Islah have taken their share of the fighting and are likely to benefit from the post-war situation, even though their political stand will surely be highly contested.

Without reference to any nationwide competitive elections (the last was the presidential election of 2006, with the current war situation unlikely to foster a context for fair elections in the

foreseeable future), nor the availability of significant opinion polls, the political weight of Islah in ballot boxes is difficult to assess. The party's influence is probably both volatile and variable from one governorate to the other. Resources accumulated before and during the revolution are likely to continue to make it a major player, albeit a transformed one (Philbrick Yadav 2017).

The crisis of Islah, along with that of quietist Salafis of Dammaj who advocated apoliticism and rejected party politics in favour of automatic loyalty to the Yemeni ruler (Bonnefoy 2011), is nevertheless restructuring Sunni identity in Yemen along lines that may well be compared to what happened in Iraq in the 2000s. While the sectarian dimension of conflicts in Yemen is not exclusive of other issues, be they regional, economic, symbolic, historical or interpersonal, the context leaves much space for Sunni *jihadi* groups, who may or may not be united under the label of al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula or tempted to join the so-called Islamic State. These *jihadi* groups have a fundamentally sectarian reading of the nature of conflicts in Yemen and have the potential, in the eyes of many, to emerge as the sole competitor of the Huthis if alternative Islamist movements are marginalized. This would be the darkest of scenarios.

Such a bleak picture of the country's future built on Islah's complete marginalization in a Yemeni state dominated by the Huthis and/or ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih's heirs, and by an opposition monopolized by Sunni *jihadi* groups, is counterbalanced by certain assets that highlight the potential resilience of Islah.

Analyses of contemporary Yemeni politics tend to overlook dynamics outside of urban areas and beyond institutional processes unfolding in Sanaʿa. For instance, the crises of the al-Ahmar family and of Hashid tribes have surely affected Islah, but should not be considered as the matrix of all tribal politics in the whole of the country. Little is known of political structures in most of the governorates and of the articulation between parties, tribes and institutions. Taʿiz, the most populated governorate after Sanaʿa, remains a kind of black hole (Grabundzija 2015). Its identity, as put forward in the context of the revolutionary uprising of 2011, is often neglected by Yemenis and foreigners alike (Planel 2012).

It nevertheless embodies an alternative to the North/South opposition. Islah's position in Taʿiz has been challenged by both the Huthi militias' occupation of the city and by the development of *jihadi* movements. Yet, some local assets remain: Yassin al-Qubati, the discreet head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen, originates from this governorate; and Islahi Shaykh Hamud al-Mikhlafi gained prominence in 2011 defending the revolutionaries against government repression on Freedom Square (*sahat al-hurriyya*) in Taʿiz city and had taken the lead against the Huthis until mid-2016. Beyond Islah and the Muslim Brothers, the city has long been a cradle of activist Salafi charities, in particular the al-Hikma Association, with which Islah has cooperated.

Beyond Maʾrib and Taʿiz, the long-standing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in state and traditional institutions leaves much space for Sunni-leaning Islamism (as well as more or less progressive movements, including the Southern Hirak) beyond al-Qaʿida and *jihadi* militancy. Experience in government by Islah since the 1990s has favoured the emergence of a group of Islamist technocrats, including some originating from the South and with links with Hirak, such as the transition phase Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Muhammad al-Saʿadi, who originates from Yafiʿ. Figures such as Muhammad Qahtan, (who disappeared under Huthi custody and at various times has been declared dead), representing the "teachers" (*asatidha*) of Islah, have not lost credit. These key moderate figures, at once experienced bureaucrats and Muslim Brothers, are simply kept silent and put under pressure. Socialization of a new generation of Islahi activists in the framework of the JMP or within para-Islahi structures (such as al-Islah Charitable Society, the University of Science and Technology, some language institutes), as well as their presence in the media and on the internet, in particular during the 2011 uprising, has also allowed the party structure to evolve, even while creating a disjuncture between the party's popular face and the reality of its activism at the local level. All this energy is unlikely to suddenly dry out. But it is certain that the pivotal position Islahis claimed up until 2011, and then occupied during the transition phase, has to a certain degree disappeared in a highly polarized context.

NOTES

1. Academic literature on Islah is numerous in Arabic and European languages. Amongst the most notable Yemeni and foreign researchers who have published on the party are Anahi Alviso Marino, François Burgat, Janine Clark, Renaud Detalle, Paul Dresch, ʿAbd al-Fattah al-Hakimi, Bernard Haykel, Jens Heibach, Franck Mermier, Stacey Philbrick Yadav, Marine Poirier, ʿAbd al-Karim Saʿid, Fuʾad al-Salahi, Faris al-Saqqaf, Jillian Schwedler, ʿAbd al-Bari al-Tahir and Nasir al-Tawil.
2. On religious identities in contemporary Yemen and the convergence process initiated by the Yemeni state, see Bonnefoy 2008.
3. For a critical discussion of the inclusion/moderation debate, see Schwedler 2007.
4. Charismatic leaders of the *shabab al-thawra* willingly portrayed their movement as apartisan. The media developed a narrative that insisted on the spontaneous dimension of the uprising. However, political parties and civil society organizations ended up playing a prominent role in structuring the revolutionary process and many of the leaders of the *shabab* had in fact been socialized in political parties.
5. On the issue of *takfir* (accusation of apostasy) during the NDC, see Stacey Philbrick Yadav, 'Mobilizing against takfir in Yemen', *al-Muftah*, 22 August 2013. Available at http://muftah.org/mobilizing-against-takfir-in-yemen/#.VQawMuG2ptU (accessed 16 March 2017).
6. See for instance, Walaa Ramadan, 'Saudi's support for the Huthis. Could this be the final nail in the coffin?', *Middle East Monitor*, 31 October 2014. Available at https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/14997-saudis-support-for-houthis-could-this-be-the-final-nail-in-the-coffin (accessed 20 January 2017).
7. International Crisis Group, 'The Huthis from Saada to Sanaa', *Middle East Report*, No.154 (2014). Available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iran%20Gulf/Yemen/154-the-huthis-from-saada-to-sanaa.pdf (accessed 20 January 2017).
8. International Crisis Group, 'Yemen: defusing the Saada time bomb', *Middle East Report*, No. 86 (2009). Available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/yemen-defusing-saada-time-bomb (accessed 20 January 2017).

REFERENCES

al-Ahnaf, Mohamed, 'Al-Fudhayl al-Wartilani, un Algérien au Yémen: Le rôle des Frères Musulmans dans la révolution de 1948', *Chroniques Yéménites* 6/7 (1999), pp. 44–59.

Alviso Marino, Anahi, 'Contentious dynamics for political change? The case of the Islah Party in the Republic of Yemen', *Chroniques Yéménites* 16 (2010), pp. 57–90.

Bonnefoy, Laurent, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (London, 2011).

—— 'Les identités religieuses contemporaines au Yémen: Convergence, résistances et instrumentalisations', *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 121/122 (2008), pp. 201–15.

Bonnefoy, Laurent and Marine Poirier, 'The structuration of the Yemeni revolution: Exploring a process in motion', *Revue Française de Science Politique* 62/5 (2012), pp. 895–913.

—— 'The Yemeni congregation for reform (al-Islâh): The difficult process of building a project for change', in M. Catusse and K. Karam (eds), *Returning to Political Parties? Partisan Logic and Political Transformations in the Arab World* (Beirut, 2010), pp. 61–99.

Browers, Michaelle, 'Origins and architects of Yemen's Joint Meeting Parties', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39/4 (2007), pp. 565–86.

Burgat, François, 'Le Yémen islamiste entre universalisme et insularité', in F. Mermier, R. Leveau and U. Steinbach (eds), *Le Yémen Contemporain* (Paris, 2000), pp. 221–46.

Dresch, Paul, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Oxford, 2000).

Dresch, Paul and Bernard Haykel, 'Stereotypes and political styles: Islamists and tribesfolk in Yemen', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27/4 (1995), pp. 405–31.

Grabundzija, Maggy, *Yémen: Morceaux Choisis d'une Révolution. Mars 2011–Février 2012* (Paris, 2015).

Heibach, Jens, 'Contesting the monopoly of interpretation: The uneasy relationship between ulama and Sunni parties in Yemen', *Middle Eastern Studies* 51/4 (2015), pp. 563–84.

Longley Alley, April (2013), 'Tracking the "Arab Spring": Yemen changes everything … and nothing', *Journal of Democracy* 24/4 (2013), pp. 74–85.

Philbrick Yadav, Stacey, *Islamists and the State: Legitimacy and Institutions in Yemen and Lebanon* (London, 2013).

—— 'Tawakkul Karman as cause and effect', *Middle East Research and Information Project*, (21 October 2011). Available at http://www.merip.org/mero/mero102111 (accessed 20 January 2017).

—— 'How War is Changing Yemen's Largest Islamist Coalition', *The Washington Post*, 22 March 2017. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/22/how-war-is-changing-yemens-largest-islamist-coalition/ (accessed 12 April 2017).

Planel, Vincent, 'Le réveil des piémonts: Taez et la révolution yéménite', in L. Bonnefoy, F. Mermier and M. Poirier (eds), *Yémen: Le Tournant Révolutionnaire* (Paris, 2012), pp. 125–41.

Schwedler, Jillian, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (Cambridge, 2007).

Tahir, ʿAbd al-Bari, 'Al-mujtamaʿ al-madani wa-dawrahu fi-l-thawra: Al-Islah namudhajan' ['Civil society and its role in the revolution: The example of al-Islah'], in F. ʿAbd al-Jalil al-Salahi (ed.), *Al-Thawra al-Yamaniyya: Al-Khalfiya wa-l-Afaq* [*The Yemeni Revolution: Background and Prospects*] (Doha, 2012).

Yahya, Nasir, *Al-Tattaruf wa-l-Takfir fi-l-Yaman* [*Extremism in and Excommunication in Yemen*] (Sanaʿa, 2003).

CHAPTER 9

A Party for Salafis?: The Building of al-Rashad in Yemen's Transition Period

Judit Kuschnitzki

INTRODUCTION

Political parties are vital in transition processes toward greater political participation and openness. It is widely acknowledged that voters in pluralistic political systems delegate policy-making authority to a set of chosen representatives and that political parties are the chief bodies through which such delegation takes place (Müller and Strom 1999). They provide crucial organizational vehicles in representing the public and play a central role in negotiating new political structures (Power and Shoot n.d.). Given these important functions, party research constitutes a pivotal field in the study of political transitions, which has most recently centred on Arab Spring countries, including Yemen. As outlined in the introduction of this volume, Yemen found itself in a complex transition phase after the 2011 uprising, with a plurality of political actors fiercely competing for power. Such competition has largely taken place outside of existing party structures. Key players were, amongst others, the Huthi movement, military and security factions associated with former President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, tribal militias, family clans and the youth. In this political field, the activity of al-Rashad Union (*ittihad al-rashad*), a newly-formed political party, represented something of an exception.

By shifting focus onto al-Rashad Union, this chapter contributes to an understanding of Yemen's contested post-2011 politics and adds to the study of party-building processes in moments of political transition. Given the Salafi background of al-Rashad leaders, this chapter also offers insights into the specific challenges that a "Salafi party" faces in the Yemeni context and sheds light on the broader concept of "political Salafism" that has become increasingly relevant in the Middle East since 2011.

While newly founded political parties in Yemen, such as al-Rashad Union, were confronted with a number of difficulties during the country's transition process, their most immediate challenge was one of organization.[1] Establishing a new political party required the creation of a variety of structures, processes and political functions. From the onset of al-Rashad's establishment in March 2012, its leaders were busy establishing membership, campaigning, developing internal party structures and fleshing out policy platforms aimed at distinguishing the party from others. A factor that notably set al-Rashad apart from its political rivals – whether intentionally or not – was the "Salafiness" of its leaders.[2] Salafism helped party members to carve out a niche for themselves and provided al-Rashad with a distinct character, image, and potentially a Salafi constituency. While having been helpful in brand marking the party, al-Rashad's Salafi component also constituted an ideological challenge to the party's (inter)national acceptance and long-term consolidation. It linked al-Rashad to negative Salafi stereotypes, which sparked suspicion among many existing political players.

In analysing internal party-building processes, this chapter looks both inside and outside al-Rashad. It opens the "black box" of a political party by adopting a people-based approach that places interviews with al-Rashad leaders at its core. Yet, even as party leaders' speech acts are emphasized, the broader political context of Yemen's transition phase is also considered. It is assumed that the socio-political environment of party members, its opportunities and constraints, impacted the formulation of party goals, priorities, and activities.

In an attempt to place and assess al-Rashad in its historical context, the first part of this chapter will outline the democratization

of Yemen's Salafi movement and the political processes that led to its establishment in 2012. In a next step, focus will be laid on al-Rashad's political experience, the training of its leaders and the recruitment strategies they had applied before the war began in 2015. Related questions pertaining to the party's Salafiness will also be explored. Finally, al-Rashad leaders' reaction to the Huthi movements' increasing power and predominance in 2014 and early 2015 will be assessed and the consequent challenges to al-Rashad's political development will be pointed out.

YEMEN'S POLITICAL OPENING AND SALAFIS' DEMOCRATIZATION

In a declared attempt to make use of the country's political opening, a number of Salafis in Yemen irrevocably broke with their long-held scepticism about party politics and founded the Rashad Union. Following a three-day conference that was attended by well-known Salafi figures in Yemen, the party's establishment was formally announced in March 2012. As ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani, the party's secretary-general, later explained, "[t]he revolution was not only a revolution against tyranny, but it was also a revolution in attitudes and ideas within the Muslim communities, including the Salafi movement" (cited in al-Talidi 2012). According to al-Rashad leaders, the change of political structures and participatory openness that followed the 2011 uprising motivated the establishment of a political party. "We thought that we could have an influence and that there are changes in reality due to the present revolution that we should conform to", explained ʿAbd al-Rahman Saʿid al-Barihi, head of al-Rashad's Consultative Council (*majlis al-shura*) (pers. interview al-Barihi, July 2012).

Most of the Salafis who stood behind the party's announcement were affiliated with Yemen's two major Salafi charity associations: the Yemeni Wisdom Charity Association (*jamʿiyyat al-khayriyya al-hikma al-yamaniyya*; also known as al-Hikma) and the Benevolence Association (*jamʿiyyat al-ihsan*; also known as al-Ihsan). While members of these two organizations had long broken with their quietist Salafi brothers in Yemen,[3] they had initially refused to establish a formal political party. Although they had not participated

in institutional politics, Salafi charity members were harshly criticized by their quietist counterparts who disliked their open social engagement. A particularly common and important topic underlying quietist critiques has been the issue of *hizbiyya*, which can roughly be translated into "partyism" or "factionalism". Leading Salafi clerics in Yemen, most notably Muqbil al-Wadiʿi, who is considered the founder of Yemen's Salafi movement, have consistently and unrelentingly rejected *hizbiyya* (Bonnefoy 2011). Underlying their *hizbiyya* critique was the concern that affiliations to formal organizations equalled a form of loyalty other than the allegiance to God that would divide the Muslim community. Based on that fear, democracy was denounced as a factionalizing political system, as were attempts of institutionalizing Salafism – be it in the form of political parties, charitable associations, or others (ibid.).

Until this day, followers of Muqbil al-Wadiʿi and his nominal successor Yahya al-Hajuri[4] use the above-mentioned arguments in condemning the founders and leaders of al-Rashad. Accusing them of practising *hizbiyya* and participating in an inherently un-Islamic political system, they go as far as to deny al-Rashad leaders any Salafiness.[5]

In an effort to defend themselves and their interpretation of Salafism, founding members of al-Rashad began to modify key concepts such as democracy or *hizbiyya*. They re-defined both notions in a way that lent their political work ideological support. As early as 2012, al-Humayqani admitted that "we see the problem of *hizbiyya* as well", specifying, however, that "real *hizbiyya*" was only practised by party members "who are overly dogmatic and whose loyalty and obedience to their party's ideology blinds their moral judgment". He exempted al-Rashad from similar malpractices, declaring that "we are not like this [...] We have to be with what is right" (cited in Kuschnitzki 2016: 109–10).

Similarly, democracy was not fully embraced but only partially accepted by al-Rashad leaders. As al-Rashad's President Muhammad Musa al-ʿAmiri noted in an interview in 2013, "[w]e look at democracy from two angles. The first focuses on its legislational and philosophical aspect, which claims that democracy is based on the abolition of the rule of God and God's legislation and on the

rejection of Islamic law." This aspect, al-ʿAmiri claimed, was not only rejected by the Rashad Union but by all Muslims. "No Muslim on earth could accept a Western-style democracy that does not acknowledge the authority of Islam and governance that follows Islamic law" (cited in ibid.: 110). The second aspect of democracy, according to al-Rashad's leadership, is a procedural one, and includes features like the choice, accountability and monitoring of the government. "Aspects such as these are evinced within our religion" (cited in ibid.: 111), explained al-ʿAmiri with a reference to the concept of *shura*.[6]

Al-Rashad leaders' differentiation between procedural and ideological aspects of democracy was nothing new. It had previously been advocated during the post-1967 Islamic revival and was discussed and supported by leading Islamic thinkers such as Rashid al-Ghannouchi (Tamimi 2007). Within the context of the Arab Spring, other "Salafi parties" (e.g. Egypt's newly-formed al-Nur) also made the distinction between "procedures of democracy" and "philosophy of democracy".[7]

BUILDING AL-RASHAD IN THE MIDST OF YEMEN'S POLITICAL TRANSITION

Following its establishment, al-Rashad was first presented as an acting political party during the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). Next to the liberal-leaning Justice and Building Party, al-Rashad was the only new party that was allowed to participate in the NDC, being granted five of the overall 565 seats (Bonnefoy and Kuschnitzki 2015).

According to ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim, the head of al-Rashad's Rehabilitation and Teaching Department, the NDC helped the party increase the number of its members, which he ranked at around 70,000 in 2014.[8] Al-Qasim argued that the party was presented as approachable, rational, and reasonable during the NDC. "People who were judging us, say someone from the Socialist Party, saw that al-Rashad is actually doing good [...] and they engaged in debates with us [...] So their viewpoint on al-Rashad started changing." At the same time, al-Qasim claimed that al-Rashad leaders managed to

please its conservative (Salafi) constituency. "We stuck to our message: whether in front of the people, or behind closed doors. It remained the same," he maintained.

> They [al-Rashad's constituency] expected that we would be going to the NDC and compromise our beliefs – with regards to the quota for women, for example [...] But we opposed it. They said "if you are going to the NDC you will accept that *shari'a* is only one source of law," but we kept insisting that *shari'a* law needed to be the only source of legislation. (Pers. interview al-Qasim, October 2014)

Al-Qasim judged that party members' clarity and straightforwardness benefitted al-Rashad and increased its popularity.

Given the lack of membership figures and statistics, it is difficult to verify whether and for what reasons party leaders managed to expand their constituency during the NDC. Yet, there is little doubt that the NDC did offer al-Rashad leaders a unique platform to introduce their party as a new political actor. According to the office manager of the NDC's General Secretariat, Fatima Salih, the party made a good first impression. While Salih admits that "as a woman I would not vote for al-Rashad", she described its representatives as "politically mature, respectful, effective and committed", concluding that "their overall performance [at the NDC] was very good". Al-Rashad participants were "clear and straightforward", she said, "and were always looking forward to agreements". Although they expressed reservations on certain issues, including the women quota (see al-Sakkaf's chapter in this volume), Salih valued that al-Rashad representatives at no point withdrew from the NDC. Contrary to other parties, "including the GPC, or the Huthis, which withdrew many times and delayed the whole process", al-Rashad members never posed an obstacle to the NDC's smooth course of action. What Salih pointed out as particularly striking was al-Rashad members' open interaction with women – an observation that led her to assume that "the party has the potential to open up" (pers. interview Salih, December 2014).

Both with respect to the women's quota and the role of *shari'a*, al-Rashad representatives revealed a conservative standpoint that matched the positions of certain factions of the Islah Party,[9] and was likely in accordance with the views of its religious-traditional constituency. However, al-Rashad leaders were ultimately required to

make compromises at the NDC, being outvoted on several key issues. In spite of their dissatisfaction with the NDC outcomes, al-Rashad representatives reluctantly agreed to them. In an interview, ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani pragmatically explained that "it is impossible to gain all that you want", and that consensus was necessary in spite of al-Rashad's reservations (Al-Sabahi 2014). When asked about areas in which al-Rashad representatives performed particularly well during the NDC, most party leaders pointed to the role of *shariʿa* and the women's quota – in spite of having been unable to implement their political positions in either of these two cases. ʿAbd Allah al-Hashidi, chairman of the Judicial Authority in al-Rashad, argued that "the most important thing for which they [al-Rashad representatives] fought for in the NDC is that Islamic *shariʿa* must be the reference for state and society" (pers. interview al-Hashidi, October 2014). Likewise, Hani al-Jabali, head of the party's Political Department, maintained that al-Rashad representatives were able to enact the greatest influence in discussions on the women's quota and the role of *shariʿa* (pers. interview al-Jabali, November 2014). Muhammad Sulayman al-Saman, head of al-Rashad's Expert Office (*maktab al-khubaraʾ*) agreed that it was within the NDC's state-building group that al-Rashad representatives left a mark:

> We spoke about the identity of the state. Some people at the NDC talked a lot about the difference between the identity of the state and the identity of the people. We asserted that there was no difference between the two. (Pers. interview al-Saman, November 2014)

Expanding the party's outreach and recruiting new members

Next to gaining first political experiences, al-Rashad leaders were eager to expand the party's reach, setting up branches across the country and advancing their recruitment methods. ʿAmmar al-Haddad, the deputy head of al-Rashad's Youth Department, was busy organizing events and activities to attract new, young members. The 23-year-old media student, who is originally from al-Mahwit governorate, claimed to know what appeals to young Yemenis at university. "Students' biggest concern is obtaining services," he declared, adding that "anyone offering these services will win them over" (pers. interview al-Haddad, November 2014). Among the most

valuable services, in his opinion, were training events that allowed students to further develop their skills. Accordingly, al-Rashad's Youth Department was involved in setting up numerous training events, such as teaching English or offering courses in media studies. Material services ranged from photocopying books for students to "the provision of financial support and residence" (ibid.). For example, the party ran a large apartment in the Madhbah area in Sanaʿa, which provided about 30 students with free accommodation – six students per room.

Most young men, al-Haddad explained, joined the party for the same reason he did: "Al-Rashad party's vision complies with the nature of Yemeni society. In addition to that, the Rashad party has a clean slate, and its leaders are armed with both science and morality to serve the country and the countrymen" (ibid.). In emphasizing the party's "clean slate", al-Haddad picked up on an argument that had long been promoted by the party's leadership. In distinguishing al-Rashad from other, especially long-established, parties, its novelty and its "revolutionary origin" were widely emphasized (Kuschnitzki 2016). For instance, al-Rashad's president Muhammad Musa al-ʿAmiri, explained in a televised interview shortly after the party's establishment that "we as new powers, new to the arena, we will always be with the point of view that supports the Yemeni people" (cited in ibid.: 112). Not only was the party's establishment linked to Yemen's political upheaval, but so were its goals and struggle for change. "The people today are sick of political strife," al-ʿAmiri declared in 2012, "and they want an exit, a solution. We deplore our brothers, whether in the GPC and its allies, or the JMP and its allies,[10] to go beyond the old tensions and the negativities of the past, and to look towards the new future" (cited in ibid.: 112).

Even as al-Rashad's Youth Department focused its activities on the capital of Sanaʿa, the party began to also set up regional branches across the country (pers. interview al-Qasim, October 2014). It was the job of leading party member ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim to organize training events at the party's various offices. Among other things, al-Qasim gave lectures and workshops on time management, relying heavily on North American literature, including, for example, John

C. Maxwell's *21 Laws of Irrefutable Leadership* or Stephen Covey's time management matrix (Bonnefoy and Kuschnitzki 2015). Interestingly, al-Qasim linked American time management theories to the goal of being Islamic. "If we do not respect time, this means that we do not respect the times of prayer, we do not respect the times of fasting, we do not respect many things" (ibid.: 4). Next to al-Qasim's time management lectures, the party's secretary-general ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani offered training in political analysis, teaching participants how to assess and distinguish wrong from right information in media reports.

ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim described al-Humayqani's training as important, "especially for Salafis as they do not know anything about politics". Often coming from a conservative religious background, "they are [suddenly] exposed to numerous different viewpoints, and to other people, and they actually feel astonished by all the information they obtain". Al-Rashad's training was to help party members handle the wealth of information with which they were confronted (pers. interview al-Qasim, October 2014).

When asked about particular challenges encountered during the party's training events, al-Qasim sighed, smiled, and responded:

> They keep asking about democracy. We still have that nightmare of democracy and need to explain them why we changed [. . .] That is the main question that we keep facing. And we keep being confronted by our members: "You were saying democracy is *haram* [forbidden], why did you change your opinion now?" "You said that democracy is part of *kufr* [disbelief], and now? Why are you changing?" They keep on asking these questions. At every training event we offer. (Ibid.)

External training at the American National Democratic Institute

Not only did al-Rashad leaders offer internal training events, they themselves also participated in workshops and lectures to improve their understanding of politics and democracy. Even though al-Rashad leaders criticized American interference in Yemen, this did not seem to conflict with their participation in US-sponsored training events offered at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Sanaʿa. As al-Humayqani explained in 2012, "We told the Americans directly that interference is not acceptable but we welcome international

relations. We can have a relationship through government institutions" (pers. interview al-Humayqani, July 2012). The NDI's "democracy training" seemed to count as an acceptable mode of exchange and was generally perceived as useful by al-Rashad leaders. While some considered courses in strategic planning and election campaign management to be particularly helpful, others appreciated conversations with political experts from foreign countries, such as the Netherlands or Canada. In a context in which political conspiracies and suspicion against foreigners, especially Americans, ranked high, al-Rashad leaders' participation in NDI training events could be read as another example of their political pragmatism.

While al-Rashad leaders appeared to be aware of the NDI's US connection and the possibility of political bias, they did not openly express any mistrust or suspicion against it. When Hani al-Jabali, head of the party's Political Department, pointed out a case of disagreement he framed it in scholarly terms. Pointing to a study presented at the NDI, which he claimed signalled Yemenis' support of the women's quota, al-Jabali refrained from condemning the study's political message. Instead, he criticized its methods and lack of professionalism, noting that "the collection of data was limited to Sanaʿa and Aden and no more than 2000 people were questioned" (pers. interview al-Jabali, November 2014).

NDI Resident Program Director Jeffrey Fox reflected that "in the beginning there was a bit of an awkward dance, where they [al-Rashad leaders] were trying to figure out who we were and whether we are these bully Americans" (pers. interview Fox, November 2014). However, after the first training, Fox came to believe that al-Rashad leaders could be convinced that the NDI was not trying to "sell them anything", but was instead aiming to enable them to build their internal capacities. Independently of whether or not this was true, the NDI training provided party leaders with yet another forum for political interaction, in which al-Rashad could be introduced as a new player. Similar to the seriousness displayed during the NDC, al-Rashad leaders appeared to have valued the NDI training opportunity. Fox, for his part, appreciated their work ethic. While he admitted to "have limited comfort with [al-Rashad's] faith-based ideology", he explained that "the one thing they have is discipline, commitment,

and energy. And I love that about them. Because I see a lot of parties here that don't have that" (ibid.).

Politicizing Salafism: More politics, less Salafism?

Al-Rashad's rapid expansion, its open engagement with new ideas, its training and its members' political participation – while all commendable – came with a risk, according to ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim.

> When you see people closed, and all they know is "shaykh" and "book" and they do not listen to anything outside of that, and then you tell them: "you go! Go and meet people" [...] in different social media groups, on Facebook and WhatsApp, they actually keep saying [eagerly] "politics, you have to go [you have to try this]" [...] they meet with other groups and people, and different lecturers, and women, and they see that things that were "haram" before are very "halal" now. (Pers. interview al-Qasim, October 2014)

A problem that al-Qasim thought emerged in the process of some Salafis' politicization is that they risked "losing" their Salafiness. "You would no longer think that they are religious men ... they are so open." In an effort to maintain the "Salafi core" and the "religious roots" of new members, al-Qasim instructed them to "slow down" and "to be careful where things are going". Salafis' politicization, alongside their adoption of new vocabulary and priorities, made al-Qasim worry that "in the end they [might] actually believe 'I have to be secular'", which he argued "happened [...] to Islah members" (ibid.).[11]

While many Salafis appeared to have joined politics with initial enthusiasm, not everyone continued on, which made Salafis' politicization anything but a uniform and one-way process (Bonnefoy and Kuschnitzki 2015). For example, ʿAbd Allah al-Hashidi, chairman of al-Rashad's Judicial Authority, seemed unsure how much longer he would work with the party. Al-Hashidi is one of al-Rashad's founders and holds a PhD in Hadith studies; in 2014 he stated, "I am an academic and I am not convinced by working in the political process. I personally do not like this type of work, but reality has forced me to participate in building my country" (pers. interview al-Hashidi, October 2014). With quietist Salafism remaining resilient in Yemen,

politicized Salafis such as al-Hashidi may well end up becoming depoliticized again.

SALAFI STEREOTYPES, CONSTITUENCIES, AND THE DIFFICULTY OF CATEGORIZING AL-RASHAD

Throughout the transition process, al-Rashad leaders worked hard to turn their party into a credible political player. Their "Salafiness" acted as a double-edged sword in that process. Ever since its establishment, al-Rashad has been referred to by local and regional media outlets as Yemen's first "Salafi party". On the one hand, the Salafi label helped al-Rashad to carve out a niche for itself. Salafism also provided the party with a clear and distinguishable character and image. At the same time, however, the party's Salafi component linked al-Rashad with negative Salafi stereotypes and notions of religious extremism, thus sparking suspicion among existing political players, who oftentimes struggled to acknowledge al-Rashad as a credible democratic actor.

A particularly serious problem in the eyes of party leaders was the public association between al-Rashad and al-Qaʿida in Yemen, which spread after al-Rashad's Secretary-General ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani was labelled a "specially designated global terrorist" by the US Treasury Department in December 2013. The US accused "his" party to be a terrorist cover-up: "Al-Humayqani and AQAP [al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula] leadership have planned to establish a new political party in Yemen, which AQAP planned to use as a cover for the recruitment and training of fighters and a means to attract broader support". These heavy accusations were not backed by any further evidence, leaving the US press release extremely vague. It ignored, for instance, that al-Humayqani had already established a political party in 2012 and it never mentioned the name al-Rashad. The US allegations were widely met with criticism by Yemen's political parties, government, and segments of its population (Bonnefoy and Kuschnitzki 2015). Nevertheless, ʿAmmar al-Haddad observed that US claims made the recruitment of new party members more difficult. Ever since December 2013, al-Haddad explained, "accusations against the *shaykh* [al-Humayqani] have spread" (pers. interview al-Haddad, November 2014).

Al-Rashad leaders were eager to reverse these negative images by displaying their professionalism and democratic character, while simultaneously distancing themselves from the Salafi label. Since the party's establishment, party leaders had presented al-Rashad as a political and peaceful alternative to al-Qaʿida. In 2012, ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani explained, "we want to participate [in politics] for the sake of the country but also for these young men so they do not join these violent groups".[12] At the same time, Muhammad Sulayman al-Saman portrayed Salafism as a political trend, not just a religious doctrine, explaining that one of its major components was to "reach a compromise between modernization and that which is right and moral" (pers. interview al-Saman, November 2014).

Generally, al-Rashad leaders refused to portray the party as an exclusively Salafi project. Muhammad Sulayman al-Saman explained, "I consider myself a Salafi, and the founders of the party are Salafis. However, this party is not exclusive for those who consider themselves Salafi. It is a party for all Yemenis" (ibid.). The argument that al-Rashad is not per se Salafi, in spite of its Salafi leadership, was widespread among high-ranking al-Rashad members. Accordingly, party leaders were addressing "Muslims" or "Yemenis" in public speeches, never Salafis only. After all, "Salafi thought is not an addition to Islam", but allegedly the right understanding of it (pers. interview al-ʿAmiri, July 2012). ʿAbd Allah al-Hashidi went so far as to oppose the personal designation "Salafi" altogether. In his opinion, the formal name for "Salafis" was "Muslims". "Salafism is not a group or a gang one can join and leave, but is understanding, a method, and a way of living" (cited in Kuschnitzki 2016: 115). When explaining how he first became aware of the party, ʿAmmar al-Haddad pointed to the Salafi environment he grew up in. Yet, he admitted that his parents were not "real" Salafis.

> They are not Salafis according to the true scientific term, but they are Salafi in their ideology and thought and these two are most important. They did not study in Salafi centres and they do not keep up with the Salafi news, but there is no difference between Salafis and Sunnis. (Pers. interview al-Haddad, November 2014)

The ambiguous stance of al-Rashad leaders on Salafism made it difficult to define what role Salafism played in the process of building the party. On the one hand, party strategists seemed to adopt a "catch-all" approach in appealing to Yemeni Muslims as a whole. On the other hand, the party's Salafi component appeared more significant than al-Rashad leaders liked to publicly admit. As ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim, head of al-Rashad's Training and Rehabilitation Department, revealed, Salafism played a key role in manning al-Rashad's newly established regional branches: "People there [in the countryside] still have a specific image of Salafis, thinking that they have to be religious scholars. So, the head of a branch has to be religious, someone who appears Salafi, to make sure he is accepted" (pers. interview al-Qasim, October 2014).[13] Al-Qasim also admitted that "most of its [al-Rashad's] new members are still Salafi" (ibid.). Fox lent further support to the importance of Salafism in al-Rashad's recruitment strategies, remembering that when speaking to its leaders in 2012, they "were quite candid in saying 'you know we have a very narrow target vote, and target audience, and that is Salafis'" (pers. interview Fox, November 2014).

The refusal of many to adopt the Salafi label and the blurry line between Muslims and Salafis make it difficult to estimate the size of al-Rashad's potential Salafi constituency. Inter-Salafi feuds in Yemen further complicate the identification of a Salafi target group. Al-Rashad was not only criticized by quietist Salafis, who condemned party leaders' participation in democracy; the party was also criticized by *jihadi* Salafis. While self-identified al-Qaʿida members ascribed great value to Salafi unity, they clearly opposed al-Rashad's political participation. Abu Muqbil,[14] for instance, who grew up in al-Baydhaʾ governorate, said:

> We hold the utmost respect for Salafis but we differ with them in one thing: they chose politics and we have chosen *jihad* [. . .]. We are willing to fight next to them in battlefields. We share the same goal with them, opposing Shiʿas, but they do not want that. Politics have blinded them. (Pers. communication Abu Muqbil, December 2014)[15]

Abu Muhammad from Lahj governorate also maintained that "we and the Salafis are like brothers", nevertheless criticizing that

> when the Rashad party was founded we disagreed [...]. Al-Rashad party wants to be included in the government and does not want any party or country to accuse them of having anything to do with al-Qaʿida. That made them avoid us a lot, trying to present us as political opponents only. That is what they did and what made us differ with them. (Pers. communication Abu Muhammad, December 2014)

ʿAbd al-Rahman, in turn, complained that

> we are always defending Salafis. One of the reasons that made us fight the Huthis is their war against Salafis in Dammaj in early 2014.[16] And despite that our Salafi brothers denounce us and want nothing to do with us, especially after the Rashad party was established. It made the gap between us even wider, and made us repel them. (Pers. communication ʿAbd al-Rahman, December 2014)

Given the ambiguity and narrowness of a potential Salafi target group, it is questionable whether it could ever constitute al-Rashad's sole campaign focus. In fact, a few indicators suggest that al-Rashad leaders were in the process of adopting a more grievance-based rhetoric before the outbreak of Yemen's war in early 2015. Rather than discussing the desirability, degree and direction of regime change – typical for new parties in new democracies (Van Biezen 2005) – greater emphasis appeared to be placed on economic and welfare projects. Hani al-Jabali, for instance, argued that "most of the time citizens wait to get services [...] and I believe that this is the purpose of democracy: achieving what people want and satisfying their needs; giving them food, that is democracy, and ensuring people's safety" (pers. interview al-Jabali, November 2014). Likewise, ʿAbd Allah al-Hashidi, in his interview in 2014, emphasized the importance of economic growth and the end of unemployment. Arguably, plans were made at the time to establish an economics department within the party that would focus exclusively on economic policies (pers. interview al-Qasim, October 2014).

Given the ongoing internal and external developments of al-Rashad, it was difficult to place the party into any clear category at the time this research was conducted. It seemed to be elite-based, relying on local religious leaders, as well as movement-based, having emerged and benefitted from Salafi charity organizations. Al-Rashad appeared to be a religious party, as its program made frequent use of

Islamic references; yet, it was unclear what kind of religious party it would evolve into. Theories on party types are of little help in understanding al-Rashad and its development. The prominent typology put forth by Diamond and Gunther (2003), for example, is barely applicable to the Yemeni political landscape. Diamond and Gunther differentiate between denominational and fundamentalist religious parties, both of which are deemed to be "mass-based" and are contrasted against non-religious parties. However, in the Yemeni case, almost every party drew legitimacy from religious references during the transition process, and al-Rashad was only able to claim a moderate number of followers. Moreover, Yemen's newly established "Salafi party" seemed to fall in between the two religious party types mentioned above. Throughout the transition period, al-Rashad was willing to play the democratic game, it displayed a hierarchical party structure, and it appeared to be linked to secondary organizations, most notably Salafi religious and charity organizations. As such, al-Rashad matched key characteristics of Diamond and Gunther's denominational parties. At the same time, al-Rashad leaders' rhetoric of reorganizing state and society around religious principles, the relevance of religious authority within the party, and the lacking distinction between religion and state corresponded with the defining criteria of fundamentalist parties.

YEMEN'S VOLATILE TRANSITION AND AL-RASHAD VIEWS ON THE HUTHIS

In a series of power grabs, the Huthi movement capitalized on the growing instability in Yemen which followed the 2011 uprising. As described in the introduction to this volume, they took over Yemen's capital in September 2014 and announced the establishment of both a transitional "presidential council" and a "national council", following the government's and President Hadi's resignation in January 2015. Al-Rashad leaders publicly condemned the Huthi "coup" and discredited the movement as undemocratic and violent.[17] As one al-Rashad member declared: "Huthis want to rule by force and not through political work" (pers. interview al-Hashidi, October 2014).

Some party leaders linked the Huthi movement's allegedly undemocratic character to its Zaydi roots. "Of course their movement sprung from a religious sect and so they believe that the right to rule should be limited exclusively to their sect. For that reason they don't recognize the authority of the state" (pers. interview al-Saman, November 2014). ʿAbd Allah al-Hashidi argued:

> From my personal point of view, I think the Huthi movement is a racist movement. They are fanatic about a specific bloodline and they want this racist sect to rule others because they claim a divine right to rule the people. (Pers. interview al-Hashidi, October 2014)

Al-Hashidi further emphasized the historical difference between Sunna and Shiʿa, arguing that "Sunnis believe that the Prophet left it up to Muslims, as *shura* [the principle of consultation], to choose their ruler. He did not appoint a specific person as his replacement [. . .] Shiʿas say that is wrong". He concluded, "Sunni jurisprudence is similar to true modern democracy, which is originally an idea created by Muslims." In contrasting al-Rashad from the Huthi movement, he went on declaring:

> We, the Rashad party, want there to be political rights for every citizen, we want there to be peaceful rotation of power, we want honest and free elections in which the people will choose who rules them based on an economic and political program etc. [. . .] If political settlement is to take place in Yemen, economic and social growth will follow and unemployment will be ended. (Ibid.)

Hani al-Jabali and ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim both asserted that the Huthis were "playing the card of religion" in pursuing political goals. Al-Jabali distinguished between "Islamic parties", such as al-Rashad, and "religious parties", such as the Huthis. "Islamic parties", he explained, "are honest parties who seek to serve the public. They are able to negotiate and able to be judged and criticized". Religious parties, on the other hand, follow religious authorities whose rule is deemed divine and "non-negotiable" (pers. interview al-Jabali, November 2014).

Although al-Rashad leaders' description of the Huthi movement carried sectarian undertones, they were keen to present the conflict

surrounding the Huthis' spreading influence during Yemen's transition as a political one. Rather than using Salafi buzzwords like *shirk* (polytheism) or *bidʿa* (innovation),[18] party leaders had long portrayed the Huthis as rebels who challenged state power. Shortly after al-Rashad's establishment, its president Muhammad Musa al-ʿAmiri publicly explained,

> I assure you that the Huthi problem does not reside only with the Salafis; rather it is a problem for the entire Yemeni people. Naturally, we would say that were the Huthis to present their ideas and ideology in a peaceful manner, that is for them to do, and they may do so as they will. But when a group turns to arms and imposes its agenda on others, and imposes the prerogatives of local sovereignty on any part of Yemen, this is then a problem for the whole of Yemen and not for the Salafis alone. Projecting the matter as a Huthi problem with the Salafis, or the other way around, is a curtailment of the truth and a curtailment of the problem. (Cited in Kuschnitzki 2016: 115)

Two years later, in 2014, ʿAbd Allah al-Hashidi continued to state that the political situation could not be narrowed down to a conflict between the Huthis and the Salafis. "The problem is that they [the Huthis] want to rule," he said. Similarly, ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim argued,

> The problem now is not Huthis and Sunna. Or Zaydis and Sunna. No, it is bigger than that. Now somebody attacked the state. Attacked the government. And we have to let them understand that what they did is wrong. They are Yemeni and they are part of the political process. They have to stay part of that political process without using any kind of violence. (Pers. interview al-Qasim, October 2014)

While al-Rashad leaders initially refrained from using an overly sectarian terminology during Yemen's transition, they were nevertheless drawn into a conflict whose appearance became increasingly sectarian with time. In early February 2015, the party publicly accused the Huthis of kidnapping the head of its branch in al-Baydhaʾ governorate, which is also the ancestral home of ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani.[19] In early 2015, stories of assaults by Huthis on Salafis continued to spread among party members, who seemed to feel increasingly uncomfortable in Yemen's political climate. In many ways, the rise of the Huthi movement complicated al-Rashad's

political participation. Party leaders openly condemned what they termed the "Huthi coup" and refused to take part in the "Huthi government" in Sanaʿa.

CONCLUSION

Yemen's 2011 uprising marked a shift away from authoritarian rule towards greater political openness. Using al-Rashad as a case study, this chapter has shed some light on the party-building processes which evolved in a context of political change and contestation. Three years after al-Rashad's establishment, its leaders continued to develop party structures and political strategies in what appeared to be a lengthy and complex process. Given the ongoing internal changes at the time of research, it was difficult to place the party into any theoretical category.

While party leaders based their program on religious concepts and principles, they were also strategic actors who adapted to changes in their immediate socio-political environment. Al-Rashad leaders' compromises during the NDC exemplify their political pragmatism, as does their participation in NDI training events.

What complicated al-Rashad's party-building process is its Salafi component. The notion of Salafism is ambiguous, fluid, and its interpretation often tied to political purposes. In differentiating al-Rashad from the Huthis, for example, Salafism was associated with democratic political practices. As mentioned above, one of its components was claimed to involve "reaching a compromise between modernization and that which is right and moral" (pers. interview al-Saman, November 2014). While party leaders modified the meaning of relevant Salafi concepts, Salafism continued to be linked to religious extremism in public opinion, thus damaging the democratic image al-Rashad members wished to convey. While party leaders consequently sought to distance themselves from the Salafi label, their stance on Salafism remained inconsistent. For instance, they claimed al-Rashad was inclusive and not a "Salafi party", while at the same time demonstrating a clear preference for Salafi clerics in manning their regional party branches. Overall, it seems unclear whether al-Rashad leaders aimed at focusing on a narrow Salafi

constituency or at opening the party up by developing a more grievance-based rhetoric and notions of social justice. It remains to be seen what type of (Salafi) party al-Rashad will turn into.[20]

Newly-formed political parties had the potential to play a crucial role in Yemen's post-2011 transition process, and impeded party development has therefore constituted a further obstacle to the effort of building a pluralistic political system in the country. In the case of al-Rashad, the rise of the Huthi movement in late 2014 triggered unease and disappointment among party leaders. Considering that many party members – often due to their Salafi background and beliefs – had only begun to embrace the concept of democracy, the failure of Yemen's political process and the consequent disillusionment of some party members contains the risk of their retreat from "the political way". This, in turn, might well cause another reconfiguration in the Yemeni Salafi field, much to the advantage of its quietist and *jihadi* streams. If ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani was right in arguing that al-Rashad offered a political alternative to young Salafis, the failure of al-Rashad would bereft Yemen's Salafi youth of a meaningful opportunity to peacefully express their political positions.

NOTES

1. The issue of organization is discussed in Carothers' (2006) work on political parties in new democracies.
2. "Salafiness" can be understood as a concept that captures a wide range of practices and interpretations that are labelled "Salafi" within contemporary scholarship. Salafiness provides a suitable alternative to the concept of "Salafi identity", which is too complex as to be discussed in this chapter.
3. Wicktorowitz (2006) developed a classification distinguishing between purist, political and *jihadi* Salafis. He argues that purists prioritize the purification of Islam and *daʿwa* (the call to Islam) through educating means. Arguing that all Salafis have purist inclinations, this chapter finds the term "quietist", as put forward by Bonnefoy (2011), more fitting in describing Yemeni Salafis who have retreated from worldly affairs to focus primarily on religious education and proselytism.
4. Yahya al-Hajuri took over the main Salafi institute in Yemen, Dar al-Hadith, after Muqbil al-Wadiʿi's death in 2001 and has been at odds with Salafi activists ever since.

5. According to Yahya al-Hajuri, organizations and associations that view democratic and parliamentary elections as politics, "have nothing to do with the way of the *salaf*" – even though they might claim the contrary. The *salaf* (pious predecessors) are defined as the first three generations of Muslims, whom the Prophet Muhammad had described as 'the best of my community' (*khayr ummati*). Since they were closest to the Prophet, they are considered to embody the "original" or "true" Islam (Wagemakers 2012). Contemporary Salafis tend to perceive themselves as not only followers of the true Islam, but also as "the saved sect", whose firm belief and quest for truth, according to several *hadith*s, will save them from hellfire (Haykel 2009).
6. Within contemporary Islamic scholarship, the concept of *shura*, which translates into "consultation" or "the principle of consultation", is widely considered to be the basis for the implementation of democracy, and is frequently treated as a Muslim (local) equivalent to a Western political system and philosophy. For more information see Esposito 2003.
7. For more information on Egypt's al-Nur Party see Lacroix 2012.
8. "What helped us were actions that we took during the NDC", explained al-Qasim (pers. interview ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim, October 2014). The number of party members put forth by al-Qasim might well be exaggerated and is impossible to confirm.
9. The Islah Party was established in 1990 and is widely referred to as Yemen's Muslim Brotherhood party. However, as several scholars have emphasized, "[t]he passing reference to the Muslim Brothers obscures more than it reveals" (Haykel and Dresch 1995). Although members of the Muslim Brotherhood hold key administrative and decision-making posts and are responsible for developing party ideology (Philipps 2008), Islah is an inherently fractional party. According to Dresch (2000) it comprises three main tendencies: the tribalists, the Muslim Brothers, and members of more radical Islamic inclinations. See also Bonnefoy's chapter in this volume.
10. The Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) is an organizationally unified body that embraces six of Yemen's most prominent opposition parties.
11. Al-Rashad pitched itself as being new, moral, and principled, frequently referencing its "authentic" Islamic message. By emphasizing their closeness to religious origins and their clear religious methodology, leaders of al-Rashad implied their "religiously superior" position to the Islamist Islah Party. Al-Rashad's president Muhammad Musa al-ʿAmiri explained in 2013, "[t]he biggest factor in preventing their [Salafis'] participation in politics is the fear that al-Rashad party would become a replica of the existing Islamic political work in the Yemeni arena [which notably includes al-Islah]" (al-Saddami 2013). For more information on the differences between al-Rashad and Islah, see Kuschnitzki 2016.
12. Instead of unequivocally demonizing al-Qaʿida, al-Rashad leaders deployed a rhetoric that was more nuanced and highlighted the motivations of

young men joining it. For more information, see Bonnefoy and Kuschnitzki 2015.

13. Comparison of the educational background and diacritics (e.g. being bearded and dressed in a white gown reaching above the ankles) of party members in al-Rashad branches with those of party leaders in Sanaʿa revealed interesting differences. For example, Muhammad Sulayman al-Saman wore a loud yellow shirt when interviewed. ʿAbd al-Majid al-Qasim walked around in jeans, while Hani al-Jabali and ʿAmmar al-Haddad both dressed casually in pants and shirts. All of these men were trained at university in non-religious subjects, such as business and accounting, IT and computer sciences, diplomacy and media studies.
14. The names given by self-declared al-Qaʿida members are pseudonyms.
15. No personal interviews were conducted with self-declared al-Qaʿida members. Instead, communication took place via WhatsApp.
16. Dar al-Hadith, the most important Salafi teaching institute, is located in Dammaj in Saʿda governorate – the historical stronghold of Huthi rebels. Concomitant fighting between Huthis and Salafis in Dammaj put the Salafis in a dire situation in 2013. In early 2014, transition President ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi sponsored a difficult tribal mediation between both parties in order to reach a ceasefire. The final agreement implied that all Salafis not originally from Dammaj had to leave the village. As a consequence, around 10,000 Salafis left Saʿda in kilometre-long convoys of packed trucks, carrying only a few of their belongings. The closure of Dammaj constitutes an evident rift in the history of the Salafi movement in Yemen and came as a shock to many Sunni Islamists (Bonnefoy and Kuschnitzki 2015).
17. Salafis in Yemen have long had a troubled relationship with the Zaydi Huthi movement, and conflicts between the two parties have been recurring for years in Saʿda province. For more information, see Bonnefoy 2011.
18. It is widely agreed that the concept most central to Salafis and their understanding of creed is *tawhid* (the unity of God) (Wagemakers 2012; Wiktorowicz 2006; Haykel 2009). Practices that allegedly violate *tawhid* are hence denounced by Salafis. Shiʿis, for example, are fiercely criticized for worshiping imams and other religious figures. Salafis often complain that devotional practices at the tombs of saints and imams attract more Shiʿi believers than the Kaʿba in Mecca (Mervin 2013). The veneration of saints is thought of as a form of polytheism (*shirk*) which is condemned as the opposite of *tawhid*, and is frequently referred to as *bidaʿ* (a sinful innovation) (Wagemakers 2012). In an attempt to protect and maintain the original message of Islam, Salafis tend to be very critical about any beliefs or cultural traditions which they claim were added to the doctrines or practices enjoined in the Qurʾan and Sunna (Wiktorowicz 2006; Wagemakers 2011; Haykel 2006).

19. The head of the al-Rashad branch in al-Baydhaʾ governorate was released soon after his alleged kidnapping. For more information, read al-Rashad's statement at http://alrshad.net/?p=6835 (accessed 5 June 2017). After the Huthis' takeover of Sanaʿa in 2014, the al-Baydhaʾ region became a significant battlefield in the Huthi-led offensive against armed tribal and militant groups allegedly affiliated to al-Qaʿida.
20. That Salafi politics can come in different shades and colours is exemplified by the plurality of political Salafism in Egypt, as well as by the Kuwaiti example, where conservative Salafis who focus on purifying religious practices compete in parliament against more democratic-minded Salafis.

REFERENCES

Bonnefoy, Laurent, *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (London, 2011).

Bonnefoy, Laurent and Judit Kuschnitzki, 'Salafis and the "Arab Spring" in Yemen: Progressive politicization and resilient quietism', *Arabian Humanities* 4 (2015). Available at http://cy.revues.org/2811 (accessed 5 June 2017).

Carothers, Thomas, *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies* (Washington DC, 2006).

Diamond, Larry and Richard Gunther, 'Species of political parties – a new typology', *Sage Publications* 9/2 (2003), pp. 167–99.

Dresch, Paul and Bernard Haykel, 'Stereotypes and political styles: Islamists and tribesfolk in Yemen', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27/4 (1995), pp. 405–31.

Dresch, Paul, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge, 2000).

Durac, Vincent, 'Yemen's Arab Spring – democratic opening or regime maintenance?', *Mediterranean Politics* 17/2 (2012), pp. 161–78.

Esposito, John, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Oxford, 2003).

al-Hajuri, Yahya, *Haqiqa Hizb al-Rashad al-Salafi* [*The Truth on the Salafi al-Rashad Party*]. Available at http://www.sh-yahia.net/show_sound_2779.html (accessed 5 June 2017).

Haykel, Bernard, 'On the nature of Salafi thought and action', in R. Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London, 2009), pp. 33–57.

Kuschnitzki, Judit, 'The establishment and positioning of al-Rashad: A case study of political Salafism in Yemen', in F. Cavatorta and F. Merone (eds), *Salafism after the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power* (London, 2016), pp. 99–118.

Lacroix, Stephane, *Shaykhs and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism*, Policy Briefing Brooking Doha Centre (2012). Available at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2012/6/07%20egyptia%20

Salafism%20lacroix/stephane%20lacroix%20policy%20briefing%20english.pdf (last accessed 9 January 2013; page no longer available).

Mervin, Sabrina, 'On Sunnite-Shiite doctrinal and contemporary geopolitical tensions', in B. Maréchal and S. Zemni (eds), *The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships* (London, 2013), pp. 11–24.

Müller, Wolfgang C. and Kaare Strom, *Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions* (Cambridge, 1999).

National Dialogue Conference, *Representation*. Available at http://www.ndc.ye/page.aspx?show=68 (accessed 5 June 2017).

Phillips, Sarah, *Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective: Patronage and Pluralized Authoritarianism* (New York, 2008).

Power, Greg, and Rebecca A. Shoot, 'Political parties in transition', in G. Power and R. Shoot (eds), *Political Parties in Democratic Transitions* (Copenhagen, n.d.). Available at http://dipd.dk/wp-content/uploads/Political-Parties-in-Democratic-Transition.pdf (accessed 5 June 2017).

al-Rashad, 'Bayan hizb al-rashad farʿ muhafaza al-Baydhaʾ hawl mumarasat jamaʿat al-huthi fi al-muhafaza' ['Statement of al-Rashad party's al-Baydhaʾ branch on the practices of the Huthi group in the governorate']. Available at http://alrshad.net/?p=6835 (accessed 5 June 2017).

al-Sabahi, Ahmad, 'Hiwar sahifat al-watan al-qatariyya' ['Interview with Qatari al-Watan newspaper'], *Yamanat*. Available at http://www.yemenat.net/news45571.html (last accessed 30 March 2014; page no longer available).

al-Saddami, Yahya, 'Raʾis hizb al-rashad al-salafi yashrah asbab tajawuz fatwa tahrim al-ʿamal al-siyasi fi-l-yaman' ['The president of the Salafi Rashad party explains the reasons to forgo the *fatwa* which forbids political work in Yemen'], *Al-Siyasa*. Available at http://alrshad.net/?p=1888 (accessed 10 June 2017).

al-Talidi, Bilal, 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Humayqani (amin ʿam al-lajna al-tahdiriyya li-hizb ittihad al-rashad al-salafi bi-l-yaman): Al-thawra lam takun ʿala al-istibdad faqat', *Maghress*. Available at http://www.maghress.com/attajdid/73831 (last accessed 9 March 2013; page no longer available).

Tamimi, Azzam, 'Islam and democracy from Tahtawi to Ghannouchi', *Theory, Culture & Society* 24/2 (2007), pp. 39–58.

Van Biezen, Ingrid, 'On the theory and practice of party formation and adaptation in new democracies', *European Journal of Political Research* 44 (2005), pp. 147–74.

Wagemakers, Joas, *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi* (Cambridge, 2012).

Wiktorowicz, Quentin, 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29/3 (2006), pp. 207–39.

al-Yaman TV, Interview with Muhammad bin Musa al-ʿAmiri, 'Hiwar al-mustaqbal' ['Dialogue of the future']. Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qj3vIN6gx6k (last accessed 2 February 2013; video no longer available).

PART III

Socio-Cultural Upheavals: Yemen Before and After the Arab Spring

CHAPTER 10

A Youth Non-Movement in Sanaʿa: Changing Normative Geographies through Fashion, Art and Music

Mareike Transfeld[1]

INTRODUCTION

During the 2011 protests in the Middle East, a plethora of youth groups and young individuals publicly expressed their hopes and dreams for the future of their countries. Through art, music and media, these youths contributed to a discourse of social and political change. Their presence in the media and their use of internet and communication technologies (ICTs) attracted global attention. Locally, the uprisings were referred to as a "youth revolution", giving the protests broad legitimacy within the population. Initially, academia reacted enthusiastically at the sight of the movements of young people. It has been said that "youth cultures throughout the Arab, Persian and Muslim-majority societies are developing alternative notions and practices of citizenship" (Herrera and Mayo 2012: 72) and that youth are driving and leading change in the region. Only a few years after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, however, instead of the longed-for political changes, the trajectories of the transformations led to returned authoritarian repression and violent conflict. Assessments of the youth's role in the transformation processes find their impact to have been limited.

Of all the Arab Spring protests, Yemen's lasted the longest with a duration of over ten months, ending when then-President ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih resigned. Youth were often described as being at the forefront of the mass popular uprising,[2] and they played an important role, not just in Sanaʿa, where Change Square formed the locus of political dissent, but also in other cities such as Aden (see Augustin in this volume; Dahlgren 2014). Motivated by high unemployment rates and poverty, youth protests were particularly aimed against corruption and widespread patronage practices that were limiting their access to the job market. Although youth were initially at the forefront of the protests, established parties and political elites swiftly marginalized the youth on the squares. The GCC Initiative was nominally aimed at addressing the grievances of the people. But with the GCC Agreement, the "street" lost its leverage on politics and negotiations were restricted to the old elites (Durac 2012). During the transitional period, a total of 40 youth delegates (of the overall 565 delegates) participated in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). In the conference, youth were able to successfully push through some of their main demands in terms of political and economic empowerment, as well as education (al-Akhali 2014). However, elite bargaining, as well as regional and international influences, have led to increased violence throughout the country, making the implementation of the NDC outcomes unlikely (Transfeld 2015). Consequently, the youth movement had only limited impact on politics and power structures at the national level (Alwazir 2015; see also Qasem 2013).

This focus on national level politics, however, fails to appreciate the impact young people have had on the micro level. Beneath the elite bargaining and violent conflict, young activists, photographers, filmmakers, artists, entrepreneurs and writers continue to challenge traditional authorities in their everyday lives. While these everyday actions of youth do not appear to have an impact on national level power structures, the activities of youth – consciously or unconsciously – carry the potential for bottom-up political, and most of all social, change. Young people who claim, expand and defend (or even institutionalize) spaces of youth self-expression have to overcome obstacles and pressures of a social, moral, religious, financial and/or

institutional nature, and must frequently engage and negotiate with social and political institutions, such as families, tribes, religious parties and groups or ministries. Ultimately, through these interactions, youth question the social, cultural and religious norms and thus challenge power. These actions carry the potential to impact on dominant norms, such as gender roles and gender relations, as well as religious identities. Given that the youth movements have had only marginal impact on national level politics, more attention needs to be paid to these processes on the micro level to understand the dynamics of youth activism and its potential for social and political change.

Using Asef Bayat's (2010) concepts of "social non-movement" and "youth", this chapter looks at how youth have conquered spaces from the early 2000s until today, and by that have challenged social norms in Sanaʿa. This chapter is based on observations and experiences gained in a total of eight years of living in Yemen's capital city. In the first phase between 2001 and 2009, I participated in youth life in Sanaʿa as both a teenager and a young adult. Later, between 2012 and 2013, I was able to observe youth life in Sanaʿa and how it had changed since the 2011 uprising. Furthermore, this contribution is also based on observations of youth gained via social media (since the outbreak of the 2011 protests). I conducted interviews with approximately 30 young women and men between the ages of 19 and 34, who all described themselves as open-minded (*munfatih/munfatiha*). This term is often used in the Yemeni context when referring to an attitude that is not of the normative conservative mind-set (*muhafidh/muhafidha*). The interviews were conducted both in English and in Arabic and focused on the individuals' socialization, education, leisure time, participation in the 2011 protests (if applicable), as well as their dreams and aspirations. The interviewees were selected in youth spaces, such as the Basement (see below), and through Facebook according to the snowballing method.

YOUTH AND YOUTH NON-MOVEMENTS

Academic attention on youth in the Middle East has first and foremost been focused on a phenomenon commonly referred to as

the "youth bulge", with interest in the topic increasing since the turn of the millennium. Given the perception that large youth populations combined with stagnant economic development constitute a threat to stability and security in the Middle East, research on youth has largely been policy or development oriented, focusing on the demographic changes and the challenges they present to the states' social infrastructure. Within this literature there are several prevalent themes, such as the lack of employment and economic exclusion despite high levels of youth education, and the delayed transition to adulthood among youth populations (Dhillon and Yousef 2009). In this context, the term "youth" primarily refers to an age category. However, in the context of the Arab Spring, the term youth has rather come to be understood as a particular attitude, rather than an age category. "While they do not have a uniform political agenda, they share a collective identity built around certain ideas, including challenging militarism and tribalism, and calling for equal citizenship, the rule of law and inclusiveness" (Alwazir 2013: 2). Because of this understanding, the youth movement in Yemen was seen to represent the positive aspirations of the Yemeni uprising. Consequently, the opposing regime leaders delegitimized the claims of their elite antagonists by placing themselves on the side of the youth and juxtaposing the positive image of youth protesters with the greedy aspirations of the elite. However, this conception of youth as a particular attitude excludes young people who may not share this mind-set, while it may include members of older generations who pertain to it. It must therefore be questioned whether this movement is actually a youth movement, and what in turn constitutes a youth movement conceptually.

For instance, Bayat (2010: 117; see also Bayat and Herrera 2010) holds that youth chapters within political parties or student movements are not youth movements per se: they are people who represent a particular cause and happen to be young. Instead, Bayat proposes that youth movements are about claiming or reclaiming "youthfulness".

> "Youthfulness" signifies particular habitus or behavioral and cognitive dispositions that are associated with the fact of being "young" – that is,

> a distinct social location between childhood and adulthood, where the youngster in a relative autonomy is neither totally dependent (on adults) nor independent, and is free from being responsible for others. (Bayat 2010: 116)

The habitus that is inherent to being youthful entails a series of dispositions, such as a greater tendency for experimentation, adventurism, idealism, autonomy, mobility and change. But of course, this also includes exploring ones' sexuality and the other sex. The goal of a youth movement then is to defend this habitus and to extend the conditions which enable young people to assert their individuality and creativity (Bayat 2010: 18). Youth movements are not necessarily organized formally. Instead, they may take the shape of what Bayat describes as a social non-movement. In contrast to social movements, non-movements are not ideologically driven. As they constitute the collective actions of non-collective actors, claims are made on the individual basis. Non-movements are action-oriented and find expression in the ordinary everyday life practices of individuals, in contrast to the extraordinary protest events of organized groups. Rather than making political demands, individuals of non-movements practice their claims in their everyday lives. These movements, made up of individuals who are not organized, but act collectively, are referred to as passive networks. In contrast to active networks, which are made up of individuals with similar positions brought together deliberately though institutions (or formal organization), passive networks consist of individuals with similar positions who are brought together through spaces, such as parks, street corners or shopping malls (ibid.: 19–23).

It must be noted, however, that not all young people are "youth" in the sense of Bayat. Young people in the Middle East often move swiftly from childhood to adulthood, due to early marriage, parenthood or other responsibilities. They consequently lack the time between childhood and adulthood to express the youthful habitus of experimentation, adventurism and discovering their sexuality. Youthfulness in this sense is a modern phenomenon, which, according to Bayat, is particularly the result of modern mass schooling which produces and prolongs the period between childhood and adulthood (ibid.: 118–9).

GROWING UP: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE YOUNG IN SANAʿA

Sanaʿa provides a difficult environment for young people to express their youthfulness. In fact, on a general level, it is fair to say that many young people in Yemen do not experience youth as understood per Bayat as the phase between childhood and adulthood. Reasons for this include the economic hardships which the majority of Yemeni families face, as well as the prevalent social and cultural norms inherent to the patriarchal society of Yemen. Patriarchy favours males and elders, with senior males seen as the authority of the family. Carol Riphenbur (2000: 732) argues that these patriarchal structures may be weaker in urban areas when compared to rural areas. Nevertheless, they define the gender roles which are nurtured from a very early age in both girls and boys. In a heavily tribal society such as northern Yemen, honour (*sharaf*) and its counterpart shame (*ʿayb*) are important values that structure social interaction and are therefore an important part of a child's upbringing and socialization.[3] Through these values social norms are enforced. For instance, women should not raise their voices to their husbands (ibid.: 725; see also vom Bruck 1997: 192) or laugh in public (Ouis 2009: 453); both behaviours are considered *ʿayb*. As well, women should not take up certain jobs which are considered to be male jobs. Pernilla Ouis (ibid.: 458) found that many girls in Yemen agree with the "honour ideology", and expect any behaviour that does not conform to social and cultural norms, and thus may tarnish the honour of a family, to be punished. These girls have internalized this honour ideology through their socialization. Young men are similarly restricted through expectations held by society with regards to the responsibilities of men. In the patriarchal society of Yemen, the man's responsibility is to provide for the family and protect its honour. Boys learn from an early age that they should take up this responsibility within the family; successfully generating an income for the family and protecting the reputation of the female members of the family is thus a requirement for males. Alongside this expectation, males are introduced to material symbols of manhood early in their lives. Boys may begin carrying a weapon at any age between 10 and 16 (Miller 2003: 25). To signify their manhood and to be able to drive the car for

their mothers and sisters, boys may begin driving at the age of 12, although the legal age to obtain a driver's license is 18.

The role of girls, on the other hand, is to care for the family within the household and is thus restricted to the private sphere. From an early age, girls are involved with their mothers in daily household tasks and take responsibilities in helping to raise their siblings or cousins. When a girl reaches puberty, "she is being looked at with growing unease" (vom Bruck 1997: 178), and all efforts are made to uphold the girl's good reputation in order for the family to find an appropriate suitor. Young girls therefore often live in strict seclusion. At the average age of 12 or even younger, girls begin wearing a long black coat, referred to as *abaya* or *balto*, in public spaces, with the majority wearing both the headscarf (*hijab*) and veil (*lithma* or *niqab*) (see also ibid.: 187; Riphenbur 2000: 729). The latter is widely understood in Yemen to be a social tradition rather than a religious obligation, brought to the country via influence from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries since the 1990s (see for instance Najmaldin 2012). Girls are also warned from an early age of the dangers they could encounter in public spaces, such as harassment or conflicts that would require interaction with strange men. For instance, although it is legal, women are often discouraged to drive cars. The reasoning, provided by parents or the husband, is that driving would inevitably put women in a situation where they would have to interact with male drivers or male traffic police. Especially given the absence of clear traffic rules and laws, women are often seen to be unable to hold their own and claim their rights in confrontations pertaining to traffic accidents. Riphenbur (2000: 728) finds that particularly urban women and wealthy rural women experience strict seclusion. The reasons for women to stay home may vary and include the protection of their reputation or the need to take care of children at home.

A main factor that prevents young people from being able to express their youthfulness is the pressure to get married. Being unmarried is socially stigmatized; often women as young as 20 are considered too old for marriage (Ouis 2009: 461). It has been found that 48.4 per cent of girls get married before they reach the age of 18 (Human Rights Watch 2011: 16). These young women begin having

children soon after their wedding, and thus bear responsibility for their own children at an early age, alongside also caring for younger siblings or cousins.

Nevertheless, both delayed marriage and the proliferation of modern schooling can contribute, as Asef Bayat suggests, to the emergence of youthfulness (Bayat 2010: 118–9). The educational system was first established in northern Yemen after the republican revolution in 1962. In the 1990s, the spread of education increased with the establishment of private schools and colleges. As a result, the literacy rate among youth (15–24 years old) increased from 60 per cent in 1990 to 85 per cent in 2010 (UIS 2012: 19). Particularly since the 1990s, education in Yemen was heavily influenced by the Islah Party, who ensured a curriculum was taught that reinforces conservative norms. The party, which is in large part made up of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, did not only have a great impact on the state educational system through positions in the Ministry of Education; it also established a parallel system of religious schools throughout the country. Through this influence, the Islah Party has had a pronounced impact on society, with strict religious norms determining daily practices among urban populations.

In Sanaʿa, the emergence of non-Islahi and non-state schools accelerated in the 2000s, when private education facilities sprung up in the general Hadda area (an upscale district of Sanaʿa, where mostly mid- and high-level income families live). Besides private schools ranging from kindergarten to high school and universities, there was also a proliferation of non-state learning institutes, where students could study foreign languages or receive vocational training, particularly in information technologies. Often, these private centres teach curriculums that are inspired by foreign, and often Western educational systems. Many of the newly established colleges are in fact international or binational projects, such as the Yemeni Jordanian University (YJU) established in 2008 or the Lebanese International University (LIU) established in 2006. Therefore, not just modern mass schooling emerged, which prolonged the period between childhood and adulthood allowing young people to experiment and pursue their desires, but spaces emerged where

conservative norms were not necessarily reinforced and which exposed young people to new technologies and foreign languages.

This in turn contributed to the emergence of youth who were connected on a regional and international level through ICTs. Parallel to this development, the marriage age of young people in urban areas increased, both due to the higher levels of education as well as to the economic difficulties young people are facing (Assaad et al. 2009: 36). As men are expected to care for their families financially, many urban young men delay marriage until they have found a steady job. The current high youth unemployment rates make it difficult for young men to find jobs. To women, delayed marriage presents an opportunity to pursue further education. Thus, and as suggested by Asef Bayat, delayed marriage and modern schooling for young men and women have contributed to the emergence of "youthfulness" in Sanaʿa, i.e. the phase between childhood and adulthood where the youngster is relatively autonomous, yet not totally dependent (on adults) nor independent. As a consequence, young people emerged with a particular habitus characterized by a greater tendency for experimentation, adventurism, idealism, autonomy, mobility and change. The consequences of this development became evident in the mid-2000s.

THE ENCROACHMENT OF THE YOUTH NON-MOVEMENT

In the 1990s, few spaces existed in Sanaʿa where conditions prevailed that allowed youth to assert their individuality and creativity in order to express their youthfulness. Certain expectations exist within society determining what behaviour is acceptable and what is not acceptable in a particular space for a certain individual within a social hierarchy (youth, women, men, etc.). In Sanaʿa, these expectations are shaped by social, religious and state authorities and are enshrined in space, determining in essence what behaviour is acceptable in a mosque in contrast to a shopping mall, different parts of a home in contrast to the streets. This spatial structuring of norms or the normative geographies is the result of these "*expectations* about behavior that relate a position in a social structure to actions in space" – understood here in the sense of Tim Cresswell (1996: 3).

Cresswell argues that given these expectations benefit the powerful, normative geographies can also be understood in a sense of ideologies enshrined in space by authorities. Transgressions of these norms thus represent a challenge to the authorities that enforce them.

This relationship between space and authorities is relevant with regards to non-movements, not just because non-movements carry the potential to challenge authorities, but also because they forge solidarities in shared spaces. It is in spaces, particularly in modern cities, that youth develop a consciousness about their youthfulness and where passive networks emerge (Bayat 2010: 119). Bayat explores the street as a "key theater of contention" and identifies two key attributes of street politics. One, the street serves as an arena to communicate discontent: the active use of public space, which is dictated by the authorities to be used only passively (such as driving or walking), presents a conflict between individuals or a collective populace against the authorities. Or in other words, by transgressing expectations in a certain space (here the streets), individuals challenge authorities. But a second attribute is that the street is also a space where identities develop, solidarities are forged and protest extends beyond certain circles to include unknown individuals. Because individuals recognize their mutual interests and sentiments, the street provides a space where strangers can establish latent communication. In this sense, passive networks of youth non-movements can develop when young people identify each other through the expression of their youthfulness in a shared space (ibid.: 11–3).

During the protests of 2011, young people and their self-expression became more visible in the public spaces of urban Yemen. It would be wrong to assume, however, that these youth emerged out of a vacuum. Instead, in the years prior to the 2011 uprising, the youth non-movement gradually carved out youth spaces – understood here as spaces where the expression of youthfulness is acceptable – ultimately affecting the normative geographies of Sanaʿa. It is argued here that the youth slowly encroached on public spaces through the mechanisms of the non-movement, whereas the apparent dichotomy of public and private is rather understood as a spectrum. Private and public are understood in

a minimalist sense with private being "in here", personal, intimate, closest to the self, secluded from unwanted others, being free to be ourselves; and public is understood as "out there", impersonal, distant, formal (Piktin 1981: 328). Whereas in the private realm, it is the rules of the family that determine the normative order, outside of parental homes normative geographies are determined by a variety of social, religious and political authorities.

Young males in the streets

Few spaces existed that allowed youth to act youthfully, given that the youthful sense of adventurism and experimentation often contradicts dominant social norms in Sanaʿa. In parental homes, norms to protect the honour and reputation of a family are enforced by parents. Some youth may be able to express their youthfulness in the realms of their personal rooms, by putting up certain posters on the walls or by playing certain music, for example. However, it was still difficult for youth to meet, particularly with the opposite sex, within parental homes. Likewise, only few public spaces existed where youth could gather and express their youthfulness. Thus, the normative geographies of Sanaʿa did not provide the conditions that enabled the expression of a youth habitus. Particularly young women were largely restricted to their homes, with the streets remaining an arena for young men. One particular group of young men I spent time with in Sanaʿa in the early 2000s used to hang out on the steps of a restaurant at a street corner on Hadda Street. Referring to the location as "the office", the peers of this group symbolically claimed ownership of the street corner. This act in itself challenged those political and moral authorities, as Bayat suggests, who dictate the streets to be used only passively. But beyond that, this street corner also served as a stage for this group of youth to display their lifestyle in public, contributing to the emergence of passive youth networks.

When in shared spaces, their habitus, such as lifestyles, clothing or taste in music, as identity markers allow for groups of youth and individuals to identify each other and their shared interests. In the early 2000s, one particular fashion, for instance, was to wear baggy jeans. This type of clothing is particularly rare in Yemen, and can be understood as an identity marker. Already the mere act of wearing

this type of jeans presented a subversive challenge to dominant social norms. Men wearing jeans are viewed as lacking in manhood, in bravery and in affiliation to a good tribe (al-Rubaidi 2014: 30). In Yemeni culture men wear traditional garments, such as the long white robe commonly worn on the Arabian Peninsula locally known as a *zanna* or a wrap-around man skirt referred to as *mawaz* or *futa*. Through their mutual recognition in a shared space, these individuals thus contribute to the emergence of a passive youth network. Wearing baggy jeans, they were either identified by bystanders as rebels, or, by like-minded youth, as peers.

Besides the street as a shared space, other locations where these young men could spend their time, express their youthfulness and identify each other as likeminded included "Top 20" or "Hawaii" (two pool and table tennis clubs in Hadda), male gyms, and internet or shisha cafés. By displaying their lifestyles in these particular spaces, youth began to challenge and change the normative geographies of Sanaʿa by tacitly carving out spaces where, initially, young men could begin to express their youthfulness. And with the continuing encroachment of the youth non-movement on public spaces, young women, too, soon began to carve out spaces for the expression of their youthfulness.

Emerging spaces of youthfulness: overcoming sex segregation in the public sphere[4]

As described by Asef Bayat, discovering ones' sexuality and experimenting or exploring the other sex is inherent to the youth habitus. Sanaʿa's normative geographies are however structured through sex segregation, making it difficult to mingle with the other sex. Thus, the expression of this facet of ones' youthfulness is particularly difficult. For instance, in Sanaʿa's biggest shopping mall, the Sanaʿa Trade Center, groups of young men are not allowed to linger, and are immediately reminded by security personnel to continue walking, to prevent any flirting with girls. Also, girls are not permitted to enter the pool and table tennis clubs that are frequented by young men. Restaurants are also segregated and divided into two sections: for men and for families. The latter is only accessible to men accompanied by their wives, mothers or sisters.

The tables in the family section are often guarded by separation barriers to ensure privacy. Some restaurants also have a distinct women's section to which men have no access at all. However, as challenging the norm is an inherent facet of being youthful, youth try to expand the conditions that allow them to express their youthfulness by meeting youth of the opposite sex. While sex segregation remains largely in place to date, it has been tacitly challenged in recent years.

Given that the sexes remain segregated and that meetings between unrelated males and females are not permissible either in restaurants or in parental houses, cars with tinted windows provide a safe space on the spectrum between private and public to circumvent social norms. The proliferation of non-state learning institutes and colleges run by Western-educated or liberal individuals also contributed to challenging sex segregation. While secondary schools remain mostly sex-segregated, it is particularly in universities and language institutes where young men and women can mix. In the context of an educational establishment, communication with and even befriending the opposite sex appear less immoral. Parallel to this development, the boundaries of sex segregation in restaurants also started to blur. Starting in the mid-2000s, some restaurants – particularly ones with English names or run by Indian nationals – developed into places where young men and women would meet and more easily mix in the respective family sections. Sometimes, unmarried couples also used the privacy that family sections in restaurants provide to meet romantically and exchange kisses behind separation barriers (pers. interview, February 2015). For instance, in the coffee shops and gardens of Funny Bunny or Food King, two restaurants on Hadda Street, young women and men in their early 20s could meet, even if they were looked on with suspicion when they did. Yet, youth of both sexes were able to identify each other in these shared spaces, sometimes even made contact and by that contributed to the expansion of the passive network making up the youth non-movement. To further defend the youth habitus, the passive network of the youth non-movement expanded into new spaces, in turn expanding the conditions that allowed the expression of youthfulness and changing the city's normative geographies. This became increasingly evident in the late 2000s when these youth began to mix

freely in restaurants. By then, a number of restaurants had opened in Southern Hadda that were no longer sex-segregated. The first of its kind was Zorbas, a multi-floor restaurant established by a Greek national, where people of all ages and different nationalities mixed. The restaurant had a porch towards the street, where customers could sit and have their food and drinks in plain sight of people passing by on foot or by car. Not only did this space allow youth to come together, but it also allowed them to express their youthfulness towards the out-group, i.e. those who do not enter the restaurant. Particularly, youth could sit together in mixed groups of unrelated men and women, sometimes smoking shisha side by side, laughing publicly, while also not strictly conforming to socially dictated, conservative dress codes. This did not only challenge dominant social norms through everyday life practices, it also allowed for the passive network of youth to expand. The restaurant both served as a shared space in which young people were able to identify each other and as a stage to perform youthfulness, thereby transgressing social norms. This changed the normative geographies of Sanaʿa, with more restaurants opening up in the same area, enabling youth to express their youthfulness in this particular part of the city. In 2007, Sanaʿa's first in a series of coffee shops located in Hadda opened: the Coffee Trader. The waitresses who worked in this coffee shop, and the many others that were to follow as well as in similar non-sex-segregated restaurants, are mostly either of Ethiopian or Filipino origin, do not wear *abaya*s or *hijab*s and do not always speak Arabic. Moreover, through the free wireless internet offered here, and the presence of well-travelled Yemeni youth and customers of different nationalities, these spaces become part of the global (virtual) world, thus making the youth at the coffee shops part of the global youth culture. In these spaces, casual meetings between unrelated young men and women had now become acceptable. In the words of one youth, in the "coffee shops males and females could meet for simply drinking a coffee, without having to eat lunch or dinner, it was no longer fishy to do so" (pers. interview, May 2014).

Through tacitly challenging sex segregation, this youth non-movement was also able to challenge other social norms, such as that of arranged marriages. For these young people, it has become more

common to look for and find their future spouses in learning institutes and universities. One young married couple shared with me the story of how they met at YALI, the English-language institute run by the US Embassy. The young man's family is from the central Yemeni city of Taʿiz, whereas his wife's family comes from a northern tribal family. Describing it as love at first sight, the young man did not give up despite the challenges his non-tribal background presented to his ambition to marry this particular girl. Despite the many challenges that remain, in the urban Yemeni context it has become increasingly common for families to allow these kinds of non-arranged weddings (see also Keller 2002; al-Yarisi 2013). Another consequence of the emergence of these spaces and of the tacit challenging of sex segregation was that such young women spent more time outside of their homes, frequenting coffee shops and restaurants more often and for longer periods of time. While until 2006 it was rare to see girls in public places after seven or eight o'clock in the evening, the sight of young women staying at coffee shops beyond this time in the evening has become more common in the years since.

Young women claim the streets: from hijab to hijabista

Usually, young women spent most of their time at home, visiting relatives or going to religious discussion groups, referred to as *halaqa*, together with their sisters and mothers. However, younger women, in contrast to their mothers, do not find their attendance of *halaqa*s useful (Pandya 2009: 59–63). Many of the youth I spoke to claimed that religion did not play a major role within their families, which is perhaps why many girls outright rejected attending *halaqa*s. Through private educational facilities, these women found alternative spaces which enabled them to mix with others in an atmosphere where issues pertaining to topics other than religion could be discussed.

Above that, new fashion trends coming from the Gulf States gave young women the opportunity to express their youthfulness in public through their clothing. Distinct styles of wearing the *hijab*, embroidery and special cuts turned the *abaya*, *hijab* and *lithma* into a fashion statement. These new styles even allowed young women to subversively challenge norms by expressing their sexuality through

clothing that is meant to conceal sexuality. *Abaya*s may have large images embroidered on the back, such as flowers or butterflies. After the so-called "bat-cut *abayas*" with large sleeves that were fashionable in the 2000s, in the early 2010s young women began wearing tight fitted *abaya*s which revealed the silhouette of their bodies. This and other new styles of wearing the *hijab* can be understood as a way for young women to express their youthfulness and to rebel against dominant social norms. For the "camel hump" or "beehive hijab" style, young women wear "bumpits" under their *hijab*s to create the impression of a large bump (i.e. large amounts of hair) on the head. Similar to baggy jeans, not only is this style a fashion statement and a marker of identity, but it also presents a challenge to social norms which is controversially debated in the context of a *hadith* in which the Prophet Muhammed is said to have stated:

> There are two types of people of hell that I have never seen; people with whips like the tails of cattle, with which they strike the people, and women who are dressed but appear naked, walking with an enticing gait, with their heads looking like the humps of camels, leaning to one side. They will never enter paradise, nor even smell its fragrance, although its fragrance can be discerned from such and such a distance. (al-Qushairi 1955: 1680)

These styles present a challenge to dominant norms, which at the same time allows identification with other like-minded young women. Although the greater majority of women conform to the more conservative ways of wearing the *hijab*, new styles are particularly visible in the Hadda area, where many restaurants and coffee shops can be found. As a result, the evolving youth spaces and the challenging of social norms in the late 2000s, young women generally became more visible in public. This again impacted on the normative geographies of the city, with particularly Hadda being a space where young women wearing these new styles are common.

2011 UPRISING: YOUTH TAKE "CHANGE SQUARE"

With the emergence of the protests in 2011, young people began to claim the streets, particularly through art and music.[5] Rather than just being present in the street and expressing youthfulness through

lifestyles and fashion, the youth non-movement now developed a stronger consciousness and attempted to leave a lasting impact on the normative geographies of Sanaʿa. In February 2011, young activists together with human rights advocates set up a camp on the intersection in front of the Sanaʿa University's main campus. "Change Square", as the protest camp came to be known, provided a space where young women and men protested side by side, particularly at the early stages of the protests. Some young women even stayed at Change Square overnight, which in other settings would be unthinkable. Afrah Nasser, a young journalist, described how she – together with other women – entered a men-only café next to Change Square (Nasser 2011). In an interview, she described the feeling of having the choice to enter the café as being liberating and empowering. She further explained that she had passed this café many times in the past when she was a student at Sanaʿa University. But because it was considered *ʿayb* (shameful), entering the café had previously not even crossed her mind. In a blog post she described how in the "new Yemen" it would be possible for women to drink tea at a regularly men-only café. Likewise, young musicians performed non-traditional music on the Square. Ahmad ʿAsiry, who came to be known as the "artist of the revolution", regularly gave reggae concerts. In his music, he addressed the conservative norms of Yemeni society. Although society often looks down on musicians, ʿAsiry became accepted and respected in the Square. Graffiti artists also became active: murals on the walls were not only an expression of the festive atmosphere on the Square, but they were also representations of the young artists' political demands. Murad Subayʿ was soon described as "Yemen's own Banksy" (see also Alviso-Marino 2014).

This atmosphere did not last. With the increasingly dominant role of the Islah Party on the square and as a reaction to allegations made by ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih that the female protesters of "Change Square" were immoral, social norms were yet again enforced by Islah. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Hamid al-Ahmar, leading member of the Islah Party, stated that "there was bad behavior, which turned the square into a discotheque! Those women wanted to go hand in hand with their boyfriends as lovers in the demonstrations. This is not right and is against our religion" (Sohlman 2012; see also

Strzelecka's contribution in this volume). Consequently, Islah erected a physical barrier to separate female from male protesters. In April 2011, female youth, along with adult women protesters who insisted on protesting side by side with men, were beaten. Once Islah came to control the main stage with restrictions on who could speak and perform, youth were forced to the margins of (if not all together away from) the protest square. Consequently, in May 2011 youth set up their own stage in front of the old campus of Sanaʿa University (pers. interview, September 2011; see also Heinze 2015 for how the balance of power changed on Change Square). There they found themselves at the frontlines of the battles with government forces. Parallel to this development, Islah – together with other oppositional parties who were represented on the Square – engaged in negotiations with the ruling party, the General People's Congress, over the GCC Initiative. Youth were not only marginalized on the Square, but also sidelined in these negotiations and finally excluded from the signing of the deal in November 2011. Although the youth lost Change Square as a space to express their youthfulness and were marginalized in the transitional period, they were not pushed back into the private sphere; rather, they claimed other spaces where they could challenge not only political, but also social and religious, norms.

CLAIMING AND EXPANDING YOUTH SPACES AFTER 2011: FROM THE BASEMENT TO THE STREETS

During the initial phase of the protests, youth of both sexes were able to connect and forge solidarity in the shared space that Change Square provided. In this shared space, the youth also constructed a common identity. A female activist stated that she was "closed minded" until she met other young people at the Square. She described how the youth influenced and strengthened each other's attitudes; after these experiences she had finally "found herself" (pers. interview, March 2015). These connections and experiences in turn inspired these youths to challenge social norms elsewhere, norms which inhibited them from expressing their youthfulness. With their convictions strengthened through their common experiences, young

people began to challenge their parents, for instance, demanding more freedoms (see also Al-Samei 2013). Girls challenged gender roles by refusing to do household tasks while their brothers were staying at Change Square. Through these activities, the youth non-movement defended the youthful habitus and through their everyday life activities tried to expand the conditions which allow them to express their youthfulness. After having lost their fear of openly challenging norms, youth were able to increasingly institutionalize these spaces and more actively push to expand them. The "coffee shop culture" gained momentum. Since the 2011 uprising, coffee shops have become increasingly crowded, with many new ones opening up. Currently, in contrast to before the 2011 protests, many young people use these spaces to jointly plan projects, give concerts or do art. These spaces are viewed as a refuge for young people to escape restricting social norms (Haddash 2012). However, these spaces are not limited to the coffee shops, but also include virtual spaces like Facebook, as well as spaces in the realm of culture, such as "the Basement". These spaces are local representations of the global youth culture, and left their mark on the normative geographies in Sanaʿa.

Facebook

Following the prominent role Facebook played in the uprisings around the Middle East, the social media platform also became more popular in Yemen and, as such, became a space for youth to connect with each other. In late July 2010, the penetration rate of Facebook in Yemen was 0.45 per cent. By mid-February 2011, when the protests began to gain momentum in Sanaʿa, the rate reached 1 per cent, increasing to 2.35 per cent in May 2013. The dialectic dynamics of on- and offline spaces resulted in the protest experiences impacting the youth's behaviour on Facebook, while their experiences on Facebook impacted their behaviour offline. Facebook had a mobilization function, as it enabled young activists to connect and develop strategies, plan marches and discuss politics (Alwazir 2011). But beyond the logistical advantages the site provided, Facebook also allowed this youth non-movement to forge connections with likeminded youth in Yemen and around the world. This not only enabled the exchange of experiences for protests and campaigns, but

it also allowed youth to strengthen their youth identities, resulting in action and mobilization on the ground. Now, secret groups and pages, where issues such as atheism, romance and sex can be discussed, are slowly emerging online. At the same time, the experiences on Change Square impacted the youth's behaviour in the virtual space. Interestingly, the presence of young females on Facebook changed in the course of and after the popular protests. To young women who were not able to stay on the Square late at night, Facebook became a convenient way to stay connected with their male peers from the protest camp. While in the past Facebook was dismissed as an immoral space where men and women would connect romantically, during the protests Facebook developed to become a tool to engage politically and to contribute to the struggle for political change. In this way, it became more acceptable for girls to use Facebook and connect with others. Before 2011, it was very rare that young women would use their authentic names and pictures for their accounts (Abulhoom 2013). This disclosure however became more common after the popular uprising with many young women who were involved in the protests doing so, thus inspiring and encouraging others. Both Facebook being a means to express opinions and the use of authentic pictures allowed youth to express themselves in a shared space and expand the passive youth network.

Art and music: from the Basement to the streets

In the Basement, a cultural foundation run by young people, a youth space became institutionalized. With its English name, the Basement signifies a space for a youth subculture, which, although hiding in the "basement" away from the mainstream culture, is yet a spatial manifestation of youthfulness somewhere on the spectrum between private and public. It is located in an unimposing building at the outskirts of Hadda in Southern Sanaʿa. Formerly an architectural office designed by Sabaʾ al-Sulayhi, an MIT graduate and Yemeni architect and now a mentor to the youth of the Basement, the interior of the two-floor house is impressive and unique in Yemen. The wide-open spaces and large windows create a light atmosphere – the architecture seems to perfectly represent the attitudes of the young people who spend their time here. Organizing regular open

mic nights and concerts, the foundation is a place where various young musicians can develop their talents. Often these musicians play non-traditional instruments and music, including electronic music, Western-inspired oud and rap music. Unmarried young women and men also make music and perform together in this space. These musicians not only find their peers here, but also an interested audience. "We want to be able to have a night club and a mosque in the city, and people should be able to choose whether they want to go to the night club or the mosque," explained one of the organizers of the Basement (pers. interview, May 2014). In the Basement, sex segregation is not upheld. Women and men mix freely, sitting next to each other on couches, drinking tea or playing pool. Many of the women also do not adhere to the socially enforced dress code of *abaya* and *hijab*. Some do not wear either covering; others only wear a *hijab* but reveal some hair.

The concept of the Basement is inspired by the dandelion. It provides a space for young people to nurture their creative capacities, and also encourages them to practise their talents outside of the foundation and to spread like the seeds of a dandelion. With this concept, the Basement actively promotes the expansion of conditions that enable the expression of youthfulness. Ahmad ʿAsiry, for instance, spent a lot of time at the Basement, and then took his music to the streets even after youth were marginalized from the Square. To him, it was a symbol of the continuation of the revolution (pers. interview, February 2015). On the street, some joined and began to dance; others cursed him, saying he would go to hell because music is *haram* (forbidden). Nevertheless, ʿAsiry expressed his youth habitus in a public space and transformed the street corner into a stage for youth. Through the "Inside Out Project", young people from the Basement also expanded youth spaces.[6] For this campaign, young Yemenis were photographed while expressing their feelings, in whichever way they chose to demonstrate to the international media that Yemenis are not terrorists, but human beings. The campaign had a global message and was inspired by a worldwide campaign of the same name to transform messages of personal identity into art. As such, the project showed the global interconnectedness of the youth. But the initiative also had a local impact. The photographs

were printed onto large sheets of paper and then distributed on the walls of Sanaʿa: some in the Old City, others in traffic tunnels. The photographs showed both young women and men in various poses, not always adhering to social norms in terms of dress. Particularly in the Old City, the youth faced resistance when trying to put up the pictures which were perceived as immoral. Only after negotiations were they able to proceed. Unfortunately, a lot of the photos, particularly the ones of women, were torn down later. It was not unusual for unveiled non-Yemeni women to be shown in ads around Sanaʿa; but to many the pictures of Yemeni women, some of whom revealed their hair, were socially unacceptable. By putting up the photos in the streets of Sanaʿa, youth challenged these social norms and – even if just for a short while – transformed the streets of Sanaʿa into a space of contestation through the expression of their identity.

CONCLUSION: SANAʿA'S YOUTH NON-MOVEMENT FACES UNCERTAIN TIMES

Since the mid-2000s, Sanaʿa's youth non-movement has slowly come out of the private realm, claiming spaces outside of parental homes, allowing young people to increasingly express their youthfulness, their sense for adventurism and experimentation and thus changing the normative geographies of Sanaʿa. While it was mostly young men in the early phase who claimed the streets, later on coffee shops and restaurants enabled both male and female youth to create spaces which allowed them to mix and challenge sex segregation. The collective actions of these individual youth actors culminated in the protests of 2011 and contributed to the transformation of semi-public and public space. These new spaces allowed youth to increasingly engage in certain behaviour which may not always adhere to social norms.

A number of factors contributed to this development. First of all, the increasing number of private schools in Sanaʿa since the 1990s and 2000s contributed to the production of youthfulness. This, coupled with delayed marriage, turned some young people into youth as a social actor, in that the phase between childhood and adulthood was prolonged, with youth becoming aware of their

youthfulness and desiring to express their youthful habitus. These spaces, such as co-ed private schools and learning institutes, allowed youth to forge an identity and strengthen their convictions. It also allowed them to experience non-sexual relations with the other sex and enabled them to develop an alternative perspective on gender relations. This development was further enhanced with the emergence of coffee shops and restaurants where sexes are not segregated. During the 2011 protests, Change Square became a public space where the expression of youthfulness became possible; it was seen by youth as the cradle for social change. The shared experiences on the Square empowered the youth's ambition to challenge those social norms which inhibit them from expressing their individuality and creativity. As a consequence, youth further expanded their spaces in the public sphere and at the same time demanded more freedoms from their parents at home. Youth have continued to claim spaces and are pushing to expand the boundaries and challenge social norms.

However, as the ongoing war in Yemen blocks any meaningful transition to a more stable political order, the social changes achieved by the youth non-movement are in peril. Not only are youth spaces affected by the ongoing air strikes conducted by the Saudi coalition, as well as the deteriorating economic conditions in the capital. But with the new dominance of the Huthi movement in Sanaʿa, which has enforced strict sex segregation in its home region Saʿda, and the continuous shifting of alliances of the traditional elites, normative geographies of the capital are changing yet again. Nevertheless, youth spaces continue to exist, with particularly coffee shops remaining a space for youthful self-expression. Of the youth activists who remain in the capital, many continue to resist the violence as well as the dominance of the Huthis through art and creativity. The Basement and other youth groups continue to organize activities whenever possible. But many youth do not see a future for themselves in the current environment of violent conflict, where the expression of their identities, their individuality and creativity becomes ever more difficult. Many members of the youth non-movement have already left Yemen or are actively seeking emigration.

NOTES

1. I want to thank all the young Yemenis for sharing their life stories with me, enabling me to write this chapter. I particularly want to thank Marie-Christine Heinze and Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi for their valuable feedback on earlier versions. I also owe gratitude to the late Prof. Dr. Christoph Schumann and Dimitris Soudias for having inspired me to think about normativity and space in an unpublished paper we cooperated on in 2012.
2. For background on the youth activists who protested on various protest squares throughout the country see Transfeld 2013.
3. Susanne Dahlgren argues in her book *Contesting Realities: The Public Sphere and Morality in Southern Yemen*, that *adab* is a more fruitful concept for studying morality in the Middle East, as the honour/shame dichotomy is not always used as a reference. Rather, according to Dahlgren, the reference used is the reputation of a person, manifested in how his or her tasks are taken care of and what is known of the person outside the work place (see Dahlgren, 2010: 9–10). However, in my time in Sanaʿa and in the interviews I conducted, it was particularly the word *ʿayb* that was used as a reference with regards to certain behaviours one should not engage in.
4. Sex segregation is understood as the physical separation of individuals according to their biological sex. The term is used instead of gender segregation, which refers instead to the separation of individuals according to their gender identity or the social constructions of gender.
5. Atiaf Alwazir, a youth activist, blogger and journalist documented the art produced at Change Square on her blog 'Woman from Yemen'; for instance, see: http://womanfromyemen.blogspot.de/2011/05/art-for-change-at-square-of-change.html (accessed 16 June 2017).
6. The Facebook page of the "Inside Out Project" can be accessed at https://www.facebook.com/InsideOutProjectYemen (accessed 16 June 2017).

REFERENCES

Abulhoom, ʿAli, 'Facebook users assume new identity online', *Yemen Times*, 11 April 2013. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1667/report/2218/Facebook-users-assume-new-identities-online.htm (last accessed 16 June 2017; page no longer available).

al-Akhali, Rafat, 'What Yemen's youth got out of the National Dialogue Conference', *Atlantic Council*, 7 April 2014. Available at http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/what-yemen-s-youth-got-out-of-the-national-dialogue-conference (accessed 16 June 2017).

Alviso-Marino, Anahi, *The Politics of Painting in Public Spaces: Yemeni Street Art as a Device for Political Action*, Paper presented at the PARGC Symposium (Philadelphia 2014).

Alwazir, Atiaf, 'Yemen's independent youth and their role in the National Dialogue Conference: Triggering a change in political culture', *SWP Comments* 23 (2013), pp. 1–8. Available at http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2013C23_wzr.pdf (accessed 24 October 2014).

—— 'Social media in Yemen: Expecting the unexpected', *Alakhbar English*, 30 December 2011. Available at http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/2931 (accessed 16 June 2017).

—— 'Yemen's enduring resistance: "Youth" between politics and informal structures', *Mediterranean Politics* 21/1 (2015), pp. 170–91. Available at http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13629395.2015.1081446 (accessed 16 June 2017).

Assaad, Ragui, et al., 'Youth exclusion in Yemen: Tackling the twin deficits of human development and natural resources', *Middle East Youth Initiative*, 30 November 2009. Available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1548534 (accessed 16 June 2017).

Bayat, Asef, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Amsterdam, 2010).

vom Bruck, Gabriele, 'Elusive bodies: the politics of aesthetics among Yemeni elite women', *Signs* 1/23 (1997), pp. 175–214.

Cresswell, Tim, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minnesota, 1996).

Dahlgren, Susanne, 'More than half of society: Southern Yemeni youth, unemployment and the quest for a state job', in H. Lackner (ed.), *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition* (London, 2014).

—— *Contesting Realities: The Public Sphere and Morality in Southern Yemen* (New York, 2010).

Dhillon, Navtej and Tarik Yousef (eds), *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East* (Washington DC, 2009).

Durac, Vincent, 'Yemen's Arab Spring – democratic opening or regime maintenance?', *Mediterranean Politics* 17/2 (2012), pp. 161–78.

Haddash, Nadia, 'New cafés emerge in Sanaʿa to reduce qat chewing', *Yemen Times*, 22 November 2012. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1627/culture/1650/New-caf%C3%A9s-emerge-in-Sana%E2%80%99a-to-reduce-Qat-chewing.htm (last accessed 16 June 2017; page no longer available).

Heinze, Marie-Christine, 'From the margins of Yemen into the heart of the country, from fist-fights on Change Square to control of the capital city: Spatial manifestations of the Ḥūthī ascension to power', in S. Conermann and E. Smolarz (eds), *Mobilizing Religion: Networks and Mobility* (Berlin, 2015).

Herrera, Linda and Peter Mayo, 'The Arab Spring, digital youth and the challenges of education and work', *Holy Land Studies* 11/1 (2012), pp. 71–8.

Herrera, Linda and Asef Bayat, *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (New York, 2010).

Human Rights Watch, 'How come you allow little girls to get married?', *Human Rights Watch*, 7 November 2011. Available online at http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/12/07/how-come-you-allow-little-girls-get-married (accessed 16 June 2017).

Keller, Ursula, "*Wie Willst Du Sie Heiraten, Wo Du Sie Doch Gar Nicht Kennst?!" Heitratsstrategien Gebildeter Frauen in Sana'a, Jemen* (Berlin, 2000).

Miller, Derek B., *Demand, Stockpiles, and Social Controls: Small Arms in Yemen* (Geneva, 2003). Available at http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/B-Occasional-papers/SAS-OP09-Yemen.pdf (accessed 16 June 2017).

Najmaldin, Marwa, 'The niqab: An endless argument', *Yemen Times*, 23 February 2012. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1549/culture/462/The-Niqab-an-endless-argument.htm (last accessed 16 June 2017; page no longer available).

Nasser, Afrah, 'Ladies at a men's café' (2011). Available at http://afrahnasser.blogspot.de/2011/05/ladies-at-mens-cafeteria.html (accessed 16 June 2017).

Ouis, Pernilla, 'Honourable traditions? Honour violence, early marriage and sexual abuse of teenage girls in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen', *International Journal of Children's Rights* 17 (2009), pp. 445–74.

Pandya, Sophia, 'Religious change among Yemeni women: The new popularity of ʿAmr Khaled', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 1/5 (2009), pp. 50–79.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel, 'Justice: On relating private and public', *Political Theory* 9/3 (1981), pp. 327–52.

Qasem, Ala, *Five Barriers to Youth Engagement, Decision-Making, and Leadership in Yemen's Political Parties*, Saferworld (2013). Available at http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/785-five-barriers-to-youth-engagement-decision-making-and-leadership-in-yemens-political-parties (accessed 16 June 2017).

al-Qushayri, Muslim bin al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, edited by Muhammad Fu'ad ʿAbd al-Baqi (Beirut, 1955).

Riphenbur, Carol, 'Changing gender relations and development in Yemen: Education, family, health and fertility, cultural expression', *Southeastern Political Review* 4/28 (2000), pp. 715–43.

al-Rubaidi, Abdulsalam, 'Sixtieth versus Seventieth Street: Practices and counter-practices during the Yemeni Spring 2011', *Jemen-Report* 45/1&2 (2014), pp. 27–31.

Al-Samei, Mohammed, 'Women at Change Square: Changes of conviction, thought, and manner', *Yemen Times*, 8 March 2013. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1553/culture/547/Women-at-Change-Square-Changes-of-conviction-thought-and-manner.htm (last accessed 16 June 2016; page no longer available).

Sohlman, Eva, 'Yemen's many factions wait impatiently for a resolution', *New York Times*, 23 May 2012. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/

24/world/middleeast/24iht-m24-yemen-change.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed 16 June 2017).

Transfeld, Mareike, *The Youth Movement and its Activists*, YPC Policy Brief (Sanaʿa, 2013). Available at http://www.csfyemen.org/upfiles/csf-p1860.pdf (accessed 16 June 2017).

—— 'Political bargaining and violent conflict: Shifting elite alliances as the decisive factor in Yemen's transformation', *Mediterranean Politics* 20/3 (2015).

UIS, *Adult and Youth Literacy, 1990–2015, Analysis of Data for 41 Selected Countries* (Montreal, 2012). Available online at http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/UIS-literacy-statistics-1990-2015-en.pdf (accessed 16 June 2017).

al-Yarisi, Amal, 'Breaking with tradition', *Yemen Times*, 26 November 2013. Available http://www.yementimes.com/en/1732/culture/3160/Breaking-with-tradition.htm (last accessed 16 June 2017; page no longer available).

CHAPTER 11

Can We Talk to Terrorists?: Extremism and the Potential for Dialogue, as Portrayed in Yemeni Film and Theatre

Katherine Hennessey

INTRODUCTION

This article examines twenty-first-century theatrical and cinematic performances in Yemen that treat the issue of terrorism.[1] It argues that until 2014 such productions generally portrayed the character of the terrorist as fitting into one of two moulds: the rare diabolical mastermind who cannot be swayed from his violent intent; and the much more common radicalized citizen, malcontent and misguided rather than truly malevolent. Whereas the former must be expunged or exterminated, the latter may be re-educated and reintegrated into Yemeni society through a process of engagement and dialogue.

Yet, following the lacklustre conclusion of Yemen's National Dialogue process in early 2014, Yemeni theatre began to take a much more pessimistic view of the utility of attempting to reason with extremists. Terrorist characters were reduced to inscrutable one-dimensional symbols of evil – a repetitive, formulaic portrayal which this article attributes to a combination of factors, including heavy-handed government intervention, dire news events, and a lack of imagination among scriptwriters, and which strongly suggested a loss

of public confidence in the model of dialogue as a solution to Yemen's most pressing challenges.

EXTREMISTS ON SCREEN

In his far-reaching study of the negative cinematic portrayal of Arab characters, Jack Shaheen traces the history of the Arab-as-terrorist stereotype in Hollywood feature films back to 1951, to the film noir *Sirocco*, starring Humphrey Bogart as an American arms dealer attacked by Syrian extremists in Damascus (Shaheen 2001: 16). Shaheen notes that this stereotype has proved sadly popular with American film producers and audiences over the subsequent decades, with hundreds of additional films cavalierly vilifying "the Arab" as a violent extremist bent on blood, bombings and mayhem, motivated by religious or political fanaticism or by atavistic anti-American fury.

Yet burgeoning film industries around the world have proven that two can play this twisted game of demonization. The 2006 Turkish film *Valley of the Wolves: Iraq*, for example, stars Billy Zane as a bloodthirsty, megalomaniacal American colonel who guns down an Iraqi wedding party that includes women and children, and then riddles with bullets a truck carrying captured prisoners on their way to Abu Ghraib. Though Hollywood still saturates world media to a remarkable extent, the local and regional popularity of this sort of rival fare bears noting. *Valley of the Wolves: Iraq* was the top-grossing Turkish film of that year, and has been followed since by two spin-off television series and two more *Valley of the Wolves* films, with a third in production (Wikipedia 2015). *Valley of the Wolves: Iraq* has also been rebroadcast regionally via satellite TV, which is how I myself happened to see parts of it one day in Sanaʿa.

In examples such as these, the terrorist is consistently presented as inhumane, brutish and, most importantly, foreign with respect to both the geography and the psychology of the audience. Being "Other" in terms of nationality and/or ethnicity serves as cinematic shorthand for an "Otherness" of mentality, for adherence to a skewed worldview or a perverted code of ethics – one entirely foreign to "Us", to the film's assumed viewers. As postcolonial critics from Frantz Fanon to Edward Said have repeatedly pointed out, it is a relatively

simple matter to demonize what is foreign, and/or to collude in such demonization.[2]

But what might a film about a not-so-foreign extremist look like? How might a US film present an "American everyman", with no connection to Islam or the Arab world, yet radicalized into committing violent atrocities against innocents? How might a Turkish film portray a Turkish (not Kurdish) terror cell in an average middle-class neighbourhood in Istanbul? That is, how might the cinema portray the terrorist who, not long ago, was just the boy or girl next door?

Yemen has, to date, made very few contributions to the film industry. Yet it has provided us with a film that serves as an illuminating indication of how Yemeni directors deal with the issue of Yemeni terrorist characters; namely, *al-Rihan al-Khasir* (*The Losing Bet*) (2008), directed by Fadl al-ʿUlafi and written by al-ʿUlafi, Muhammad al-Hubayshi, and ʿAbd al-Karim al-Ashmuri. *The Losing Bet* has been given short shrift by its critics, mostly Yemeni, who comment that it is crude and formulaic – or worse, a self-indulgent, mendacious attempt by the Yemeni government to portray itself and its security forces as ever vigilant, effective and unyielding in their fight against terrorism.[3] Though not entirely unjustified, this criticism fails to take into account two of the most striking characteristics of the film: the sheer range of "terrorist" characters it portrays, and the varied and nuanced response of each to radicalizing propaganda.

Filmed mostly in the picturesque town of Thula, *The Losing Bet* opens with charming scenes in which local Yemenis offer hospitality to an amiable group of foreign tourists. The latter try on traditional Yemeni dress and jewellery, and even participate, albeit gingerly, in a *janbiya* (dagger) dance. One bright young Yemeni teenager, Shaima, serves as translator and quickly becomes friends with blonde, inquisitive Maria. Yet the idyllic soon gives way to the sinister, as two local *mujahiddin*– one of them Shaima's brother Nasir – return from their seven-year sojourn abroad and attempt to radicalize the town's malcontent young men.

The film's portrayal of the returning extremists is carefully calculated to render them unsympathetic and alienating to Yemeni

audiences. Nasir, ably played by celebrated Yemeni actor Nabil Hizam, is dark and humourless, dislikes children and is abusive to his wife and sister. Amongst themselves, the extremists speak a stilted, rigidly formal Arabic complete with case endings, in contrast to the other characters (and the majority of Yemenis) who speak mainly in local dialect or standard Arabic. The *mujahiddin* also are visibly marked as different: They sport long beards and dress uniformly in long white *thawb*s and *kufiya*s, while the majority of Thula's male inhabitants wear button-down shirts and dress pants, or the typically Yemeni combination of *thawb*, suit jacket, and embroidered shawl.

Yet rather than portraying the extremists as irrevocably foreign, incomprehensibly "other" – as a problem to be exterminated – the film leaves open the possibility that at least some of the *mujahiddin* can be reformed and reintegrated into Yemeni society. Nasir's comrade-in-arms Tawfiq, initially committed to violent *jihad*, regrets this choice when he learns of the hardship his absence has inflicted on his wife and son. The elegantly dressed and groomed Mahmud, who speaks to his visitors against the backdrop of a beautiful library, exemplifies the reformed *mujahid*, one who "used to live in that environment", but who now engages in dialogue with returnees like Tawfiq in the hope of dissuading them from violence (al-ʿUlafi et al., 45m25s–45m29s).

The film repeatedly models the process of such dialogue and of efforts at non-violent engagement with the *mujahiddin*, which are undertaken not only by Mahmud but by a slew of his fellow characters. The police chief asks Mahmud's help in understanding why and how young people are radicalized. Tawfiq's wife tearfully interrogates him, rejecting his attempts to justify his long estrangement. Tawfiq later spars with Nasir, and Nasir argues with the young, idealistic graduate Imad. Late in the film we see an imam leading a dialogue in a seminar room with repentant *mujahiddin*. Perhaps most poignant, when Nasir expels his wife Najat – an artist whose paintings Nasir terms an "abomination", despite the fact that when sold to tourists they contribute significantly to the household income – Nasir's elderly father rebukes him:

> Is this the *jihad* [struggle] that you've brought back to us? This murderous thirst for power, this hatred for yourself, your family, and your homeland? Do you know who's really struggling? Your sister, who works on behalf of the whole family. And your wife, who takes care of all of us [...] *They* are the true *mujahiddin*. They are, not you. (Ibid.: 1h11m20s–1h11m53s)[4]

Though Nasir remains unmoved by his father's words, other characters are more receptive to the possibility of dialogue about terrorism and the process of intellectual and emotional engagement. In addition to the instances already noted, *The Losing Bet* contains a climactic episode in which one of the younger terrorists – until this point a stock character with nothing to differentiate him from the rest of his cadre – ventures out of the terrorists' hideout, wearing a suicide vest and using Tawfiq's kidnapped son as a human shield against the besieging police forces. The security chief lays down his weapons and approaches, reasoning at length with the suicide bomber, reassuring him that they are not enemies, and appealing in turn to his compassion for the child and his love of country, which, he argues, are also religious duties. Visibly shaken in his resolve, the would-be bomber is finally overcome by an irresistible emotional appeal – that of his mother, who pleads tearfully with him over a megaphone given to her by the security forces.

The soap-operatic enactment of these crucial moments is one of the film's three main flaws. The others are the sinister demeanour and elocution of the most hardened extremists, which are emphasized to an unintentionally comedic degree, and the overly aspirational depiction of the security forces. Anyone familiar with the shambolic nature of Yemeni bureaucracy will raise an eyebrow at the scenes set in precisely organized offices where men and women in immaculate uniform sit in front of sleek computer screens, diligently compiling reports on suspected terrorists.[5]

Yet none of these faults entirely diminishes the film's main achievement – its nuanced analysis of the various forces and motivations that can lead to radicalization. *The Losing Bet* shows us not merely the terrorist next door, but the entire continuum from committed violent fanatic to reformed *jihadi*. Most importantly, it proposes that even though hardline "masterminds" like Nasir and the

Sheikh may be impervious to an outstretched hand, other radicals can be reasoned with. Far from being implacable alien brutes, the potential terrorists of this film are repeatedly shown to be human beings – flawed and misguided, but also redeemable, susceptible to appeals to their reason, their emotions and their better nature. This suggests the need for a complex strategy to confront terrorism – a strategy that includes lethal military force, but only after attempts at reason and the emotional appeals of trusted interlocutors have tried and failed.

EXTREMISTS ON STAGE, PHASE I: BLACK HEARTS AND BLACK SHEEP

Two Yemeni theatrical performances from around the same period as *The Losing Bet* plumb the depths of the psychology of radicalization in analogous ways, depicting destructive actions committed not by evil, inscrutable monsters, but by hurt or marginalized members of a community. In the charming musical comedy *Bushra Sara*, written and directed by ʿAmr Jamal and performed in Aden in 2007, young and idealistic paternal cousins Sara and Ahmad fall in love, and through their irrepressible optimism convince the other members of their struggling extended family to work together to open a restaurant. All are won over with the exception of Ahmad's elder brother Imad, who, during extended periods of unemployment, has become addicted to *qat*, nicotine and painkillers.

When Imad, in a drug-addled haze, mocks the family's plan as quixotic, his father throws him out of the house; but later, as the restaurant begins to thrive, the prodigal returns, starving. Between his father's frosty greeting, malnourishment and the hallucinogenic effects of the drugs, Imad loses his wits. Stumbling disoriented across the stage through dramatic strobe lighting, Imad ultimately sets ablaze the restaurant in which his family has invested their entire savings.

The play portrays this family as Yemen in microcosm, with Imad as its discontented, destabilizing element. Before Sara's and Ahmad's romance unites them, the family members all lament their poverty and misfortune, but none has the necessary strength to change,

a point reinforced in visual terms by the father's lack of a limb (his left arm is missing). Some dream of an external solution to their woes; Ahmad, for example, repeatedly suggests going to work in Saudi Arabia. It is Sara who realizes that every member of the family has a talent to contribute to the restaurant – a cooperative project corresponding on the national scale to progress, development and productive employment, to the building of a "new Yemen".

Though Imad is not a bomb-wielding terrorist per se, numerous facets of the character call the analogy to mind. Like the young recruits in *The Losing Bet*, he has no job and no prospects; he takes drugs, which are often cited in Yemeni rhetoric about terrorism as a means to brainwash ordinary people into carrying out atrocities; and he leaves a trail of fiery destruction in his wake. Yet the play portrays Imad as pathetic rather than irrevocably evil. His return to the family after being thrown out and his plea for food and acceptance demonstrate his willingness to reform. It is his father's stern rebuke, in tandem with the hunger and hallucinations, which derails the possibility of dialogue and reintegration. In the final scene, rather than cling to resentment and despair, the family pulls together once again to rebuild what has been destroyed. The play implies, however, that this destruction could have been avoided had father and son been able to attain a mutual understanding.

This faith in the ultimately positive outcome of dialogue, unity and hard work is not, however, a truth universally acknowledged by Yemeni authors. In stark contrast to the optimism and resilience of ʿAmr Jamal's characters stands ʿAbd al-Latif, protagonist of Wajdi al-Ahdal's *Jarima fi-Shariʿ al-Mataʿim* (*A Crime on Restaurant Street*) (2009).[6] Obsessively persecuted by the "bank director", a shadowy stand-in for the then president ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, protagonist ʿAbd al-Latif must choose between committing an act of terrorism and dying in prison. Al-Ahdal's insistence in the play that the corruption of Salih's regime directly and deliberately encourages terrorism and criminal violence was courageous and outspoken,[7] and his portrayal of the terrorist figure is chilling – an ordinary Yemeni citizen, blessed with talent, education, and success, yet viciously compelled by external forces to commit an act of atrocious violence.

Al-Ahdal presents ʿAbd al-Latif as kind and intelligent; a supporting character, Jamila, who serves as the closest thing the play has to a moral compass, views him with affection and gratitude for always treating her with dignity, despite her low status as an orphan who begs on the streets to support her siblings. And ʿAbd al-Latif's act of terrorism is depicted as an absolute anomaly, an act against his conscience. Framed and jailed by the bank manager for a crime he has not committed, he is promised his freedom in return for the commission of a crime – a stark portrayal of the perversions of justice of which the author accuses Salih's regime. Yet while he reserves his staunchest criticism for the president and his rule, al-Ahdal is careful not to entirely absolve ʿAbd al-Latif of ultimate responsibility for his actions, and provides a final tableau which mocks violent extremists' pretensions to heroism. After gunning down his acquaintances at his local café with a Kalashnikov provided by the bank manager's henchman Wiswas, ʿAbd al-Latif strikes "a heroic pose with his rifle" – but he does so while sitting upon a white toilet, placed front and centre, close to the audience.[8]

In contrast to the other works thus far examined, al-Ahdal's play is not about the potential of dialogue to address the problem of extremism. In *A Crime on Restaurant Street*, the phenomenon of terrorism springs directly from the corrupt and corrupting nature of the Yemeni government. No dialogue is possible, because the bank manager and his minions acknowledge no frame of reference other than their own perverted words and desires. When ʿAbd al-Latif expresses his hope that the truth of his innocence will come to light and that he will be set free from prison, Wiswas snickers, "The truth! You're so naïve! Truth, my friend, is only worth what you can pay for it. And since we're the ones with the money, we can buy whatever truth we want!" (al-Ahdal 2009: 17). As though in response to the flattering portrayal of the Yemeni security forces in *The Losing Bet*, this play portrays the Yemeni government itself as the ultimate cause of extremist violence, a cause which must be uprooted before any positive change can take place.

Al-Ahdal's play concludes with an act of violence, the eventual repercussions of which are left to the imagination. A subsequent Yemeni production picks up, in a sense, from where al-Ahdal's left

off: the one-act pantomime *Wayn Inti al-An?* (*Where Are You Now?*). This was performed in 2010 at the Cultural Centre in Sanaʿa by a group of young actors from the Future Partners for Development Foundation, with support from the US Embassy (which obviously had a vested interest in the topic). The play opens with a happy street scene – children playing, families sharing a drink at the local juice bar – but the tranquillity is soon shattered by an exploding bomb. The lone surviving protagonist finds a series of personal effects belonging to the other characters in the debris, each object calling to mind a memory of and a longing for all that is lost. Acted without words except for the single title phrase, which the protagonist addresses to his beloved after her death in the explosion, the play is a heart-wrenching study of the emotional trauma wrought by terrorism.[9]

After the upheavals of 2011, Yemeni playwrights continued to grapple with this theme, and to delve searchingly into the root causes of radicalization. Muhammad al-Rawi's radio play *Sharicʿ Thalatha* (*Third Street*), broadcast on *FM Shabab* in 2012, continued the Yemeni trend of portraying the terrorist as a family member led terribly astray. The play depicts a love story between Hasna and Sami, two young people of differing social strata, but woven into the plot is the story of Hasna's brother Majd, gradually radicalized over the course of the play's 25 episodes by the fanatical preaching of the imam at a local mosque, and who eventually wreaks havoc as a suicide bomber.

One of the remarkable aspects of al-Rawi's play is that its format specifically encouraged dialogue with its audience about the various issues raised by the script, terrorism being one of a series of issues that the play targeted as serious dilemmas facing Yemeni society. The play was broadcast live, with groups and individuals from across Sanaʿa invited to attend the performance and to share their reactions and their questions afterwards, all as integral parts of the radio program. The broadcast thus modelled a process of individual and collective engagement and civic dialogue as a means of combating radicalization and extremism.

The theme of terrorism also recurs as a means to critique the Yemeni government, albeit indirectly and without the acerbic fury of

A Crime on Restaurant Street, in the play *Daʿmaamistan*, performed in March 2013 at Sanaʿa University. Directed and adapted by Amin Hazabir from a short story by Muhammad al-Qaʾud, *Daʿmaamistan* chronicles the fantastic adventures of an ordinary Yemeni who is unexpectedly elected president of a republic in another galaxy. The protagonist is comically unable to cope with the efficiency and transparency of the government of Daʿmaamistan, whose bureaucrats thwart his repeated attempts to institute corrupt and self-serving policies, to carve out backroom deals, and to filch money from the state treasury to pay his personal expenses. In stark contrast to the realities of Yemen, this fictional government is vigilant over its territory to a point that would render terrorism impossible. When the protagonist is astounded by the precision of a report that a virus-carrying ant has wandered across the republic's border, a functionary responds matter-of-factly, "[t]his is National Security, your Excellency. These days they're keeping their eyes peeled".[10]

EXTREMISTS ON STAGE, PHASE II: MONSTERS AND MADMEN

Perhaps in recognition of the power of these depictions of terrorists and terrorism on the Yemeni stage, in early 2014 the Yemeni Prime Minister's office issued a directive encouraging Yemeni theatre practitioners to address the issue of terrorism in their work (pers. interview Salih, April 2014). Given the previous flourishing of plays that treat the issue of terrorism, one might have assumed official encouragement to be superfluous. The directive seems nevertheless to have had a palpable effect: Of the 12 performances that constituted the 2014 theatre festival in Sanaʿa, three took terrorism as a central theme, with five others either alluding to it in ancillary fashion or treating related issues. Yet this increase in quantity did not signify a greater intellectual engagement with the issue of terrorism, nor a surge in creative meditation on solutions to the problem. Rather, most of the festival plays returned to a stock portrayal of extremists as unfathomably alien and incomprehensible.

The tone was set by the festival's opening production, written and directed by ʿUmar ʿAbd Allah Salih.[11] Entitled *Marzuq in the Role of the Terrorist*, this improvizational comedy features a bumbling actor who

must represent an extremist on stage but cannot get a handle on the character, shocked as he is by the very idea of extremist violence. His director Hamud's repeated attempts to deconstruct the psychology of a terrorist backfire, as Marzuq comically misunderstands all of his instructions.

Most of the scenes contain a serious underlying point. Early on, Marzuq enters having "disguised" himself in a *sitara* (the traditional red and blue printed cloth that elderly Yemeni women often wrap around themselves when in public places), pointing a prop rifle towards the ceiling. Hamud angrily asks why he has chosen a rifle rather than the suicide vest prescribed by the script, and why he is aiming upwards. Marzuq responds that he is going to shoot out the power lines.[12] "I told you," says the exasperated Hamud, "that the character is a terrorist who wears a suicide vest. That's so you can blow yourself up, and everyone around you!" To which Marzuq replies, in lines that prompted sustained applause from the audience: "Fine. But anyone who attacks the electricity station is also a terrorist. And the thugs who cut the roads and harass drivers – they're terrorists! And the people who attack the gas lines – terrorists! And the ones who kidnap foreigners – terrorists!" (Salih 2014: file 1, 18m42s–19m12s).

Marzuq hereby takes the rather generic idea of terrorism and relates it to Yemen's particular manifestations of socio-political instability, such as kidnapping, extortion and attacks on fuel and power lines, suggesting that to exploit a lack of security for one's personal ends by using these types of actual or threatened violence is also a form of terrorism.

In the play's final scene, Marzuq simply refuses to play his assigned role. Instead, he delivers a stirring oration which avers, among other things, that no true Yemeni could be a terrorist; that terrorists are instruments of evil; that neither Islam nor any other religion allows a man to murder his fellow men; and that terrorists do not respect women, children, the elderly, nor Yemeni traditions and character. Hamud, startled but eventually convinced by this eloquence, delivers the final word: "It's true. None of us – not Marzuq, nor any other actor, nor any Yemeni – can play the role of a terrorist. Why not? Because terrorism has no religion" (ibid.: file 2, 23m55s–24m11s).

This performance was followed the subsequent night by the play *Wa al-Hall?* (*What's the Solution?*) by Salih al-Salih,[13] in which a long-bearded *mutashaddid*[14] harasses the other characters with increasing violence, accusing them of heresy and deviance. The play clearly illustrates the connections between this intolerance and an endemic culture of corruption: Whether the example is the play's tea and sandwich shop owner bribing the health inspector to ignore violations of the code of hygiene, or the *mutashaddid*'s expressions of extremism escalating unchecked and unchallenged, a climate of insecurity and lawlessness puts the entire public at risk. Unfortunately, this rather structureless play ultimately left unanswered the question posed in its title, suggesting little hope for a positive social transformation.

Al-Tawhan, directed by Muhammad al-Rakhm, had a similar plot, with an extremist who blows up himself and other characters in the final scene. Originally slated to direct Saadullah Wannous's classic political satire *The King is the King* for the festival, al-Rakhm substituted this play at the last minute, in response to a long disbursement delay and a substantial decrease in the subsidies the Ministry of Culture offered to the festival directors.[15] It was a poor choice: The script was filled with stock characters and slapstick comedy, which provoked cheap laughter but little emotional or intellectual engagement. Worse still, the staging incorporated juvenile, cartoonish sound effects to emphasize punch lines. Rather than a collaboration between audience and actors to create meaning, this production at times seemed like a competition between opposing parties, with groups of rowdy teenagers in the house calling out their own one-liners, at times drowning out the dialogue. Troublingly, a few particularly uncouth members of these groups even audibly mocked the play's climactic closing scene.

Fortunately, the festival's penultimate production *Irhab ya Nas!* (*It's Terrorism, People!*) departed from clichéd convention. This work of experimental theatre was composed of vignettes, each one structured around a particular act of terroristic violence – a suicide bombing, a mass shooting, a siege – and its dehumanizing effects on the survivors. Unconventional and provoking, *Irhab ya Nas!* contained some of the festival's most memorable moments:

a moving tableau scene in which a female character mourns an infant killed in the violence; a gaggle of reporters parasitically descending on the carnage, competing to obtain the bloodiest background for their video montages; groups of actors imitating monkeys and dogs, losing their humanity and descending into a mad pack of snarling, clawing beasts (al-Salih 2014a).

Yet this production too was flawed, notably by the decision to play one of the female characters in drag for easy laughs that sadly diminished the gravitas of the subject matter, and by technical problems, especially with the music and sound effects. The latter issue may stem in part from the fact that this play, too, was also a last-minute festival substitute. Director Salih al-Salih had originally proposed to direct Amin Abu Haydar's *Irhab Bom Dot Com* (*Terrorism Bomb Dot Com*).

Abu Haydar's play contains a fascinating scene in which a *shaykh*, Saʿid, having carried out a suicide bombing to achieve martyrdom, is confronted after death by two ghostly figures, one in red, one in green, who reject his claims to paradise. "There is no peace for those who violate peace," they intone, accusing him of being "a murderer, a criminal, a savage terrorist who has sold his soul to the devil, not to God" (Abu Haydar 2013: 22–3). A disembodied celestial voice then tells him that suicide is forbidden, that he is a criminal, and that those he has killed are the true martyrs. Happily for the *shaykh*, this turns out to be merely a dream-vision of the afterlife; he reawakens on earth to find that his suicide vest has not detonated, and renounces all acts of terrorism.

But this powerful scene seems disjointed from the rest of the play: We have little indication of why the *shaykh*, a family man with grown sons, one an officer in the army, is seduced by extremist rhetoric. The *shaykh*'s own explanation is demonic possession (ibid.: 28), and indeed the names of the play's terrorist figures indicate them as evil caricatures: Ghoul, Bat, and disembodied Head are the villainous masterminds of the *shaykh*'s temporary radicalization. The stage directions, which call for scenes of newsreel-type footage of the aftermath of terrorist attacks to be projected onto onstage screens, also had a dangerous potential to reduce actual violence to the level of theatrical illusion. As such, *Irhab ya Nas!*, which

examined the emotional repercussions of terrorist violence, was a better choice.

Other festival productions treated the subject of violent extremism more obliquely. *Al-Tifl* (*The Child*), written by Egyptian playwright Fawzi Miladi and skilfully directed by Ha'il al-Salwi, contained a clear warning, if not against terrorism per se, then at least against attempts to remedy injustice through acts of violence; the protagonist who takes the law into his own hands ends up mistakenly killing his beloved infant son rather than the true target of his rage. A scene from *Al-Ushaq Yamutun Kull Yawm* (*The Passionate Die Every Day*), authored by the much-admired and recently deceased Yemeni playwright Muhammad al-Sharafi and directed by Insaf ʿAlawi, featured the director of a morgue who must judge whether the bodies of the deceased deserve internment in the illustrious martyrs' cemetery, after their souls appear to him to plead their cases. The range of motivations – occasionally noble, but more often petty and pedestrian – that spurred these dead to lay down their lives could be seen as a pointed critique of the facile rhetoric of martyrdom utilized and promoted by terrorist groups.

Ironically, given the repeated focus on the issue, the festival's standout production *Min Int?* (*Who Are You?*), directed by ʿAbd Allah Yahya Ibrahim, was not at all about terrorism. Yet the script very cleverly played on the audience's preconceived expectations by featuring a mysterious monster that kidnaps innocent people off the streets and whisks them away to his lair. An old man who escapes from captivity recounts that the monster's prisoners include women, children, the elderly, people of all types and classes, causing the other characters to ask the question that gives the play its title – that is, who or what is this monster? The slew of kidnappings, his sinister redoubt, the fact that no one is safe from his depredations and that the government seems powerless to stop him, all suggest that the monster is a symbol of terrorism in Yemen.

Yet in the play's final moments, when one of the characters despairingly wails "Who are you?" the monster responds by picking up a placard from a table on the set and holding it with a flourish towards the audience. On the placard is written *al-Saratan* (cancer). At this point in the performance, the actors broke character to

explain to the audience that cancer often goes undiagnosed in Yemen until it is too late; that it can affect young and old, men and women, rich and poor; and that volunteers from a local cancer awareness project were in the theatre to hand out informational pamphlets, including the address of a clinic equipped to screen for various forms of cancer. The production had cleverly played on anxiety about terrorism as an ingenious means of misdirecting the audience's suspicions about the monster's identity, giving the play a satisfyingly surprising ending while also emphasizing the seriousness of the disease and the critical need for early detection.

It seems, then, that the ministerial directive did serve to increase the quantity of Yemeni plays in the 2014 theatre festival that focused on terrorism. Yet the quality of most of these, in terms of the literary value of the scripts, the technical sophistication of the production, and the skills demonstrated by the actors, was mediocre. The festival's outstanding plays were those that departed from the dictates of the Prime Minister's office, reflecting in a more abstract fashion upon the nature of violence and extremism and the threats these pose to Yemeni society.

Moreover, the festival's terrorism plays represented an unsettling departure from the previously prevailing tendency to depict at least some terrorist characters as susceptible to reason, reform and reintegration. Instead of semi-committed radicals, the festival showed only lone wolves: The extremists in *Wa al-Hall?, al-Tawhan* and *Irhab ya Nas!* are all crazed fanatics, prepared to commit unspeakable acts of violence for no discernible reason.

This flattening of difference was likely due in some instances to a playwright's desire to give Yemeni officialdom what it presumably wanted – a straightforward condemnation of terrorism in Yemen. In other cases, it may have stemmed from a dearth of imagination and/or a lack of desire to grapple with an unsettling character. Certainly the appalling attack on the Ministry of Defence in December 2013,[16] in which civilians seeking treatment in the ministry hospital were gunned down or blown up in grenade attacks, substantiated in the minds of some Yemenis the notion that terrorists are unspeakably evil, savage and animalistic beyond the possibility of human outreach. Yet, undoubtedly, the sputtering conclusion of the

National Dialogue – the mechanism heralded as the lynchpin of Yemen's peaceful and democratic transition, which concluded in January 2014 with little to boast in terms of concrete results or measurable improvements to citizens' daily lives – also caused many of Yemen's citizens to lose faith in the model of dialogue as a solution to Yemen's problems, or as a process by which such solutions may be found.

The changing portrayal of terrorists on the stage reflects this cognitive shift. When dialogue seemed an effective strategy, some terrorists were rendered as psychologically complex potential interlocutors. From 2014 onwards, however, Yemeni playwrights increasingly opted to stage an inscrutable, inherently brutal and violent stereotype of the kind critiqued by Jack Shaheen, suggesting that there is no point in attempting a dialogue with such monstrosities, no language common to civilized, rational "Us" and savage, bloodthirsty "Them".

This may in many cases be true. The bloody executions perpetrated on video in 2014 and after by the terrorists of the so-called Islamic State, for example, are monstrous to a degree that defies description. Yet the Yemeni stage previously posited a more nuanced distinction between the truly evil extremist and the misguided radical. If the latter were radicalized through a process, through propaganda and manipulation, then surely, the argument went, there was still hope that at least some could be de-radicalized through a process of moral education to which the theatre itself could contribute. Dialogue was thus one useful strategy among several that the government and society could potentially bring to bear to address this problem.

Yemen's more recent performances, however, illustrated the abject loss of that optimistic conviction, portraying terrorism as a problem that can only be solved through lethal force. This trend on the stage foreshadowed the prevailing dynamics of macro-level socio-political events. The main players in the Huthi takeover of Sanaʿa, in the political turmoil that has fragmented the nation and paralysed the government, and in the devastating aerial bombardment by the Saudi-led coalition, for example, have all attempted to justify their destructive actions by painting their opponents as extremists who

cannot be reasoned with, claiming that their own objectives can only be achieved through brute force.[17]

CONCLUSION

The stage is Yemeni society in microcosm, in its most creative, lively and provoking form. Its productions have repeatedly presaged Yemen's upheavals and evolutions: It modelled the Arab Spring years before its inception and, over the course of 2011, it illustrated the euphoria of the Spring while warning against its potential pitfalls. In 2014, when the Yemeni stage began to portray the issue of terrorism as a struggle of good vs. absolute evil – an "Us vs. Them" conflict in which either one or both sides must come to a bloody end – it augured the turbulent and frightening era that has since come.

The current conflict in Yemen will not conclude with one party obliterating its opponents and erasing their viewpoints, no matter how zealously its various belligerents may work towards that end. Honest, fair-minded dialogue, capable of distinguishing between the hardcore fanatics and the reclaimable radicals on all sides, will be the country's only way forward in its search for stability. Yemen's theatre- and film-makers have not shied away from such dialogue in the recent past, nor should their political counterparts in the present.

NOTES

1. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of ʿAbd Allah Yahya Ibrahim, Amin Abu Haydar, Amin Hazabir, Haʾil al-Salwi, Lutfi Hamud, Muhammad al-Rawi, Nabhan al-Shami, Nizar Ghanim, Salih al-Salih, ʿUmar ʿAbd Allah Salih and Wajdi al-Ahdal, all of whom provided scripts, video footage, and/or interviews; and Subhi al-Zurayqi, whose help in navigating the linguistic complexities of Yemeni theatre has been invaluable.
2. The secondary literature on this phenomenon is enormous even if we limit ourselves to examination of post-colonial studies, which is not the only field of inquiry to have contributed to development of this framework. Post-colonial criticism provides highly useful theoretical discussions of demonization and dehumanization of the "Other" – for which, see Fanon 2001; Spivak 1988; Said 1997, etc.

3. See for example Fleischmann. Scholar Christopher Boucek, however, rightly noted that the film was "unconventional" and "an excellent example" of the use of non-traditional media to fight radicalization (Boucek 2008: 1).
4. Here the subtitling contains several linguistic errors and omits the reference to Nasir's wife, so I have provided my own translation.
5. Early on in the film the Shaykh, the mastermind of the terrorist cell, complains that the Yemeni security forces are the best in the Arab world: "Our situation here is difficult, not like the others' in all the other countries. Can you imagine that we can't carry out any operation to get us closer to God, for the government is very vigilant" (al-ʿUlafi et al. 2008: 16m59s–17m18s).
6. For a full translation of the play, see al-Ahdal 2016; for a more detailed analysis of it, see Hennessey 2015.
7. Rehearsals of this play at the Cultural Centre in Sanaʿa elicited the scrutiny of Yemen's Political Security forces, according to Hazabir. Scholar Sarah Philips has, of course, made an analogous argument to al-Ahdal's; i.e. that the Salih regime permitted just enough violence and disorder in Yemen to trigger fears of terrorism within the international community, prompting offers of millions of dollars in aid, which in turn enabled the perpetuation of a cycle of patronage politics, corruption, and violence – Salih as bank manager indeed.
8. Al-Ahdal 2009: p. 4 for stage directions, including placement of the toilet, and p. 18 for the gory final scene. Translations from this and the other plays are mine.
9. This play was performed immediately after another one-act play, *Hadhariyyat al-Tuyur Ghadarat-ha al-Ajniha*, on the subject of abuse and discrimination against women. A number of the actors and actresses played roles in both plays, thus visually linking these two forms of violence in the audience's mind. For more on these plays, see Hennessey 2012.
10. Al-Qaʾud and Hazabir 2013: file 01_2, 1m10s–1,18s. Translated from a DVD of the performance provided by Hazabir.
11. Salih composed an outline of the script, to which actors Sulayman Dawud (Marzuq), Khalid al-Bahri (Hamud), and ʿAbd al-Nasir al-ʿArasi contributed numerous jokes and improvised lines, so that the production changed and evolved constantly over the course of rehearsals, and even during the performance.
12. Targeting power lines, which can plunge the entire country into a blackout, is a sadly common strategy among various species of militants in Yemen. In addition to inconvenience and lost productivity, this tactic causes millions of dollars' worth of damage to appliances, computers, etc.
13. Technically, this was not one of the festival performances, as its sponsorship was independent of the Ministry of Culture.
14. A word used in Yemen to refer variously to a religious fundamentalist, hardliner, or fanatic.

15. For more on the challenges faced by directors at this year's theatre festival, see Hennessey 2014.
16. For the details of this attack, cf. Khalil 2013; Arrabyee and Hubbard 2013, etc.
17. An understandable assumption, given that the Huthi participation in Yemen's National Dialogue Conference was blighted by the assassination of two of their representatives: ʿAbd al-Karim Jadban and Ahmad Sharaf al-Din, on 22 November 2013 and 21 January 2014, respectively.

REFERENCES

Abu Haydar, Amin, *Irhab Bom Dot Com* [*Terrorism Bomb Dot Com*] Unpublished script (Sanaʿa, 2013).

al-Ahdal, Wajdi, *Jarima fi-Shariʿ al-Mataʾim* [*A Crime on Restaurant Street*], Theatrical performance (Sanaʿa, 2009).

——— 'A Crime on Restaurant Street', *Arab Stages* 5/1 (Fall 2016). Translated by Katherine Hennessey. Available at http://arabstages.org/2016/10/a-crime-on-restaurant-street/ (accessed 8 June 2017).

Arrabyee, Nasir and Ben Hubbard, 'Attack on Yemeni Defense Ministry compound kills 52', *New York Times*, 5 December 2013. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/06/world/middleeast/yemen-attack.html?_r=0 (accessed 8 June 2017).

Boucek, Christopher, '*The Losing Bet* and unconventional counter-radicalization in Yemen', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (6 November 2008). Available at http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Boucek_Losing_Bet_Analysis.pdf (accessed 8 June 2017).

Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York, 2001).

Fleischmann, Jeffrey, 'Yemeni director combats terrorism with propaganda', *Los Angeles Times*, 26 December 2009. Available at http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/26/world/la-fg-losing-bet26-2009dec26 (accessed 8 June 2017).

Future Partners for Development Foundation, *Wayn Inti al-An?* [*Where Are You Now?*], Theatrical performance (Sanaʿa Cultural Centre, 2010).

Hennessey, Katherine, 'Staging a protest: Socio-political critique in contemporary Yemeni theatre', in E. Houssami (ed.), *Doomed by Hope: Essays on the Theatre* (London, 2012).

——— 'Drama in Yemen: Behind the scenes at World Theater Day', *Middle East Report* 271 (Summer 2014), pp. 36–9.

——— 'Staging the revolution: The drama of Yemen's Arab Spring', *Arabian Humanities* 4 (2015). Available at http://cy.revues.org/2848 (accessed 8 June 2017).

Ibrahim, Yahya and ʿAbdallah Yahya, *Min Int?* [*Who Are You?*], Theatrical performance (Sanaʿa Cultural Centre, 6 May 2014).

Jamal, ʿAmr, *Bushra Sara*, DVD of theatrical performance (Al-Noor Centre, Aden, 2007).

Khalil, Shaimaa, 'Deadly attacks hit Yemen Defense Ministry in Sanaa', *BBC News*, 5 December 2013. Available at http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25228729 (accessed 8 June 2017).

Miladi, Fawzi, *Al-Tifl* [*The Child*], Theatrical performance, directed by Haʾil al-Salwi (Sanaʿa Cultural Centre, 1 May 2014).

Philips, Sarah, *Yemen and the Politics of Permanent Crisis* (London, 2011).

al-Qaʾud, Muhammad and Amin Hazabir, *Da'maamistan*. DVD of theatrical performance (Sanaʿa University, March 2013).

al-Rakhm, Muhammad, *Al-Tawhan*, Theatrical performance (Sanaʿa Cultural Centre, 4 May 2014).

al-Rawi, Muhammad, *Sharīʿ Thalatha* [*Third Street*], Radio play, broadcast by *FM Shabab* (Sanaʿa, 2012).

Said, Edward, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York, 1997).

al-Salih, Salih, *Irhab ya Nas!* [*It's Terrorism, People!*], Theatrical performance (Sanaʿa Cultural Center, 12 May 2014a).

——— *Wa al-Hall?* [*What's the Solution?*], Theatrical performance (Sanaʿa Cultural Centre, 1 April 2014b).

Salih, ʿUmar ʿAbd Allah, *Marzuq in the Role of the Terrorist*. Theatrical performance, filmed by Ben Wiacek (Sanaʿa Cultural Centre, 30 March 2014).

——— Personal interview, filmed by Ben Wiacek (Sanaʿa, 6 April 2014).

Shaheen, Jack, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Northampton, 2001).

al-Sharafi, Muhammad, *Al-Ushaq Yamutun Kull Yawm* [*The Passionate Die Every Day*], Theatrical performances, directed by Insaf Alawi (Sanaʿa Cultural Centre, 5 and 10 May 2014).

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, 1988), pp. 271–313.

al-ʿUlafi, Fadl, Muhammad al-Hubaishi and ʿAbd al-Karim al-Ashmuri, *Al-Rihan al-Khasir* [*The Losing Bet*], DVD (Sanaʿa, 2008).

Wikepedia, 'Valley of the Wolves' and 'Valley of the Wolves: Iraq', *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* (4 January 2015). Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valley_of_the_Wolves (accessed 8 June 2017).

CHAPTER 12

Can the "Old Yemen" Survive the "New Yemen"?: The Depredations of War and Other Threats to Yemen's Cultural Heritage

Stephen Steinbeiser

INTRODUCTION

Though prized for its authenticity, antiquity, and exotic provenance, Yemeni heritage is facing grave dangers. Direct threats include the violent turmoil of the current war as well as the aerial bombardment campaign begun by the Saudi-led coalition on 26 March 2015, and locally-based illegal activity such as looting and smuggling. Indirect threats include neglect, natural degradation, and the nation's economic decline. Efforts to preserve and conserve heritage in the country are urgently necessary if the "Old Yemen" – the timeless chain of tangible and intangible patrimony linking Yemen's past to its current generations – is to survive, flourish in, and benefit the "New Yemen", in whatever configuration it may emerge after the eventual resolution of the current crises.

This chapter analyses pre-war strategies and approaches to conserving Yemen's diverse cultural heritage, and explores the potential of that heritage to serve as a sustainable economic resource. It surveys negative examples – for example, those in which local actors have been marginalized from heritage preservation projects – but also presents positive case studies in which Yemeni individuals

and communities, cognizant of the threats to and the value of their local patrimony, have successfully shouldered the burden of preserving it, independent of government support. The chapter argues that local efforts to protect Yemen's cultural heritage, particularly in times of crisis, can be significantly more effective than attempts at intervention on the part of the central government (in whatever form that may eventually take), and that recent international attempts to draw the world's attention to this issue should be combined with concerted political action, both to pressure the coalition to desist from bombing heritage sites, and to encourage productive local efforts to protect Yemen's heritage once rehabilitation of the country occurs.[1]

THOSE WHO BUILD VS. THOSE WHO DESTROY: YEMENI HERITAGE AND ITS VULNERABILITIES

In a *New York Times* editorial published 26 June 2015, Lamya Khalidi recalls the painstaking work that she and an international team of archaeologists dedicated, over the course of a decade, to excavating historical sites in Yemen that dated back to 2500 B.C. The team carefully preserved the artefacts they unearthed, which were collected and displayed in the Dhamar Regional Museum until 22 May 2015, when the museum was razed by a Saudi-led coalition (SLC) airstrike. In an instant, the bombing consigned to oblivion the priceless remnants of a civilization that dated back four and a half millennia.

Over the course of their military campaigns "Decisive Storm" (26 March–21 April 2015) and "Restoring Hope" (22 April 2015–ongoing, at the time of writing), SLC airstrikes have apparently hit the Great Maʾrib Dam, Qaliyat al-Qahira (Cairo Castle, an Ottoman-era white stone fortress) in Taʿiz, the Old City of Sanaʿa, the Old City of Saʿda, and the al-Hadi Mosque (a 1200-year-old Zaydi site in Saʿda), in addition to the Dhamar Museum.[2] Another airstrike narrowly missed Dar al-Hajar (Taylor 2015), an iconic landmark on the outskirts of Sanaʿa, which this article surveys in detail below.

Determining whether such airstrikes represent a concerted effort on the part of the Saudi military to target Yemen's heritage sites would require intimate knowledge of decision-making processes at

the upper echelons of the coalition military, and is thus beyond the scope of this chapter.[3] Yet whatever the motives and whatever the intentions, the longer the war continues, the more Yemen's civilians and its cultural heritage suffer. As an increasingly prevalent Yemeni adage puts it, *mukharrib wahid ghalib alf ʿammar*: A single vandal can destroy the work of a thousand builders.

PICTURING THE FUTURE OF HERITAGE: A ROLE FOR YEMENIS?

Though aerial bombardment is the swiftest-acting and most fearsome menace to Yemen's heritage, it is only one of the current conglomeration of threats. Yemenis themselves, as actors on the ground, are often better placed than anyone else to respond to and ameliorate these threats, and they have a vested interest in the protection of their own cultural heritage, as an asset that could provide economic benefits in the future. Yet, as we shall see, local actors are often left out of the picture – quite literally, in one example discussed below – when international organizations conceptualize heritage preservation in Yemen.

The term "heritage" covers a wide range of meanings, including tangible forms, such as buildings, monuments, and artefacts, as well as intangible forms, like music, dance, and language. In economic terms, the World Bank describes heritage as an "asset" (Throsby 2012: 46), drawing upon capital theory, wherein goods combined with labour produce additional goods and services. Indeed, heritage, such as a traditional song, when performed, recorded, published or otherwise produced can create jobs and generate income. Yet heritage assets are not coextensive with other types of known assets, because their value may not derive entirely from market valuation, as real estate does, but also from non-market valuations, such as residents' nostalgia for preserving it. Value may also derive from non-economic terms, as when a site holds religious significance or an object serves as a symbol of identity: people may pay more to see a traditional song performed, for example, or to purchase a recording of it, if it holds particular resonance as an expression of religious, national or ethnic identity. Underlying elements of cultural value can be aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, social, historic, scientific, or related to notions

of authenticity, and identifying cultural value requires "recognising that it is a concept reflecting a number of different dimensions of value; not all of them may be present in a particular case, and their significance may vary from one situation to another" (ibid.: 54–6).

Unlike other forms of capital, cultural capital is "inherited from the past, will deteriorate or degrade if not maintained, and impose[s] a burden on the present generation a duty to care for the assets involved so they can be handed down to future generations" (ibid.: 48). Special principles thus attach to cultural capital, paramount among them the principle of sustainable development through preservation, conservation, restoration, adaptive reuse, and historic environment initiatives.[4] The World Bank's approach to heritage has evolved over time from "do-no-harm" in the 1980s to "specific intervention" in the 1990s to its current "integrated approach", which it describes as "integrating cultural heritage in local economic development, considering tangible and intangible assets comprehensively" (SSD 2010: slide 25).[5]

Problematically, little of Yemen's rich heritage has been well documented, and current discussion of Yemen focuses on its immediate political and social problems, ranging from political disorder to vanishing natural resources, with little long-term vision evident. Yemen is much maligned in international media as a haven for militants, such as al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, and rebel movements, and branded a "failed state", "extremist", and "tribal". Even before the current military conflict, the bureaucratic dysfunction among Yemen's ministries and agencies was particularly problematic within those responsible for preserving culture and heritage: officials were often reluctant to act because of an unclear purview, leaving heritage vulnerable to unscrupulous individuals' attempts to exploit it.

Rather than attempting to compel more action from a national government already dealing with multiple crises before the Saudi intervention, some Yemeni individuals and communities pursued strategies to protect, develop and in fact prosper from the country's important heritage at more local levels. Thus far, however, their efforts have received little recognition; they have not been integrated

into the big picture of heritage preservation agendas in Yemen, which are set not only by the central government but also by a range of international experts and international non-governmental organizations who work in the field in Yemen, or who comment upon it from outside the country.

For an illustration of the degree to which heritage conservation discourse may overlook the potential contributions of local Yemenis, we need look no further than the cover of the World Bank's seminal work on deriving economic benefit from cultural heritage, entitled *The Economics of Uniqueness* (Licciardi and Amirtahrmasebi 2012). The cover photo shows a scene from the northern Yemeni village of Hababah, situated between Thula and Shibam-Kawkaban in Sanaʿa governorate. This area used to be the site of much tourism in Yemen, but has now been rocked by conflict between Huthi partisans and local non-Huthi communities (Al-Sakkaf 2014). The photo immediately conveys the singularity of northern Yemeni architecture: an imposing, sand-coloured cluster of tall stone homes hovering around the edge of an inviting communal pool of blue water. Hababah, as the picture illustrates, typifies a Yemeni highland village, distinguished by "Arabian Gothic architecture" (Tim Mackintosh-Smith, in Ben Hirsi 2000) and harmonious, communal design, with a compact centre that houses the local mosque, gardens, market and cisterns. This is the type of idyllic site tourists enjoy when coming to Yemen, and one of the iconic images that those familiar with Yemen may imagine when the term "Yemeni cultural heritage" is used. To the unfamiliar, the scene may serve to dispel the more violent and chaotic images of Yemen often found in world media.

However, the cover illustration is also striking for what is absent: no residents of Hababah, or any Yemenis at all, are visible in the photo. So in addition to presenting an idealized vision of preserved architectural heritage, the photo also symbolizes the tenor of discourse surrounding cultural heritage preservation in Yemen, which often focuses on the realm of tangible effects and immoveable structures and landscapes, not of living communities, their changing heritage and their evolving role in preserving it. Officials and experts alike often discuss preserving the stones, mud brick, painted wood, paper manuscripts, etc., in places like Hababah, but the role of local

Yemenis and how they actually benefit from and, more crucially, sustain that process is rarely considered. This is not to indict the efforts of organizations, mostly foreign, who are the primary engine of support for such projects and who train Yemenis in restoration techniques, but rather to suggest the importance of two questions with which some externally-funded projects seem reluctant to engage: how local communities may benefit financially from investment in heritage projects, and how they will sustain them in times of confusion or outright strife.[6]

LOCKING LOCAL INHABITANTS OUT: THE ʿAMIRIYA MOSQUE

The World Bank's photo illustration of the disconnect between preservation projects and local people is not mere coincidence; I have personally observed instances in Yemen in which local communities are kept at a distance from heritage preservation projects. In 2005, for example, I travelled to Radaʿ in the governorate of al-Baydhaʾ to visit the *masjid* al-ʿAmiriya, a historic sixteenth-century Tahirid dynasty mosque/school complex which, at the time, had recently been restored. While the goal of restoration was to save this majestic structure, an indirect benefit to the local community was the possibility of attracting tourists to the comparatively impoverished town of Radaʿ, a short two-hour drive from Sanaʿa. When I visited as a tourist, however, the guard would not allow me to enter without permission from "the Ministry" (which ministry was not specified). After a minor delay I was able to supply permission and gained entry to the mosque. At least 100 people who had happened to gather around me during my discussion with the guard followed me into the main prayer hall, with its sumptuously intricate, vibrantly coloured geometric and calligraphic decoration extending across the domed ceilings. When I asked several of my new companions when they had last visited, they responded, to my surprise, that none had previously seen the inside of the restored mosque – it was effectively closed to the public, even to the inhabitants of Radaʿ.

In the intervening years, according to anecdotal reports, the *masjid* has essentially remained closed. In late winter 2012, Radaʿ became known in international media as a town controlled by al-Qaʿida

(Smoltczyk 2012). Some members of the al-Dhahab family occupied the *masjid* al-ʿAmiriya and, as one of their first acts of defiance, opened the mosque to public prayer at noon on Friday. Eventually, they were dislodged with minimal damage to the mosque, a tribute to the enduring *masjid* and its ability to resist destruction for over five centuries. But it still stands empty, unvisited; a serious investment of time and energy, not to mention the sum of around half a million US dollars invested in the restoration,[7] that holds little potential to serve as a cultural, social, religious or economic hub of any kind during Yemen's present crises. In 2014, it was not advisable to travel to Radaʿ at all; even the Executive Director of the Ministry of Tourism, herself from Radaʿ, recommended against a visit (pers. interview Huraibi, May 2014), and conditions have only worsened since.

The irony of the difficulties that the inhabitants of Radaʿ face in accessing the ʿAmiriya mosque is twofold. First, the *masjid* is an expression of uniquely local art and architecture: its creators, the Tahirids, were a local, tribal family, whose style contrasted markedly from that of their cosmopolitan predecessors, the Rasulids (Al-Radi 1997: 37). The *masjid* expressed the culmination of that style and has survived for five centuries, despite wars, economic downturns and occupations. Second, the restoration project itself deliberately involved "the use of local rather than international talent", carefully training local workers in restoration techniques (ibid.: 197). That these workers participated for ten years in the restoration of a splendid structure only to be locked out after its completion highlights one of the challenges of incorporating heritage into strategies for development.

ILLEGAL EXPLOITATION OF HERITAGE IN YEMEN

Another dire threat to Yemen's cultural heritage is that of looting and theft. On a broad level, one historian described the Salih-era government as so riddled by a culture of endemic corruption as to constitute a "kleptocracy" (Burrowes 2012).[8] While direct appropriation by the government of tangible heritage effects has not been made public, if it has happened at all, cases of negligence are evident. In one brazen example, a few days before the Islamic festival of

ʿId al-Adha in October 2013, when offices had closed the museum to begin the holiday period, the director of the National Museum in Sanaʿa unexpectedly returned only to discover the theft of antique swords and of pages from an historic copy of the Qurʾan (al-Jubari 2013). This scandalous event, coordinated from the inside, involved an official from the very agency tasked with protecting antiquities in Yemen. Despite the return of the stolen treasures and the perpetrators being brought to justice, the resultant public outcry and political finger-pointing left museum and agency officials alike anxious and reticent to pursue public events at the museum, which has remained closed to the public since.

This is one example among many of the dangers to cultural heritage that stem directly and indirectly from Yemen's violent upheavals from the Arab Spring onwards. Even before the current conflict the push to eradicate militants and rebel movements resulted in direct assaults on heritage sites, such as the occupation of the ʿAmiriya Mosque in 2013 in Radaʿ (Smoltczyk 2012); the destruction and looting of the museum in Abyan (pers. interview al-Sayani September 2013); an assault on the property of the museum in al-Mukalla (pers. comm. Ba Wazir, June 2014); and the closure of most of the roughly 27 public museums in the country out of safety concerns (pers. interview al-Hadi, November 2013). Reports of rocket attacks close to Thula, an important heritage and tourist site that has recently received several tens of thousands of US dollars in restoration (pers. interview al-Hadhrami, May 2014b), are even more alarming.

Perhaps most serious, however, are reports that ordinary Yemenis themselves have begun to mine the country's treasures. An accurate assessment of looting, smuggling and the illegal trade in Yemeni antiquities is difficult and often relies on anecdotal accounts, but it is well known that some artefacts have already been stolen, illegally exported, sold at auction or through other channels, or appropriated for private, in-country use. ʿAbd al-Karim al-Barakani, Deputy Manager of Antiquities and Cultural Properties Protection, estimates that at least 450 antique artefacts were smuggled from Yemen in 2013, of which only 60 have been recovered (Yemen Post 2014). Alexander Nagel of the Smithsonian Institution has traced the

prevalence of Yemeni antiquities on the international black market, noting high demand for artefacts like alabaster sculptures and medieval manuscripts.[9] A few years ago, a gang of young speculators in Sanaʿa took the initiative to illegally purchase as many artefacts as they could afford, with the intent to seek buyers at a higher purchase price. When asked why they wished to do so, they cited their desire to purchase the latest iPads, iPhones, and other gadgetry, trading their ancient past for a digital future (pers. interview al-Baydhani, June 2012). Officials openly discuss the efforts of an individual in Europe to sell a *kursi al-ʿarsh*, or "throne chair" – apparently one of a pair of ancient Minean stone thrones from the village of al-Sawdaʾ in al-Jawf governorate, which are associated in Yemen with *mahram Bilqis*, the purported Temple of the Queen of Sheba – for a reported six million euros (pers. interview al-Sayani, September 2013).[10]

Some high profile cases have had a net positive outcome – such as the detection of smuggled manuscripts in Beirut and their subsequent return to Sanaʿa, as well as the arrest of a British national at the Sanaʿa International Airport in February 2014 with 16 artefacts in his baggage (Yemen Post 2014). But unsuccessfully-resolved cases often remain unreported, at least publicly, and are difficult to trace. Yemeni professors and officials estimate that this has resulted in the loss of millions of dollars' worth of artefacts traded illegally, for which they blame the general lack of a strong central authority in the country, particularly acute since 2011 (pers. interviews ʿAbd Allah and Shaʾif, June 2012; al-Barakani, September 2013).

Fortunately, it is sometimes possible for local authorities to counter these threats. For instance, a well-respected *shaykh* from a village near the town of Dhamar issued a request that, should the villagers unearth any artefacts in their land, they remit them to his custody rather than attempting to sell them. The *shaykh* stressed the importance of collecting and preserving such objects as a kind of common property, a part of the village's historical record. Trusting in his reputation for honesty and integrity, a number of villagers turned in artefacts they had unearthed (pers. interview al-Wajih, 2012).

A REPLICABLE LOCAL MODEL: DAR AL-HAJAR

The Dhamari *shaykh* provides one example of an individual Yemeni interested in taking on the responsibility of preserving local heritage. Another and more complete example is Dar al-Hajar and the efforts to curate it. Constructed as a summer home for Imam Yahya on a rocky protrusion in Wadi Dhahr, adjacent to the capital to the north-west, the Dar combines northern Yemeni vernacular architecture with the history of the Zaydi Imamate. As a result, it conveys both the singularity of the local aesthetic of defensive domestic architecture, and the importance of a key historical personage and era in the country. Like all built heritage, the Dar and surrounding area would have fallen into disrepair without proper care over the course of decades. Currently, however, it continues to survive, receiving restoration as necessary and even welcoming local tourists when the security situation permits.

Emblematic of northern Yemeni culture for both Yemenis and foreigners alike, Dar al-Hajar also offers a model for heritage conservation in a country where an impoverished economy and the vagaries of shifting tribal/political alliances conspire to de-incentivize local investment in heritage. The Dar avoids these possible pitfalls thanks to a unique leasing arrangement between Shaykh Yahya ʿAli Naji and the Ministry of Tourism.[11]

Shaykh Naji currently leases the Dar from the Ministry via its agent in the area, the Local Council (LC). He is the second lessee of the building. The fact that he, a private, albeit prominent citizen from Wadi Dhahr, where the Dar is located, can lease this structure at all is surprising. It bucks the general reluctance of the Yemeni government to cede control to private enterprises or individuals of public places, especially heritage sites as iconic as the Dar. This arrangement arose after Yemeni unity when, for financial reasons, the government decided to lease the Dar to an investor who held the lease for 18 years, after which, in the beginning of 2011, Shaykh Yahya took it over.

The period during which he took over the lease is important; it was during the beginning of Yemen's Arab Spring, but before serious violence broke out. This violence and the current war have made the current lease unprofitable for the Shaykh. He pays

YR 300,000 per month (about USD 1,400) to the government to lease the property, a much larger sum than the previous lessee, who paid YR 80,000 per month.[12]

Shaykh Naji has three potential sources of revenue from the site. The first is ticket sales; in a good month, he can make roughly YR 100,000 from admission tickets, mainly from local Friday tourists. Tickets for non-Yemenis cost six times as much, YR 1,000 versus YR 150, but the violence has squelched foreign tourism. Another source of revenue is hall rental for occasions, mainly weddings; the Dar's large hall costs YR 50,000 to rent for a day. The *shaykh* also has a potential source of revenue from renting out small stalls from which local traders and artisans sell wares and souvenirs.

The Dar employees total 18 people who require at least YR 350,000 per month. If the *shaykh* can rent the hall once a week for weddings, he can potentially break even on the lease, but not on the employees' salaries. Thus, as of late 2014, even with three potential revenue streams, the *shaykh* could not meet the minimal monthly lease for the Dar itself, and he was paying out of pocket for Dar expenses and employees.

On its face, this seems like a bad investment. Yet there are two distinguishing features that make this investment different for Shaykh Naji, who has experience in the tourism industry and would like to develop the site to generate revenue. First, he is optimistic that the situation will improve at some point during the remainder of his lease, which ends in 2022, and that the Dar will ultimately prove a good investment. Second, and perhaps more importantly, he is from Wadi Dhahr and would like to conserve the Dar. He recognizes that it is an iconic symbol for his community and the country, and laments the fact that "the government does not support anything" (pers. interview Naji, May 2014).

Shaykh Naji has also witnessed similar sites looted or neglected to the point of destruction. On the mountain ridge just above Dar al-Hajar sits a series of watchtowers, *nawwab* in Yemeni Arabic, which served defensive purposes historically during the Imamate period. They are so dilapidated that they require immediate emergency restoration work. Yet despite the fact that the *shaykh* has brought the matter to the attention of government officials, embassies, and

possible foreign donors, no work has been done and some of the towers have started to fall. The *shaykh* observes this, and it impels him to invest not only as a businessman, but as a citizen and patriot, too. Such pride and concern has spurred him to take it upon himself to protect another site, a presumed ancient graveyard, from looters and developers, in the hope that one day it will be properly documented and preserved.

This combination of civic pride and economic speculation, resulting effectively in a public/private partnership, stands in contradistinction to most other Yemeni models for heritage conservation with the goal of income generation. The Ministry of Tourism does not have any other similar arrangements in effect anywhere in the country (pers. interview Huraibi, May 2014). This unique partnership rose as a response to a lack of funding after unification in 1990 and the fear that the iconic Dar would fall into disrepair (pers. interview al-Hadhrami, May 2014a).

While it may be difficult to imagine that government officials could ever let a structure as recognized as Dar al-Hajar fall into this fate, the city of Zabid, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, was recently almost de-inscribed because of a lack of conservation efforts (Yemen Post 2012; al-Kibsi 2013; SabaNet 2014). Given that due to the current war, all Yemeni heritage is under threat, agreements between government agencies like the Ministry of Tourism, once they regain legitimacy, and private individual parties who are committed to investing and developing a given site make sense as a path toward cooperative conservation. Although the Dar leasing arrangement could be reproduced on a larger scale, it remains the only current example of this type of public/private agreement in the country (pers. interview Salih, June 2014).

Other projects have sought to engage local communities through the local councils (LCs), to varying degrees of success. Thula is an example of a tourist area that has historically been popular with both foreign and domestic tourists, and in which the LC has been instrumental and largely successful in attracting and revitalizing large areas of the urban core. Most of the lower fort complex has been restored, including the cistern and pathways. The urban fabric has been preserved because of restoration work along the town's

perimeter wall. Yet because the LC did not advertise the rehabilitation, attract events and festivities, nor sought to promote the town as a tourist destination even among Yemenis, the economic advantage of the project ended with the restoration work.

Another local heritage preservation effort is that of the Idanoot Foundation for Folklore, founded and run in Sanaʿa by Fatima al-Baydhani. Al-Baydhani's interest in Yemeni folklore and storytelling sparked a grass-roots initiative to collect and publish poems, folktales, children's stories and songs from across the entire country. Idanoot has produced an enormous database of their collection, small sections of which have been published on CDs and in short story anthologies. Yet even this pioneering organization ran short of funding in the wake of the Arab Spring, and since 2014 their work has been mainly suspended.

Finally, I must cite the example of cultural heritage preservation with which I am most intimately acquainted: the construction of a four-story mud brick tower house in the al-Qaʿ neighbourhood of Sanaʿa, a project which I oversaw over the course of 2010, and in which my wife and I lived from 2011 to mid-2014, when events outside our control forced us to leave Yemen. I worked closely with a local architect and restoration specialist to design the building, and he drew on the decades-long expertise of an extensive team of carpenters, stonemasons, ironmongers, glass-, plaster-, and brickmakers, all of them trained in traditional Yemeni methods of construction. All of them were captivated – as was I – by the opportunity to create, from scratch, a traditional tower house using the beautiful vernacular architecture of the al-Qaʿ neighbourhood, which is similar in a number of respects to that of the Old City of Sanaʿa. It was the first traditional building to be constructed using wholly traditional techniques and materials in western Sanaʿa in decades (pers. interview al-Hadhrami, May 2014a).

This project effectively preserved and celebrated a crucial form of Yemen's intangible cultural heritage – the knowledge and skills of this highly trained group of builders – and the fact that we were able to accomplish this feat, in less than a year, demonstrates that Yemen's vernacular architecture is a viable construction method to this day. Such a point is of crucial importance in considering not only

how to repair damaged traditional buildings but what options exist when – as in the example of Gulf "reconstruction" projects considered in the next section – such buildings are damaged beyond the possibility of repair.

GCC AID'S UNPREDICTABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR YEMENI HERITAGE

The Gulf countries deserve special consideration when speaking of heritage protection in Yemen, because of their geographically and culturally close relationship, and because all six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – are presently investing heavily in turning culture and heritage, their own and others', into economic resources (Defterios 2014). Formal collective Gulf efforts to support development in Yemen began at a GCC summit in Abu Dhabi in 2005, at which the Gulf countries officially announced their intention to assist development and infrastructure projects in Yemen (Al Qadhi 2008). The following year Gulf countries pledged USD 4.7 billion in aid for Yemen, to be used over a period of four years, from 2007 to 2010 (ibid.). Towards the end of 2012, the GCC even opened an office in Sanaʿa to oversee aid distribution (Yemen Fox 2012).

Pledges through the GCC do not represent all aid from the Gulf community to Yemen. Each Gulf country makes individual allocations to the government of Yemen, too. At the height of the political crisis in the summer of 2011, Saudi Arabia donated three million barrels of oil (Almasmari 2011) and the United Arab Emirates gave 500 million AED in food aid (Chicago Tribune 2012). In a period of about five weeks, Kuwait made a small grant and then a large loan to the Yemeni government, a total of roughly USD 33 million (KFAED 2012). It is unclear how much of these grants and loans overlap with the USD 4.4 billion pledged as the GCC portion of aid under the Friends of Yemen umbrella of assistance (GOV.UK 2013), but it is obvious that Yemen's reliance on political and financial aid from the Gulf affords the GCC strategic access to the country, especially in the form of development projects.

Yemen traditionally represents a remarkably different example of urban space and design than that found in Gulf countries. Yet the increased GCC funding, particularly in the form of humanitarian and charitable projects, often influences Yemeni space and architecture in ways that do not adhere to typically Yemeni styles. Even well-intentioned development projects can lead to unintended and deleterious consequences for heritage sites and effects.

The village of al-Rawda, close to the Sanaʿa airport, remains a largely picturesque town, a patchwork quilted with lush vegetation, small farms and traditional earthen tower houses. The main paved road, a project sponsored by Qatar, leads from the major highway from Sanaʿa into the town. But the road has bisected the old market area, forcing half of the market to relocate, as well as leaving the remaining market exposed to cars, which now travel faster on the asphalt road. Residents complain that while a paved road was necessary, it could have been better planned to harmonize with the existing urban fabric.

Another project, this one in the village of al-Qatn in Wadi Dawʿan in the Hadhramawt, has literally reconfigured urban design and the daily living arrangements of some local Yemenis. Houses in the region of al-Qatn were entirely destroyed in severe flooding in 2008. The United Arab Emirates generously offered to help rebuild, but its design concept for new housing departed from the architecture of the Wadi Hadhramawt, which is traditionally typified by tall earthen towers, well suited to the climate of the area and the cultural norms of Yemeni families. The new housing design was that of a sprawling Gulf villa, not a Yemeni tower house, and in the new urban layout there was no central street or market area. After an American architect's evaluation of the design, before the construction stage commenced, some flourishes were eliminated (Jerome 2009). The end result, however, has completely redefined Yemeni housing in the area, now called Khalifa City.

A departure from traditional Yemeni aesthetic and architectural style is not problematic per se, nor is an increased stylistic influence from the Gulf (whether intentional or inadvertent) in GCC-funded projects for hospitals, roads, and houses. But one wonders whether GCC organizations carrying out development aid projects have

much understanding of the value of Yemen's cultural heritage and vernacular architecture.

Development aid and heritage preservation are not necessarily competing priorities; projects can harmonize humanitarian need with investment in cultural heritage. Yet this seems to occur most often when local communities are involved and invested in the project. During a recent restoration of the water cisterns in the mountain village of al-Hajjara near Manakha, for instance, the local population involved themselves in project oversight, going so far as to depose the *shaykh* in charge of it, whom villagers felt had not responded strongly enough when vandals attempted to disrupt the project. The villagers grasped the potential economic benefit that the project held, and were unwilling to allow anything to hinder it. Rightly so, as during the unrest of 2011, when the main road was blocked and water deliveries stopped for extended periods, the restored cisterns became an invaluable source of rainwater collection for the entire community (pers. interview al-Hadhrami, May 2014a). Funding for this restoration project came not from the GCC but from the Sanaʿa-based Social Fund for Development, which may help to explain a greater responsiveness to local convictions about how the project could best be carried out.

A further concern regarding the GCC's relationship to Yemen is that Gulf nations will attempt to reproduce the comparatively exotic essence of Yemeni heritage and transplant the "Kingdom of Sheba" elsewhere, rendering Yemen itself a less alluring destination, since reproductions of its iconic sites will be more easily visited elsewhere than in Yemen itself. This is especially possible in countries like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that have the wherewithal, desire and skills to plan grand hubs of heritage tourism and culture. Palm Island in Dubai, for instance, contains faux-Sanaʿani buildings.[13]

But there are graver reasons to be concerned about the GCC's effect on Yemeni heritage. Most obvious is the fact that the GCC does not have the best interests of Yemen, a non-member state, in mind. All members of the GCC, except Oman, have taken part in the Arab coalition fighting in Yemen, as of 2017. Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's richest country and leader of the coalition, has led the

protracted and gory war against Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, and the GCC as a whole has made no meaningful intervention to stop or ameliorate it. By the time of writing the war had resulted in Yemen teetering on the brink of famine and a cholera outbreak. If the GCC is incapable of safeguarding Yemeni citizens' basic rights and health, it is highly unlikely that they will take effective steps to protect the nation's heritage.

Furthermore, the war in Yemen is symptomatic of a broader policy shift in Saudi Arabia that has sought aggressively to intervene in affairs in the region. The German foreign intelligence service, BND, stated in their December 2015 report "the previous cautious diplomatic stance of older leading members of the royal family is being replaced by an impulsive policy of intervention" (Cockburn 2017) and this applies not just to coalition airstrikes but to plans for post-conflict reconstruction: former Yemeni foreign minister Riyadh Yassin referred to a 2015 pledge of $247 million in aid as the "King Salman Development Plan for Yemen" (Asharq al-Awsat 2015), a title that not only brands the effort as distinctly Saudi, but also implies that the Saudi king will be deciding Yemen's future development trajectory.

Yemen would have much to gain from Saudi investment in its infrastructure, no doubt, yet the GCC's heavy investments in its own cultural infrastructure and heritage conservation (Defterios 2014) have at times resulted in sacrificing conservation for modern convenience, or for the sake of visions or ideologies that fail to acknowledge the value of historic preservation. Saudi Arabia in particular has committed to certain cultural programs as part of its Vision 2030, but even prior to it had begun the economic exploitation of its own historical and heritage sites. Nothing is sacred in that pursuit: to increase the capacity of Mecca's Masjid al-Haram to accommodate worshippers, contractors have levelled Ottoman- and Abbasid-era architecture, and even sites dating back to the time of the Prophet. By one estimate, over the last 20 years over 95 per cent of the historic buildings in the vicinity of the mosque have been destroyed (Taylor 2013; Hameed 2015). Such action was not the result of negligence or ignorance. Rather, it was a deliberate act, blessed by the religious establishment: "Many senior Wahabis are

vehemently against the preservation of historical Islamic sites that are linked to the prophet" (Taylor 2013). The result is unlikely to change when sites serve as reminders of the presence or the history of an unwanted minority sect. In 2011 another GCC country, Bahrain, purposely targeted and intentionally destroyed at least 35 Shiite mosques when confronted with sectarian opposition ('Discrimination' 2011). The Zaydi al-Hadi Mosque in Saʿda, or, the Great Maʾrib dam, celebrated from an era before Islam, or museums that contain pre-Islamic artefacts thus will be unlikely candidates as recipients of aid from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

These attitudes could not only jeopardize Yemen's historic sites, but may also have a deterrent effect on those Yemenis who work to preserve it. "There is a broad consensus that the Saudi ideological juggernaut has disrupted local Islamic traditions in dozens of countries – the result of lavish spending on religious outreach for half a century, estimated in the tens of billions of dollars" (Shane 2015). If the same type of "Wahhabist" thinking prevails as in the example of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, then Yemen's heritage could be even more vulnerable after the war than it is currently. Having witnessed this impact in places other than Yemen, the former US special representative to Muslim countries stated that "Wahhabi influence was an insidious presence, changing the local sense of identity; displacing historic, culturally vibrant forms of Islamic practice; and pulling along individuals who were either paid to follow their rules or who became on their own custodians of the Wahhabi world view" (Farah Pandith, cited in ibid.). Any remotely similar effect on heritage in Yemen could destroy not just many of the country's iconic sites, but also positive attitudes towards their conservation and development that have protected them for generations.

This assumes of course that Yemen's heritage, both moveable and immoveable, survives the war. The Dhamar Regional Museum bombed by the aerial campaign contained 12,000 artefacts, destroyed in one fell swoop (N.P. and Erasmus 2015). The archaeological sites of the pre-Islamic cities Baraqish and Sirwah have also been attacked from the air (ibid.). On the ground, al-Qaʿida in Yemen has begun to destroy sites that it believes are idolatrous, or incompatible with its warped understanding of Islam, like two Sufi shrines and a

700-year-old mosque in Lahj (ibid.). On one of the days the Maʾrib dam was damaged by airstrikes (it has been targeted a total of four times) and the mausoleum of a Hadhrami scholar was also completely destroyed (Naumkin 2015). Even the graves in Aden of Chinese workers from the 1960s have been destroyed, perhaps as a symbolic eradication of South Yemen's socialist and atheist past (N.P. and Erasmus 2015). Attitudes sympathetic to destroying artefacts, especially pre-Islamic ones, or non-Islamic symbols (such as the gravestones of the Chinese workers), stem from a desire to purge any possible distraction from following the so-called "straight path" of a rigid and intolerant theology.

Given these attitudes, it is unclear how many of Yemen's artefacts will remain after the war; many will be destroyed, while others could be looted and stolen. Many of Yemen's artefacts are a moveable feast (Steinbeiser 2014): they are valuable – black market prices can reach thousands of US dollars (al-Junaid 2014) – and easily transportable, and some have already been spirited out of the country. The general manager of customs at Sanaʿa International Airport estimated that eight to ten smugglers were arrested in the first three months of 2014, about 4 per cent of the total number of smugglers (antiquities and non-antiquities) detained during that period (Mohammed Al-Mahfathi, cited in ibid.). Officials confirm that a number of GCC citizens have attempted in the past to smuggle artefacts out of the country, well before the commencement of the current conflict (al-Barakani 2013).

Occasionally, authorities outside of Yemen uncover artefacts that they believe have been smuggled. Swiss authorities seized Yemeni, Syrian and Iraqi artefacts from storage lockers near the free port where officials believed they arrived from the countries of provenance via Qatar (Agerholm 2016). While these efforts are noteworthy, the battle to trace and regain any tangible heritage after it leaves Yemen is rarely winnable.

CONCLUSION: INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS AND LOCAL INTEGRATION

In April 2016, UNESCO and ten high profile international museums – including the Louvre, the British Museum, the Ashmolean and the

Freer-Sackler Galleries at the Smithsonian – launched Yemeni Heritage Week (YHW), a celebration of the ancient history and cultures of Yemen, in which each museum highlighted ancient Yemeni artefacts from its collection. The Freer/Sackler Galleries exhibition, for example, included a first century B.C. bronze plaque inscribed in South Arabian script; an exquisite pair of first century A.D. bronze statues, each depicting a young boy riding a lion; and a beautifully carved alabaster bust of a young woman, itself around 2,000 years old (UNESCO/Smithsonian 2016). The museums accompanied their exhibits with lectures and discussions of Yemeni heritage and the damage inflicted upon it by the war that began in 2014–15.

According to UNESCO, YHW's laudable goal was to offer the general public "a great opportunity to explore and understand cultural heritage of Yemen, which is not always well-known in the world" ('Yemeni Heritage Week' 2016). It was clearly also designed as an attempt to intervene in international politics, by shedding light on the destructive nature of the SLC's aerial bombardment. As Irina Bokova, director-general of UNESCO, wrote in her preface to the YHW brochure:

> The conflict that erupted in Yemen in March 2015 … plac[es] unique heritage at the risk of total destruction. The Old City of Sanaʿa has suffered severe damage as a consequence of shelling and explosions … [T]his destruction exacerbates human suffering, undermining societies over the long-term, weakening the ground for reconciliation and peace. Whenever culture is attacked, we must stand together and respond with even more culture and knowledge, to foster mutual understanding and safeguard the heritage shared by all humanity. (UNESCO/Smithsonian 2016)

A similar initiative was underway at the time of writing this article at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London: a late summer 2017 exhibition at the Brunei Gallery entitled *Buildings That Fill My Eye: Architectural Heritage of Yemen*. Planned to coincide with the launch of an eponymous anthology by exhibition curator and emeritus professor Trevor H. J. Marchand, the exhibition's mission was "to remind the world of Yemen's tremendous cultural creativity and the need for international collaboration to protect it and its people from the destructive forces

that have beset the region" ('Buildings' 2017). Accompanying public events included a lecture by Marchand that discussed the "unprecedented scale" of the current threats to Yemen's architectural heritage ('Yemen's Architectural Heritage' 2017).

Another recent contribution to efforts to preserve cultural heritage threatened by war is the establishment of the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, "a foundation to finance projects to protect, conserve and restore cultural property endangered by armed conflict" ('UAE pledges' 2017). Five countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and one individual have pledged a total of over $60 million (ibid.), while the fund has raised a total of $75 million to date on its way to a $100 million goal ('France and UAE' 2017). The fact that France is the largest contributor to the fund to date ($30 million, compared to Saudi Arabia's $20 million) may have a tempering effect on the unpredictable consequences of GCC aid examined in the preceding section. But it is unclear what impact the fund will have or whether it will empower local Yemeni-sponsored movements to preserve heritage. In fact whether any of these funds will actually be used in Yemen is ambiguous: the inaugural announcements suggest that its main aims are combatting the type of destruction wrought by ISIS in places like Mosul and Palmyra, rather than addressing the serious threats to Yemen's heritage.

The efforts of museums, institutions, and individuals to shed light on this crucial topic can help bring it to the attention of a wider international public. Lesser known, however, are Yemenis' own contributions, past, potential or ongoing, to preserving their nation's cultural heritage. If international organizations work in partnership with concerned Yemeni actors and capitalize on those contributions, then Yemen's surviving heritage can be preserved and responsibly exploited, as part of a much-needed effort to restructure the country economically.

Upon conclusion of the war, the international donor community will likely try to salve the country's economic woes through development initiatives, but such initiatives rarely include programs to conserve, develop and responsibly utilize heritage as an economic resource. Development in this way overlooks Yemeni heritage as a

resource that is both abundant (despite looting, smuggling, and the depredations of war) and well suited to sustainable projects. Without proper conservation and protection, the country stands to lose many tangible heritage assets through neglect and degradation and through the illegal antiquities trade. Without integrating heritage preservation into development strategies, Yemen stands to lose an entire potential industry.

At times individual Yemenis and local communities do take the initiative to preserve what they can of the country's cultural heritage. These types of local initiatives can lead to enduring results, and, as Selma al-Radi argued à propos of the ʿAmiriya restoration, "international organizations should be encouraging similar local sponsorship of projects" (al-Radi 1997: 198). Shaykh Yahya ʿAli Naji of Dar al-Hajar is one example of the degree to which some individual Yemenis are willing to commit their own time, energy and financial resources to heritage preservation.

Yet the threats are dire. Once the war finishes, the project of rebuilding the country will take years. The violence and disorder that make theft and looting viable will not disappear quickly. The economic crises which make smuggling and black market selling attractive cannot be remedied immediately and in fact may place heritage conservation projects in false competition with humanitarian necessities. Moreover, even well-intentioned aid efforts can occasionally damage Yemen's cultural heritage. War, violence, and political impasse further threaten the effects, traditions, and potential of the "Old Yemen" with each passing day. If more far-sighted Yemenis choose to shoulder the responsibility of protecting their nation's patrimony and interested international actors and institutions help to ensure that such Yemenis are brought into the picture, literally and figuratively, of heritage conservation efforts, then an invaluable cultural legacy and its economic potential may one day be able to flourish.

NOTES

1. Portions of this chapter were presented at the Gulf Research Meeting August 2014 in Cambridge, UK, as well as at "The New Yemen" workshop in Bonn, June 2014.

2. For further accounts of the damage inflicted by these airstrikes, see Khalidi 2015, Gladstone 2015, Taylor 2015, and Browning and Ghobari 2015.
3. In any case, decision-makers would likely either blame the damage on incorrect or misleading information, as they have done in the case of mistakenly-bombed hospitals and funeral gatherings, or accuse the Huthis of taking refuge or storing weapons within those sites – an accusation that may have some justification in the case of Qaliyat al-Qahira, at least. Browning and Ghobari state that Huthi fighters were "holed up" in the fortress (2015). Gladstone notes that the SLC denied responsibility for striking the Old City of Sanaʿa; instead, SLC spokesman Brig. Gen. Ahmed al-Assiri suggested, the explosion might have occurred within a Huthi ammunitions storehouse (2015). On the claim that "false information" led to the funeral bombing, in which up to 140 people were killed, see Hubbard 2016; for the admission by the Saudi Ambassador to the UN that the fourth airstrike on a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in Yemen was "a mistake", which the ambassador blamed on MSF itself, claiming it had provided the military incorrect GPS coordinates for the hospital, see Oakford 2015.
4. For an extended discussion of economic theory as it applies to cultural heritage, see Throsby 2012.
5. For a detailed explanation of the gradual evolution of heritage preservation as a concept and a practice, not just at the World Bank but also at institutions like UNESCO and ICOMOS, and more generally in intellectual discourse, see the introduction to Lamprakos 2016.
6. It is noteworthy that although the World Bank uses this photo as the cover of its text on theories of economic development of cultural heritage, it does not include one mention of Yemen or Hababah in the book itself, other than the cover photo credit. It is a sad commentary on the state of heritage preservation in Yemen that there are no successful examples the World Bank can point to in Yemen to prove the theories that it enumerates in the voluminous compendium that the image of Hababah has been used to promote.
7. See Al-Radi: 201n.52. This sum does not include the interior painting conservation.
8. The political, economic, social, and cultural obstacles that Yemen currently faces go well beyond the scope of this chapter; the dangers posed by pernicious terrorism, rising violent sectarianism, political instability, and dwindling natural resources have been well-documented by a variety of reputable sources from Boucek 2010 onwards.
9. In a talk entitled "The Last of the Qataban: Documenting Looting in the Yemeni Highlands", delivered at the *Archaeological Looting: Realities and Possibilities for New Policy Approaches* conference at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society, University of Chicago, 28 February 2015, as summarized by Damien Huffer (2015).

10. Editor's note: For a picture of these thrones, see http://www.panoramio.com/photo/70137784 (accessed 8 June 2017). I am grateful to Alexander Nagel of the Smithsonian for providing me with this link.
11. The following section is based on an interview with Shaykh Naji (May 2014).
12. During this period, however, the Yemeni Riyal was worth more – at least YR 200=1 USD.
13. Images of these replicas of traditional Sanaʿani buildings can be seen advertised on the IFA Hotels and Resorts website under 'Properties: Dubai: Kingdom of Sheba'. Available at http://www.ifahotelsresorts.com/page/kingdom-of-sheba (accessed 8 June 2017).

REFERENCES

ʿAbd Allah, Yusuf and ʿAbd al-Hakim Shaʾif [Professors of archaeology at Sanaʿa University], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 26 June 2012).

Agerholm, Harriet, 'Stolen artifacts from Palmyra and Yemen seized in Geneva', *The Independent*, 4 December 2016. Available at http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/stolen-artifacts-palmyra-yemen-geneva-enesco-switzerland-a7454001.html#gallery (accessed 12 June 2017).

Almasmari, Hakim, 'Three mile long queues at petrol stations as Yemen's fuel crisis starves economy', *The National*, 4 July 2011. Available at http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/three-mile-long-queues-at-petrol-stations-as-yemens-fuel-crisis-starves-economy/ (accessed 8 June 2017).

Asharq Al-Awsat, 'Saudi-led coalition announces new "Arab Marshall Plan" to rebuild Yemen', *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 21 April 2015. https://english.aawsat.com/theaawsat/news-middle-east/saudi-led-coalition-announces-new-arab-marshall-plan-to-rebuild-yemen (accessed 10 June 2017).

al-Baydhani, Fatima [Founder, Idanoot Foundation for Folklore], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 27 June 2012).

al-Barakani, ʿAbd al-Karim [Director, Department for Combating Antiquities Smuggling, GOAM], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 12 September 2013).

Ba Wazir, Adnan [General Manager of GOAM, al-Mukalla], telephone interview (Sanaʿa, 10 June 2014).

Ben Hirsi, Bader, *The English Shaykh and the Yemeni Gentleman*, DVD (Surrey: Felix Films Entertainment, 2000).

Boucek, Christopher, 'Yemen: Avoiding a downward spiral', in C. Boucek and M. Ottoway (eds), *Yemen on the Brink* (Washington DC, 2010), pp. 1–27.

Browning, Noah and Mohammed Ghobari, 'History a casualty in Yemen's war as bombs smash ancient sites', *Reuters*, 13 May 2015. Available at http://www.reuters.com/article/yemen-security-heritage-idUSL5N0Y43X020150513 (accessed 12 May 2017).

'"Buildings that fill my eye": Architectural heritage of Yemen', exhibition announcement. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, University of London. Available at https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/yemen/ (accessed 27 May 2017).

Burrowes, Robert, 'Why most Yemenis should despise ex-President Ali Abdullah Saleh', *Yemen Times*, 27 February 2012. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1550/opinion/488/Why-most-Yemenis-should-despise–ex-president-ʿAli-Abdullah-Saleh.htm (last accessed 8 June 2017; page no longer available).

Chicago Tribune, 'UAE to give Yemen $136 million in aid', *Chicago Tribune*, 3 June 2012. Available at http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-06-03/news/sns-rt-uae-yemenaidl5e8h35ey-20120603_1_food-aid-yemeni-people-aid-agencies (accessed 8 June 2017).

Cockburn, Patrick, 'Saudi Arabia's dream of becoming the dominant Arab and Muslim power in the world has gone down in flames', *The Independent*, 6 January 2017. Available at http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/saudi-arabia-syria-yemen-oil-prince-salman-down-in-flames-a7513636.html#gallery (accessed 10 June 2017).

Defterios, John, 'The art of living: Abu Dhabi adds cultural big-hitters to Saadiyat Island project', *CNN.com*, 29 January 2014. Available at http://edition.cnn.com/2014/01/28/business/abu-dhabi-art-of-building-louvre-guggenheim-saadiyat/index.html (accessed 8 June 2017).

'Discrimination and deprivation of religious freedom in Bahrain', *Bahrain Centre for Human Rights*, 23 June 2011. Available at http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4295 (accessed 12 June 2017).

'France and UAE launch fund to protect cultural heritage in war-torn areas', *Artforum*, 21 March 2017. Available at https://www.artforum.com/news/id=67313 (accessed 12 June 2017).

Gladstone, Rick, 'Explosion destroys ancient cultural heritage site in Yemen capital', *The New York Times*, 12 June 2015. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/13/world/middleeast/yemen-sana-explosion-houthis-saudi-arabia.html (accessed 12 May 2017).

GOV.UK [Gov.uk], 'The Friends of Yemen ministerial meeting co-chairs' statement', gov.uk [Foreign & Commonwealth Office press release], 7 March 2013. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-friends-of-yemen-ministerial-meeting-co-chairs-statement/ (accessed 8 June 2017).

al-Hadhrami, Abdullah [architect and restoration specialist], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 13 May 2014a).

—— Personal interview (Sanaʿa, 20 May 2014b).

al-Hadi, Ibrahim [Director, National Museum in Sanaʿa], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 3 November 2013).

Hameed, Mustafa, 'The destruction of Mecca: How Saudi Arabia's construction rampage is threatening Islam's holiest city', *Foreign Policy*, 22 September 2015. Available at http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/22/the-destruction-of-mecca-saudi-arabia-construction/ (accessed 11 June 2017).

Hubbard, Ben, 'Saudi-led coalition says it bombed Yemen funeral based on false information', *The New York Times*, 15 October 2016. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/16/world/middleeast/saudi-led-coalition-says-it-bombed-yemen-funeral-based-on-false-information.html (accessed 12 May 2017).

Huffer, Damine, 'The heritage landscape: Key players and current issues (notes on the Past for Sale Conference, 2015)', *SAFE: Saving Antiquities For Everyone*, 24 July 2015. Available at http://savingantiquities.org/the-heritage-landscape-key-players-and-current-issues-notes-on-the-past-for-sale-conference-2015/ (accessed 12 May 2017).

Huraibi, Fatima [Executive Director, Ministry of Tourism], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 21 May 2014).

Jerome, Pamela, *Response to Proposed Plans for New Housing by Office of Hani al-Sahooly and Associates Planners, Architects and Engineers*, Report submitted to the Hadhrami Reconstruction Authority (2009).

al-Jubari, Rammah, '1300 year old Quran stolen from National Museum', *Yemen Times*, 29 October 2013. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1724/news/3051/1300-year-old-Quran-stolen-from-National-Museum.htm (last accessed 8 June 2017; page no longer available).

al-Junaid, Madiha, 'Illicit antiquities trade threatens Yemen's rich heritage', *Yemen Times*, 12 June 2014. http://www.yementimes.com/en/1789/report/3969/Illicit-antiquities-trade-threatens-Yemen's-rich-heritage.htm (last accessed 12 June 2017; page no longer available).

KFAED [Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development], 'Signature of Agreement for a Grant to the Government of Yemen', 18 April 2012. Available at https://kuwait-fund.org/en/web/kfund/current-news-events/-/asset_publisher/8Vn82dPrFd8B/content/signature-of-agreement-for-a-grant-to-the-government-of-yemen (accessed 8 June 2017).

Khalidi, Lamya, 'Yemeni heritage, Saudi vandalism', *The New York Times*, 26 June 2015. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/27/opinion/yemeni-heritage-saudi-vandalism.html (accessed 12 May 2017).

al-Kibsi, Hisham, 'Sanaʿa, Zabid keep on the World Heritage list', *Yemen Observer*, 20 June 2013.

Lamprakos, Michele, *Building a World Heritage City: Sanaʿa, Yemen* (London, 2016).

Licciardi, Guido and Rana Amirtahrmasebi (eds), *The Economics of Uniqueness: Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development* (Washington DC, 2012).

Naji, Shaykh Yahya ʿAli, personal interview (Sanaʿa, 13 May 2014).

Naumkin, Vitaly, 'Saving Middle East relics needs less talk, more action', *Al Monitor*, 6 August 2015. Available at http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/russia-efforts-save-monuments-middle-east.html (accessed 12 June 2017).

N.P. and Erasmus, 'The religious and cultural heritage being ruined by Yemen's war', *The Economist*, 9 September 2015. Available at http://www.

economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2015/09/cultural-religious-heritage-destroyed-yemen-war (accessed 12 June 2017).

Oakford, Samuel, 'Exclusive: Saudi Arabia admits bombing MSF Hospital in Yemen – but faults MSF', *ViceNews*, 28 October 2015. Available at https://news.vice.com/article/exclusive-saudi-arabia-admits-bombing-msf-hospital-in-yemen-but-faults-msf (accessed 12 May 2017).

Al Qadhi, Mohammed, 'Yemen looks to GCC for economic aid', *The National*, 29 December 2008. Available at http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/yemen-looks-to-gcc-for-economic-aid/ (accessed 8 June 2017).

Al-Radi, Selma, *The ʿAmiriya in Radaʿ: The History and Restoration of a Sixteenth-Century Madrasa in the Yemen*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art XIII (Oxford, 1997).

SabaNet, 'Culture Minister calls for int'l campaign to preserve Zabid and Sana'a', *SabaNet*, 19 June 2014. Available at http://www.sabanews.net/en/news358097.htm (last accessed 8 June 2017; page no longer available).

Al-Sakkaf, Nasser, 'New fighting front between Houthis and northern tribesmen', *Yemen Times*, 11 March 2014. Available at http://www.yementimes.com/en/1762/news/3581/New-fighting-front-between-Huthis-and-northern-tribesmen.htm (last accessed 8 June 2017; page no longer available).

Salih, ʿAbdu Mahdi [General Director for Investment and Development of Tourist Areas], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 3 June 2014).

al-Sayani, Muhannid [General Director of GOAM], personal interview (Sanaʿa, 12 September 2013).

Shane, Scott, 'Saudis and Extremism: "Both the arsonists and the firefighters"', *The New York Times*, 5 December 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/12/08/is-saudi-arabia-a-unique-generator-of-extremism/the-world-needs-a-long-term-strategy-for-defeating-extremism (accessed 11 June 2017).

Smoltczyk, Alexander, 'Tension in Yemen: Al-Qaida activity puts regime change in doubt', *Der Spiegel*, 26 January 2012. Available at http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/tension-in-yemen-al-qaida-activity-puts-regime-change-in-doubt-a-811134.html (accessed 8 June 2017).

SSD [Supporting Sustainable Development in Historic Cities and Cultural Heritage Sites], PowerPoint presentation prepared by Urban Development and Local Government section (Washington DC, 2010). Last accessed 31 May 2014; page no longer available.

Steinbeiser, Stephen, 'Protecting a moveable and immoveable feast: Legal safeguards for Yemen's cultural heritage', *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 16/2 (2014), pp. 163–77.

Taylor, Adam, 'The world may be ignoring the destruction of cultural treasures in Yemen', *The Washington Post*, 5 June 2015. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/06/05/the-world-may-be-ignoring-the-destruction-of-cultural-treasures-in-yemen/?utm_term=.5abb262bac71 (accessed 12 May 2017).

Taylor, Jerome, 'The photos Saudi Arabia doesn't want seen – and proof Islam's most holy relics are being demolished in Mecca', *The Independent*, 15 March 2013. Available at http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/the-photos-saudi-arabia-doesnt-want-seen-and-proof-islams-most-holy-relics-are-being-demolished-in-8536968.html (accessed 10 June 2017).

Throsby, David, 'Heritage economics: A conceptual framework', in G. Licciardi and R. Amirtahrmasebi (eds), *The Economics of Uniqueness: Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development* (Washington DC, 2012), pp. 45–74.

'UAE pledges Dh55m for heritage site protection fund', *The National*, 20 March 2017. Available at http://www.thenational.ae/uae/heritage/uae-pledges-dh55m-for-heritage-site-protection-fund (accessed 12 June 2017).

UNESCO, 'Yemeni heritage week – museums united for Yemen'. Available at http://en.unesco.org/events/yemeni-heritage-week-museums-united-yemen (accessed 12 May 2017).

UNESCO/The Smithsonian, 'Yemeni heritage week' brochure for the Freer/Sackler Galleries. Available at https://www.asia.si.edu/events/yemeni-heritage-week/downloads/Yemeni-Heritage-Week-Brochure.pdf (accessed 12 May 2017).

al-Wajih, Mahir [Researcher in Archaeology], personal communication (Sanaʿa, 2012).

Yemen Fox, 'GCC opens office in Sana'a', *Yemen Fox*, 10 October 2012. Available at http://yemenfox.net/news_details.php?sid=4511/ (last accessed 31 May 2014; page no longer available).

Yemen Post, 'Yemen granted new opportunity to keep Zabid as UNESCO World Heritage site', *Yemen Post*, 28 July 2012. Available at http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=5780 (accessed 8 June 2017).

—— 'British national tried over smuggling charges', *Yemen Post*, 25 February 2014 Available at http://www.yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=7619 (accessed 8 June 2017).

'Yemen's Architectural Heritage in Peril', lecture announcement. Brunei Gallery, SOAS, University of London. Available at https://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/yemen/05aug2017-yemens-architectural-heritage-in-peril.html (accessed 27 May 2017).

CHAPTER 13

Can Federalism Save the Yemeni State?

Maria-Louise Clausen

INTRODUCTION

The uprising in Yemen distinguished itself from the various Arab uprisings in 2011 by resulting in a negotiated transfer of power. The resigning president of 33 years, ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, was granted immunity from prosecution and even allowed to continue as head of the former ruling party, the General People's Congress (GPC). As the former vice-president, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, assumed executive powers, there were hopes that Yemen was on the path towards a largely peaceful and negotiated transfer of power. During the transition process, there were even references to a "Yemeni model", which could inspire other Middle Eastern countries that experienced regime change during the Arab uprisings. Yet, the fragility of the political transition and the underlying weaknesses of the political settlement became clear in the fall of 2014, when the Huthis capitalized on widespread disillusionment with the transition as they took Sanaʿa and gradually increased pressure on President Hadi. This culminated in January 2015, leading President Hadi and the government to resign, setting off a series of events that in March 2015 prompted the Saudi-led coalition to intervene in Yemen to restore President Hadi.

The negotiated transfer of power following the popular uprising in 2011 was made possible by the decision to allow former elites to

largely retain control of the political system. The immediate crisis was defused, but the underlying causes of discontent, especially among the Southerners and the Huthis, were not addressed. In light of the increased instability and strengthened calls for secession in the South, federalism became the preferred political answer to the problem of maintaining Yemeni unity and stability. As of 2017, federalism continues to be seen as the only viable political system in post-conflict Yemen by many Yemenis and the international community. However, this perspective overlooks that federations exist in as many variations as there are federal states, and that the mere decision to become a federation says very little about the future stability of the federation. It is rather what political elites somewhat misleadingly refer to as the "details" that define whether a federation will be able to manage and reduce conflict (Franck 2011: 238). This raises the question of whether adopting federalism will be a first step in building a "new Yemen" or further escalate the Yemeni state's fragmentation by giving local elites a platform to fight each other for political and economic privileges.

This chapter argues that the failure to follow up on the decision to adopt federalism in Yemen with a more detailed framework gave and gives a wide range of actors the chance to see federalism as an acceptable political outcome, but also simultaneously undermined federalism's potential to provide a clear path towards the "new Yemen" that was envisioned by those who rose up in early 2011. Federalism is framed as a solution to a range of political challenges, most notably the question of Yemeni unity, as well as questions of economic distribution and development in Yemen. Consequently, the potential of federalism to heal the consequences of decades of centralization of power and resources cannot be evaluated without investigating its concrete meaning in the Yemeni context.

This chapter thus seeks to answer whether and in how far federalism can actually help to save the Yemeni state by (1) looking at the evolution of the decision to turn Yemen into a federal state; (2) discussing previous Yemeni experiences in decentralization against the backdrop of broader concepts of federalism and decentralization; and (3) discussing some of the biggest challenges to successfully implementing federalism in Yemen.

DESIGNING THE "NEW YEMEN" AT THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE CONFERENCE

During the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the structure of the Yemeni state, including the "Southern issue" (*al-qadiyya al-janubiyya*), emerged as the most problematic topic. In broad terms, the representatives from GPC and Islah were largely trying to sustain the status quo, including the unity of the Yemeni state. They argued that a system of decentralization would be able to address the grievances of the Southerners and the Huthis, as well as the centralization of power and the general lack of development in most of Yemen. This perspective was at least partly supported by the transition agreement itself, which highlights the need to protect the unity of the Yemeni state.[1] However, in Yemen, the concept of decentralization had been delegitimized to a degree where it could no longer be considered as a credible solution to the disenfranchisement experienced, most notably by the Southerners and the Huthis (Al-Akhali 2014a). More on this later.

At the opposite end of the political spectrum, large segments of the Southern Movement called for Southern independence following the pre-unification border. It is important to note that Hirak is not a uniform movement with a cohesive leadership which can legitimately speak on behalf of the entire movement. There is internal disagreement about secession, and Hirak's participation in the NDC was surrounded by internal controversy. Large segments of Hirak boycotted the NDC; and although President Hadi handpicked many of the Southern representatives, there were still walk-outs and exchanges of representatives throughout the duration of the NDC (Schmitz 2014).[2] To the representatives of Hirak who did participate in the NDC, it was clear that Southern independence was not a likely outcome of the NDC. Hence, representatives from Hirak and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) instead endorsed the idea of federalism with two regions, which would follow the pre-unification borders between the previously independent North and South Yemen. In addition to securing immediate autonomy for the South, the structure envisioned by the representatives from Hirak would contain a mechanism that would allow Southern secession in the

future if the federal system did not accommodate Southern needs and expectations. In these endeavours, the Southerners were largely supported by the Huthis, who also sought a system that would secure them against the traditional elites and give the regions under their control in the North more autonomy (Day 2014; see also Brandt's contribution in this volume).

The structure of the future Yemeni state was discussed in the Southern Issue working group, which was unable to reach a consensus and thus postponed any final decisions. The other working groups, most notably the State-Building working group, continued to work to define the foundation of the future Yemeni state, but also recognized that some issues could only be settled once the final structure of the state had been decided. Just eight days before the scheduled conclusion of the NDC, a committee was formed to reach a decision. The committee became known as the 8 + 8, as it consisted of eight representatives from the North and South respectively.[3] The 8 + 8 committee ended up recommending a federal solution but without specifying how financial, political and administrative competencies would be devolved to the future regions, and without taking a final decision on the number of regions. At this point, the end of the NDC had already been delayed; and it was decided to defer the final decision on the number of regions to a less representative but more efficient federal regions committee. President Hadi established the federal regions committee after the finalization of the NDC and shortly thereafter, in February 2014, the federal regions committee recommended that Yemen be divided into a federal state with six regions: two regions in the former South Yemen and four regions in what was North Yemen before unification in 1990 (Al-Akhali 2014a; Gaston 2014).[4]

The decision to adopt federalism with six regions was highly incremental and driven by political considerations more than in-depth investigations into the potential advantages or disadvantages of different solutions. Furthermore, the initial postponement of the discussion of the structure of the state, followed by hasty decisions in smaller, less representative committees with closely defined mandates, meant that decisions were taken without securing the full

buy-in of the Huthis or the Southerners on the six regions (Schmitz 2014). The progress of the NDC was prioritized by avoiding many of the most important decisions, the so-called "details". Thus, the decision to implement a federal system in Yemen was not followed by any specific recommendations or specifications of what it would actually mean. Instead, many decisions were deferred to the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), a 17-person committee set up by President Hadi in March 2014 and tasked with formulating a constitution based on the NDC outcomes.[5] The composition of the CDC was immediately criticized by the youth, the Southerners and the Huthis for not securing their respective representation. These groups feared that the outcome of the CDC negotiations would be biased towards former elites, most notably the GPC and Islah. The CDC published its first draft of the constitution in January 2015, which specifies that the federal Yemen will consist of six regions, four in the North and two in South, as had been previously recommended (Art. 391 of the draft constitution). The constitutional draft furthermore outlines the future division of powers between the different levels of government by listing the powers of each level of government including concurrent powers (Chapter V). Yet, the result is unclear and contains a number of ambiguities, such as the degree to which the *wilayat* (sing. *wilaya* (governorate)) will have policy-making competencies or are intended to be service-providing entities (Art. 338). Moreover, *wilayat* seem to correspond to the governorate level, whereas the district term is kept as a smaller entity under each *wilaya*. However, the constitutional draft is silent on the responsibilities of the district level as this is delegated to future regional laws as specified in article 262. Thus, substantial "details" in relation to decentralization are not dealt with but rather pushed into the indefinite future.

In order to understand why federalism was given preference over decentralization as the model for the "new Yemen", the following section focuses on how previous experiences with decentralization were derailed by a weak connection between formal framework and implementation. These experiences, detailed below, illustrate that a formal federal framework is not sufficient if there is no shared vision of what federalism entails in the Yemeni context.

UNDERSTANDING THE MOVE FROM DECENTRALIZATION TO FEDERALISM

The first constitution of unified Yemen from 1990 states that the territory of Yemen is divided into administrative units, each of which is a legal entity, and that the law will specify the duties, authorities, powers and rights of the elected local councils. It is underlined that the local councils are part of the state authority, but the system would be defined as decentralized since there is a "transfer of power to different subnational levels of government by the central government" (Oxhorn 2004: 7). In 1994, it was clear that the merger of former North and South Yemen was unravelling. In a final attempt to divert the political crisis, a document, referred to as the Document of Pledge and Accord, was formulated which called for political, administrative and fiscal decentralization. It was an attempt to address Southern grievances through decentralization, and to prevent Southern secession (Political Forces Dialogue Committee 1994; Romeo and El-Mensi 2011: 501). However, shortly after the Document of Pledge and Accord was signed, war broke out. The North prevailed; and as a result the South experienced further marginalization as power was centralized in the North, although references to local authority were kept in the revised constitution.

In 2000, the legal background of decentralization in Yemen was reinforced with the enactment of the Local Authority Law (LAL).[6] National elections to the local councils in all governorates and districts were held in 2001 and 2006. Elections should have been carried out in 2011 but because of the uprising, they were postponed. Hence, the current local councils were elected in 2006. Generally, the LAL is considered a relatively reasonable legal starting point for decentralization, but its implementation has been partial and unstructured due, in part, to some ambiguity within the LAL. For example, article 4 specifies that the local authority system is based on the principle of administrative and financial decentralization, but in reality article 10, which states that "[e]very one of the administrative units and the local councils are deemed to be an integral part of state authority", has taken precedence. This means that it has been difficult for local councils to carve out a clear space of responsibility.

Furthermore, as in many fragile states, local governments in Yemen depend heavily on the national level for funds (Hyden 2007: 219), which means that the local councils have had limited independence. Moreover, only a very small part of their budget can be used for independent projects as most of it is allocated to salaries.

Clearly, previous experiences with decentralization have not increased confidence that decentralization can reverse the centralization of power. In fact, it has been argued that the local councils, which were established as part of the LAL, were deliberately set up to extend and expand central control to the periphery (Phillips 2008: 77). Hence, it is understandable that marginalized groups in Yemen have limited faith that a reconfirmation of decentralization alone would change anything (Salisbury 2015: 11). Against this backdrop, federalism gained popularity as a concept that did not challenge the unity of the Yemeni state but did promise larger autonomy, especially to the Southerners and the Huthis.

The outcomes from the NDC state that the future Yemeni constitution shall specify the division of power between central and local units, and that each level of government shall enjoy constitutionally defined autonomous executive, legislative and administrative authority, including the appropriate power to tax.[7] Thus, the debate on federalism in Yemen has focused on what Ronald L. Watts has called "federations",[8] i.e. federal political systems in which the constitution delegates specific powers to both central and local levels of government. All levels of government can deal directly with citizens and are directly elected (Watts 1998: 121). Clearly, federalism is understood in Yemen to entail a high degree of decentralization, but, as previously mentioned, the concept of decentralization itself has been delegitimized by the historical disconnect between formal decentralization laws and actual experience.

It is largely assumed that federalism will lead to decentralization, but many of the essential decisions needed to accomplish this have been avoided by delegating them to the realm of "details". However, it cannot be assumed that federalism will automatically lead to decentralization, as there can be both centralized and decentralized federations, and centralized and decentralized unitary states (Lecuna 2012: 140). Moreover, some observers note that the specific structure

of the federal regions seems to be aimed at weakening both the Southern Movement and the Huthis through the structure of the regions. It is suggested to combine Saʿda, the home governorate of the Huthis, with Sanaʿa governorate in the so-called Azal region, instead of combining Saʿda with al-Jawf and Hajja governorates which are historically and culturally closer to Saʿda; whereas the South will be divided into two regions, the Aden and the Hadhramawt regions (Schmitz 2014; Salisbury 2015).

Federalism thus became a popular concept in Yemen because it is different from decentralization but is assumed to provide the same benefits; namely, local autonomy as a check on centralization of power. However, the success of federalism will be determined by how federalism is actually implemented. Indeed, substantial research has shown that the success of federalism depends on a shared understanding of federalism and incorporation of contextual factors in the federal design (Rondinelli 1981: 144).

STATE-BUILDING IN YEMEN: THE POTENTIAL OF FEDERALISM AND DECENTRALIZATION

Yemen has only existed as a single state since unification in 1990 and, for large parts of that period, has been viewed as a failing or weak state. The ongoing weakness is explained by an accumulation of unaddressed grievances, most notably among the Southerners and the Huthis (Boucek and Ottaway 2010: 91). The literature on state fragility and state-building tends to focus on building central state capacity and largely ignores the role of local government, whereas the literature on decentralization and federalism focuses on the management of local government and the relationship between different levels of government (Rocha Menocal 2011; Wallis 2013). In comparison, the role of federalism as a policy instrument in state-building has received limited attention (Stepan 1999), which is interesting since federalism seems to play a dual and somewhat opposing role in fragile states: It is perceived as a way to keep the central state together and thus strengthen it vis-à-vis alternative power-centres; but, somewhat counterintuitively, this is to be achieved by, at least formally, devolving power to the periphery

away from the central state. In the following section, I address the two perspectives by discussing the issues of regional identity and the state's expansion into the periphery.

Alfred Stepan has argued that the federalism literature is unhelpful for states such as Yemen as it is too preoccupied with what he refers to as "coming-together federalism"; that is, the federal state is the result of "a bargain whereby previously sovereign polities agree to give up part of their sovereignty in order to pool their resources to increase their collective security and to achieve other goals" (Stepan 1999: 21). However, this model does not describe some recent federations where political leaders in unitary states have decided that the best way to hold their countries together is to "devolve power constitutionally and turn their threatened polities into federations" (Stepan 1999: 22; 2001: 320). He calls this "holding-together federalism" as it aims to maintain the unity of a state. Indeed, in most recent instances of federalism, federalism has been part of a state-building process where the aim has been to maintain the unity of the state and introduce a greater degree of stability by allowing for local autonomy.

Yemen seemingly fits the model for "holding-together federalism", but it has only been a united country since 1990. Yemen could therefore also be analysed as an example of "coming-together federalism" where separate units join in a federal state. Although subtle, the difference indicates that it is important to consider separate regional identities in relation to the future structure of the Yemeni state. On the surface, Yemen is relatively homogenous ethnically and religiously, which are the markers usually focused on in federalism literature; but the presence or perception of distinctive cultural identities has been part of the discussion about federalism. Most notably, the Southern Movement claims that a specific South Yemeni identity must be given political expression in the new Yemen, either in a separate state or as a federal region. But even the South Yemeni category could be further disaggregated, as some Hadhramis have asserted a Hadhrami identity and therefore support the idea of two regions in the South. Additionally, some Mahris object to the idea of al-Mahra governorate being absorbed in the

future Hadhramawt region (see also Kendall's contribution in this volume). Likewise, in the North, the Huthis have argued against being combined with Sanaʿa governorate, and instead assert that al-Jawf and Hajja governorates are culturally closer to them (Al-Akhali 2013; Brehony 2014). Thus, there are substantial cultural, social and economic differences within the future regions, as well as regional animosities, which can quickly gain saliency in any future regional system.

The NDC outcomes from the Southern Issue working group outline the conditions under which the representatives of the South can accept the federal solution; namely, various mechanisms aimed at securing equal representation of Southerners at all levels of government, including 50 per cent representation in all leadership structures in the executive, legislative and judicial bodies including the army, and priority to Southerners in filling vacancies. In addition, the Southern Issue working group specifically wanted to secure that future changes to the structure of the state cannot be implemented without the acceptance of a majority of the Southern representatives in parliament.[9] Clearly, the democratic process of "one man, one vote" is not entrusted to safeguard the interests of the South, which they frame as needing special protection. In general, the Southerners do not trust the central state as it is perceived as a tool in the hands of the Northern elite. The two regions in the former South Yemen are geographically large, but contain fewer people than the four regions in former North Yemen. Thus, the suggested safeguards of the Southern Issue working group are meant to hinder a repetition of the post-unification experience when Northern elites were able to use the elective system to gain control of the Yemeni state. However, what can be perceived as preferential treatment of Southerners can potentially feed dissatisfaction in the North. This would have negative consequences for the stability of the state.

Moreover, the Yemeni debate on federalism has largely ignored that successful federalism depends on the presence of a strong central state (Rondinelli 1981: 144). Instead, the debate has focused on the promise of regional autonomy and has neglected to define the capabilities of a central actor able and willing to enforce the rules of

the federal state. One example is resource distribution between regions, which differ substantially in terms of natural resources and population size.[10] The references to resource distribution in the Yemeni debate speak mainly of the needs to secure a fair distribution of natural resources and to secure the role of regional and sub-regional actors in controlling and managing the natural resources within an overall framework of national interest.[11] In the NDC, the issue was dealt with most extensively in the Southern Issue working group from the perspective of securing greater local control and access to the resources, in contrast to the current structure where the Northern elites have benefitted disproportionately compared to the producing regions which are mainly located in the former South Yemen.[12] Clearly, since federalism is an attempt to satisfy secessionist demands, it is important that Southerners and other marginalized groups feel represented in the central state and not just at the local level. Concurrently, the central state must be strong enough and willing to negotiate when conflicts arise between the central state and the regions, or among the regions. Otherwise, the regional state institutions and resources might be used to mobilize for secession (Anderson 2007).

In Yemen, however, the central state has never been able to provide security or other basic services to the Yemeni public. If we look at Yemen's long history, the state has not extended much beyond urban centres and has specifically been centred in Sanaʿa. Indeed, the current call for federalism is meant to reverse the marginalization of most of Yemen's current governorates by introducing a high degree of decentralization in resource management and service delivery. The complex interaction between local autonomy, service delivery and the state's expansion into the periphery can be illustrated by examining the Local Development Associations (LDAs) in the 1970s and 1980s.

Local communities in the 1970s experienced a growth in available income from remittances that entered North Yemen as a result of extensive emigration of the Yemeni workforce. This gave local communities the resources to implement infrastructure projects during which the LDA structure emerged (Carapico 1998: 107; Cohen and Hérbert 1981: 1041; Swanson 1979: 34). The ability of the LDAs

to secure funding independently of the state or other donors enabled them to formulate their own priorities.[13] The LDAs initially focused on road construction, but also supported construction of schools, health centres, water projects and other infrastructure (ʿAbduldaim 1992: 35; Carapico 1998: 111; Cohen and Hérbert 1981: 1044). Construction of roads and the spread of services associated with the central state gave the LDAs a substantial role in enhancing the linkages between local communities and the central state. As the number of LDAs grew, the central state saw an opportunity in integrating them into the state structure. This meant a process of increased centralization and standardization to rationalize the use of funds and quality of activities. The interaction between the state and the LDAs gradually increased, most notably when Ibrahim al-Hamdi, previous director of the umbrella organization of LDAs, the Confederation of Yemeni Development Associations, became president of Yemen in 1974. According to one commentator of Yemeni politics, President al-Hamdi wanted to utilize and expand the model of cooperative development further into the Yemeni periphery as a tool of state-building and increased central state control over the periphery (Day 2008: 67). Yet, it was ʿAli ʿAbd Allah Salih, the last president of the Yemen Arab Republic and the future president of united Yemen, who completed the full merger of the LDAs into the state system by turning the LDAs into Local Councils for Cooperative Development (LCCD). Although the LCCDs were given larger budgets, they lost the autonomy that had characterized the LDAs and gradually their importance (Carapico 1998: 114–8; Day 2012: 69; Phillips 2008: 79). Thus, the history of the LDAs is an example of how the central state can use local authority to penetrate areas where national policies have little relevance, but also illustrates how greater formalization or apparent recognition by the state of a decentralized structure does not necessarily increase local autonomy if that is not the intention of the national political elite.

Yemen is a young country where regional identities are strong. Hence, the future Yemeni state will need to be able to coordinate and contain regional differences. The federal system has to accommodate those population segments in Yemen which have no trust towards

the central government and therefore, as is the case in the South, require special guarantees while making sure that all regions feel equally represented in the state. This requires that the central state is strengthened but that it uses this strength to decentralize decisions to the relevant level.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES OF FEDERALISM IN YEMEN: WHAT CAN HISTORY TEACH US?

The discussion of the role of federalism as a policy instrument in relation to state-building illustrates the importance of the "details" or the specific character of the federal system, including the degree of local autonomy. Nevertheless, the debate in Yemen has devoted comparatively little attention to the issue of implementation. This is especially alarming as research has shown that particularly developing countries encounter complex problems during the implementation phase (Rondinelli 1981). Yemen is falling into the well-known trap of conflating the potential benefits of federalism and decentralization under ideal circumstances with what is realistic in a given context. The issues of capacity, local leadership and the interaction between local and central authority are some of the challenges which have not been adequately addressed in the current debate on federalism in Yemen.

First, there is a general lack of skilled officials, especially in the rural areas.[14] Hence, an important aspect of implementation will be to allocate substantial resources to building local government capacity, preferably while also building the technical capacity of central government to monitor local authority. Unsurprisingly, central government bureaucracies are generally more likely to attract better qualified people, not necessarily due to higher salaries but rather because they offer better careers and more attractive living environments (Prud'Homme 1995: 209–10). Local government will not be able to fulfil its mandate if substantial political, administrative and financial responsibilities are transferred to it without adequate financial or human resources. This includes making sure that both administrators and elected officials thoroughly understand the role and responsibilities of local government. Moreover, substantial

resources would have to be allocated to creating the physical infrastructure of local governments, including building offices and communication structures.

The experience of implementing the Local Authority Law illustrates the relevance of these concerns as both adequate human resources and suitable infrastructure have been lacking at governorate level, and even more so at district level (Romeo and El-Mensi 2011: 527). For example, in 2006, the Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA) estimated that only 82 of the 333 districts were prepared to perform the tasks defined in the LAL (Ministry of Local Administration, Yemen 2008: 2.2.2). Moreover, the National Local Authority Strategy highlights that recruitment to local administrative units has been insufficient and the training inadequate. Additionally, more than a third of all governorates, as well as three out of four districts, did not have adequate buildings for the local councils (ibid.: 2.2.5.2). Even if the Yemeni state had the necessary resources, it would still take a number of years before all necessary infrastructure could be completed and people with relevant competences could be trained or recruited. Hence, on the face of it, it is difficult to see exactly how the intentions of federalism and local authority will be implemented.

Second, it cannot be assumed that local elites will be more competent or interested in furthering general development than national elites. Granted, the decentralization literature often assumes explicitly or implicitly that local leadership will somehow be better than national leadership. Local authority is expected to function as a school of political participation and awareness by providing more potential meeting-points on localized political issues which concern its citizens. But as Treisman convincingly argues, there is no reason why these factors should be specifically associated with a decentralized state: "In short, there does not seem to be a clear, general reason to think citizens would attend political meetings, petition officials, demonstrate for or against government decisions, or turn out to vote more in a decentralised than a centralised state" (Treisman 2007: 160). The LAL established local councils but did not secure a mechanism to increase trust or linkages between local politicians and citizens. Hence, in many communities there has

traditionally been limited knowledge about who has been elected to the local council or the responsibilities of the local councils.[15] This observation is supported by the National Authority Strategy, which points to the need for community accountability as one of the major lessons learned in relation to the implementation of the LAL: "Similarly, decentralisation cannot make local authorities well responsive to people's needs without having in place a mechanism that subjects local authority units to community accountability" (Ministry of Local Administration, Yemen 2008: 2.3.1). Indeed, the debate in Yemen has mainly focused on finding an alternative to the previous system in which resources were controlled by a small elite (Al-Akhali 2014a). In that sense, Yemen follows the pattern noted by Philip Oxhorn (2004: 13): "Decentralisation seems to be promoted as much because of policy failures of the central state than for any clear empirical or theoretical reasons for suggesting that local and regional levels of governance are intrinsically better or less likely to fail." But even if it is assumed that decentralized governance holds intrinsic values related to the closeness between citizens and government officials which make it superior to centralized governance, the debate in Yemen has primarily focused on the composition of the federal structure. Yet, the regions, regardless of their specific number, will be fairly large political entities and will not in themselves secure decentralization. The draft constitution of January 2015 recommends four levels of government, in effect introducing the regional level into the current system with three levels: central state, governorate and district.[16] It is not clear to what degree decision-making will become decentralized beyond the regional structure as the powers of the district level is to be decided through future regional laws.

Finally, a well-functioning and stable system of local authority depends on the presence of strong national institutions. The central state plays a principal role in daily service provision at both local and national level. Primarily, a well-functioning federal system requires that the boundaries between different tiers of government are well defined to allow for effective power sharing between local governments and central authority (Romeo and El-Mensi 2011: 521). Indeed, most policy areas are complex and require the cooperation of

more than one tier of government. It is therefore a challenge to determine how different levels of government could and should cooperate (Prud'Homme 1995: 218). Furthermore, since capacity will most likely be low in local government, successful decentralization depends on the willingness and competence of central authority to support capacity-building at lower levels of government. The central administration tends to distrust the capabilities and motivations of local officials, as was true during the implementation of the LAL (Rondinelli 1981: 140–1). MOLA was officially charged with overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the LAL; however, despite attempts to coordinate between different line ministries, this proved a major challenge due to bureaucratic resistance and disputes over areas of responsibility.[17] It is a highly political process to establish a federal system because it entails shifting power from the central level to the various lower levels of government. MOLA was unable to secure implementation of the LAL due to, among other things, a lack of real political support, a lack of capacity, an inability to influence other ministries including the Ministry of Finance, and diverging internal views on decentralization (Romeo and El-Mensi 2011: 534).[18] If the new federal system in Yemen is to actually have an impact on the ground, these issues must be dealt with.

CONCLUSION

The uprising in Yemen paved the way for a multitude of different visions for the future "new Yemen" to be brought forward. Amongst them, the idea of federalism emerged as a way of accommodating the many different visions within a united "new Yemeni" state. Yet, in Yemen, decentralization has been elevated to an end in itself, without sufficient consideration of the context. Paul Smoke's words aptly describe the Yemeni reality: "Decentralisation is not favoured primarily because there is unambiguous proof of its desirability. The real reasons are rather varied, but ultimately political" (Smoke 2003: 7). This underlines the complexity of decentralization and consequently federalism in Yemen, and hence the need to zoom in on the specific choices. Previous experiences with decentralization in

Yemen have shown that the outcome depends on whether decentralization is supported by a clear political will and an unambiguous legal framework that specifies the distribution of power and resources. It is possible that the ambiguous use of federalism and decentralization made these concepts appealing to a broad range of actors during the NDC. Federalism and decentralization can appeal both to those who wish to isolate themselves from the central power and to those who wish to further the central state's expansion to the periphery. Hence, the lack of details in the discussions on federalism begs the question of whether the federal system will or is even meant to lead to substantial redistribution of resources and power, or if the real aim is to secure stability and the privileges of the elites. It is important to acknowledge that the implementation of federalism and decentralization is a highly political process as it, if implementation is successful, will redistribute power and resources within the Yemeni state.

NOTES

1. See the Gulf Cooperation Initiative and the Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance With the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
2. The Southern delegation was headed by Muhammad ʿAli Ahmad, a former governor of Abyan governorate who was considered a close confidant of President Hadi. He joined the NDC as head of the so-called Southern People's Conference on the request of President Hadi. However, the Southern delegation lacked legitimacy in the South as several main factions of Hirak (including ʿAli Salim al-Bidh, the February 16 Youth Movement, and Hassan Baʿum) rejected the NDC and saw it as a failure in terms of addressing the Southern grievances.
3. The 8 + 8 was formally considered a sub-working group of the Southern Issue working group, but with the special provision that the remaining members of the Southern Issue group agreed to accept the decisions of the sub-working group. However, the group was broadly conceived to be working under a specific mandate from Hadi who was under strong pressure to conclude the NDC, with resulting damage to the legitimacy of the group's decisions.
4. The Huthis and the independent Hirak rejected the decision of the six regions, as they felt it was taken without proper consultation.

5. The committee was headed by Ismaʿil al-Wazir, long-time member of GPC; whereas Ahmad ʿAwadh bin Mubarak, who also served as chief-of-staff to Yemen's president, functioned as the secretary-general of the committee.
6. In 2008 the LAL was supplemented with the National Local Authority Strategy, which states that "the local authority system has not reached the level hoped for" (Ministry of Local Administration, Yemen 2008: 1.2). The national strategy was meant to rectify this by providing an integrated vision for building and developing local authority in Yemen.
7. Republic of Yemen, 2014, National Dialogue Outcomes (unofficial English translation), Working Group of the Southern Question.
8. Ronald L. Watts differentiates between three distinct terms: federalism, federal political systems and federations (Watts 1998: 120).
9. Republic of Yemen, 2014, National Dialogue Outcomes, Working Group on the Southern Question (unofficial English translation).
10. Research suggests that differences in size and wealth of the regions can increase the instability of the federation, especially if one or two regions come to dominate the others (Elazar 1987: 170).
11. Republic of Yemen, 2014, National Dialogue Outcomes, Working Group on the Southern Question (unofficial English translation). The constitutional draft released in January 2015 envisions the *wilaya* level as having a central role in cooperation with the regional level.
12. The issue is also touched upon in the State-building working group where the focus seems to be that resources belong to the state and should serve the public rather than personal interest. The Sustainable Development working group highlights fair distribution of resources between governorates and the capital.
13. According to Sheila Carapico, 63 per cent of LDA revenues came from local contributions between 1976 and 1981 (Carapico 1998: 128).
14. Interviews, Sanaʿa 2013 (November/December).
15. Interviews, Sanaʿa (November/December 2013 and October/November 2014).
16. Republic of Yemen, draft constitution, 15 January 2015 (unofficial English translation).
17. Interviews, Sanaʿa (November/December 2013 and October/November 2014). Furthermore, one of the preparation reports for the National Local Authority Strategy states that: "The visionary LAL seems to have been crafted with the assumption of widespread understanding and support among CLMs (Central Line Ministries), an assumption that is proving unwarranted" (Ferrazzi 2006: 5). The line ministries refer to those ministries in charge of public service delivery, e.g. Ministry of Education or Ministry of Health, but not other ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Finance.
18. Interviews, Sanaʿa (November/December 2013 and October/November 2014).

REFERENCES

ʿAbduldaim, Dirar, 'The cooperative movement in North Yemen: Beginnings and developments', in M.A. Al-Saidi (ed.), *The Cooperative Movement of Yemen and Issues of Regional Development* (Sanaʿa, 1992).

Al-Akhali, Rafat, 'Debating federalism in Yemen', *Atlantic Council – Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East* (Washington DC, 2013).

—— 'The challenge of federalism in Yemen', *Atlantic Council – Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East* (Washington DC, 2014a).

—— 'Will decentralization in Yemen marginalize citizens?', *Atlantic Council – Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East* (Washington DC, 2014b).

Alley, April L., 'Yemen changes everything … and nothing', *Journal of Democracy* 24/4 (2013), pp. 74–85.

Anderson, Lawrence M., 'Theorizing federalism in Iraq', *Regional & Federal Studies – LA English* 17/2 (2007), pp. 159–71.

Boucek, Christopher and Marina Ottaway, *Yemen on the Brink* (Washington DC, 2010).

Brehony, Noel, 'The role of the PDRY in forming a South Yemeni identity', in H. Lackner (ed.), *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition* (London, 2014), pp. 123–41.

Carapico, Sheila, *Civil Society in Yemen: The Political Economy of Activism in Modern Arabia* (Cambridge, 1998).

Cohen, John M. and Mary Hérbert, 'Development from below: Local development associations in the Yemen Arab Republic', *World Development* 9/11&12 (1981), pp. 1039–61.

Day, Stephen W., 'Updating Yemeni national unity: Could lingering regional divisions bring down the regime?', *Middle East Journal* 62/3 (2008), pp. 417–36.

—— *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union* (Cambridge, 2012).

—— 'The "non-conclusion" of Yemen's National Dialogue', *Foreign Policy*, 27 January 2014.

Elazar, Daniel J., *Exploring Federalism* (Alabama, 1987).

Ferrazzi, Gabriele, *Sector Decentralization and Functional Assignment – Support Study for the Formulation of a National Decentralization Strategy Final Report* (Sanaʿa, 2006).

Franck, Thomas M., 'Why federations fail', in J. Kincaid (ed.), *Federalism* (Los Angeles, 2011).

Gaston, Erica, *Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue* (Washington DC, 2014).

Hyden, Goran, 'Challenges to decentralized governance in weak states', in D.A. Rondinelli and G.S. Cheema (eds), *Decentralizing Governance: Emerging Concepts and Practices* (Washington DC, 2007), pp. 212–28.

Lecuna, Antonio, 'Corruption and size decentralization', *Journal of Applied Economics* 14/1 (2012), pp. 139–68.

Manea, Elham, *The Perils of Yemen's Cunning State* (Oslo, 2012).

Ministry of Local Administration, Yemen. *National Local Authority Strategy* (Sanaʿa, 2008).

Oxhorn, Philip, 'Unravelling the puzzle of decentralization', in P. Oxhorn, J.S. Tulchin and A.D. Selee (eds), *Decentralization, Democratic Governance, and Civil Society in Comparative Perspective* (Washington DC, 2004), pp. 3–30.

Phillips, Sarah, *Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective: Patronage and Pluralized Authoritarianism'* (New York, 2008).

Political Forces Dialogue Committee, *The Document of Pledge and Accord* (Sanaʿa, 1994).

Prud'Homme, Rémy, 'The dangers of decentralization', *The World Bank Research Observer* 10/2 (1995), pp. 201–20.

Rocha Menocal, Alina, 'State building for peace: A new paradigm for international engagement in post-conflict fragile states?', *Third World Quarterly* 32/10 (2011), pp. 1715–36.

Romeo, Leonardo G. and Mohamed El-Mensi, 'The difficult road to local autonomy in Yemen: Decentralization reforms between political rationale and bureaucratic resistances in a multi-party democracy of the Arabian Peninsula', in J. Martinez-Vazquez and F. Vaillancourt (eds), *Decentralization in Developing Countries: Global Perspectives on the Obstacles to Fiscal Devolution* (Cheltenham, 2011).

Rondinelli, D.A., 'Government decentralization in comparative perspective: Theory and practice in developing countries', *International Review of Administrative Sciences – LA English* 47/2 (1981), pp. 133–45.

Salisbury, Peter, *Federalism, Conflict and Fragmentation in Yemen*, Saferworld (London, 2015). Available at https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1007-federalism-conflict-and-fragmentation-in-yemen (accessed 16 June 2017).

Schmitz, Charles, 'Can a federal state solve Yemen's problems?', *E-International Relations*, 13 March 2014. Available at http://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/13/can-a-federal-state-solve-yemens-problems/ (accessed 16 June 2017).

Smoke, Paul, 'Decentralisation in Africa: Goals, dimensions, myths and challenges', *Public Administration and Development* 23/1 (2003), pp. 7–16.

Stepan, Alfred C., 'Federalism and democracy: Beyond the U.S. model', *Journal of Democracy* 10/4 (1999), pp. 19–34.

—— *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford, 2001).

Swanson, Jon C., 'Some consequences of emigration for rural economic development in the Yemen Arab Republic', *The Middle East Journal* 33/1 (1979), pp. 34–43.

Treisman, Daniel, *The Architecture of Government: Rethinking Political Decentralization* (Cambridge, 2007).

Wallis, Joanne, 'What role can decentralisation play in state-building? Lessons from Timor-Leste and Bougainville', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 51/4 (2013), pp. 424–46.

Watts, Ronald L., 'Federalism, federal political systems, and federations', *Annual Review of Political Science* 1/1 (1998), pp. 117–37.

About the Authors

Anne-Linda Amira Augustin is a research associate in Middle Eastern Studies and Sociology and an associated fellow of the research network "Re-Configurations: History, Remembrance and Transformation Processes in the Middle East and North Africa" at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Philipps-University Marburg (Germany). She holds an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies, Russian and French from Leipzig University. Her current research interests include independence and protest movements, unrecognized statehood, social space production and intergenerational transmission.

Laurent Bonnefoy is a CNRS research fellow at the Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI-Sciences Po) in Paris. Based as a researcher in Sanaʿa for a total of four years, he is the author of *Salafism in Yemen: Transnationalism and Religious Identity* (Hurst & Co./Columbia University Press, 2012), *Yemen and the World: Beyond Insecurity* (Hurst, forthcoming) and has co-edited *Yémen: Le Tournant Révolutionnaire* (Karthala/CEFAS, 2012; Dar al-Furat, 2016 (in Arabic)).

Marieke Brandt is a researcher at the Institute for Social Anthropology (ISA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. Her research focuses on tribalism, tribal genealogy and history, and tribe–state relations in Southwest Arabia. She is author of the book *Tribes and Politics in Yemen: A History of the Houthi Conflict* (2017) published by Hurst/OUP.

Maria-Louise Clausen is a postdoc at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Aarhus and has a background in political science, anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies. Her research focuses on state-building interventions and state fragility in states with multiple structures of governance, including competing service provision structures and theories of the (nation) state more broadly.

Marie-Christine Heinze is President of CARPO – Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient and researcher at the University of Bonn, where she has headed the research project "Framing the 'Revolution' in Yemen", which the University of Bonn coordinated together with the Yemen Polling Center, and "Academic Approaches to Peace-building and State-building in Yemen", co-implemented with the Gender Development Research and Studies Center (GDRSC) at Sanaʿa University. She holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Bielefeld and is editor of the *Jemen-Report*, the magazine of the German–Yemeni Society. She also frequently works as a consultant on Yemen and has published widely on social and political change in the country.

Katherine Hennessey, PhD, is Assistant Dean for Curriculum and an assistant professor of English at the American University of Kuwait. From 2009 to mid-2014 she lived in Sanaʿa, researching and writing about Yemeni theatre, a subject on which she has published numerous articles and book chapters. She is also the author of *Shakespeare on the Arabian Peninsula* (London, 2018).

Elisabeth Kendall is Senior Research Fellow in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Pembroke College, University of Oxford. Her current work examines how militant jihadist movements win local audiences exploit traditional Arab cultures. She spends significant time in the field, particularly in Yemen, and is the author or editor of several books, including *ReClaiming Islamic Tradition* (2016, with Ahmad Khan), *Twenty-First Century Jihad* (2015, with Ewan Stein), *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-Garde: Intersection in Egypt* (2006), *Intelligence Arabic* (2017) and *Media Arabic* (2012).

Judit Kuschnitzki has been trained in International Relations (Maastricht University) and Modern Middle Eastern Studies (University of Oxford) and is currently working on her PhD at the University of Cambridge. Prior to her doctoral research, she worked as managing editor at the *Yemen Times* and as a research assistant at the University of Tübingen's Center for Islamic Theology. Judit Kuschnitzki has written several academic articles on the Salafi movement in Yemen and contributed a chapter to the edited volume *Salafism after the Arab Awakening* (Hurst, 2016).

Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi is a doctoral student at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in the project "The Struggles over Identity, Morality, and Public Space in Middle Eastern Cities", which is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. His dissertation tackles issues of identity and historical consciousness in the contemporary Yemeni novel. He holds a master's degree in Arabic Language and Literature from Sanaʿa University and is a lecturer at al-Baydhaʾ University. He is also Associate Fellow at CARPO – Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient. Al-Rubaidi is author of *al-Nass al-Ghaʾib fi ʿl-Qasida al-ʿArabiyya al-Haditha* [Intertextuality in Modern Arabic Poetry] (in Arabic; 2012), published by Dar al-Ghaydaʾ (Amman).

Nadia al-Sakkaf became the Republic of Yemen's first female Minister of Information in 2014 after she had participated in several high-level positions in government committees, including the National Dialogue Conference, working on the political transition and the country's future post the 2011 uprising in Yemen. Before that, she was the chief editor of the *Yemen Times*, the country's first and most widely read independent English-language newspaper, changing the media environment in the country and winning international awards for her work on press freedom. She is now a PhD candidate at the Political Science School at Reading University in the United Kingdom on the politics of gender in the Republic of Yemen.

Stephen Steinbeiser is a scholar and museum consultant, most recently serving as Cultural Director for the Atturaif Museology Project in Riyadh. From 2009 to mid-2014 he was Country Director of

the American Institute for Yemeni Studies in Sanaʿa, where he led several cultural heritage projects and obtained funding to establish Yemen's first Children's Museum. His current research explores the nexus of politics, power, and memory in commemorative museums.

Ewa K. Strzelecka is a postdoctoral scholar at the Centre for Research in Anthropology of the Nova University of Lisbon. She holds a PhD in Social and Political Science from the University of Granada. Her research is focused on gender and the complexity of social and political change in the Middle East and North Africa. She is the author of the prize-winning book *Women in the Arab Spring: The Construction of a Political Culture of Feminist Resistance in Yemen* (CSIC, 2017), which is based on her fieldwork in Sanaʿa between 2007 and 2013.

Tobias Thiel is a researcher, political analyst and development professional. He holds a PhD in International History from the London School of Economics and Political Science and an MA in International Relations from Johns Hopkins University. His doctoral dissertation focused on the citizen uprising in Yemen in 2011 and the historical processes that led to it. From 2010 to 2013, he worked in Yemen in two development cooperation projects related to governance and in support of the transition process.

Mareike Transfeld is a PhD candidate at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies at the Freie Universität Berlin. She is particularly interested in Yemeni youth culture, social norms and new media. Having spent eight years living in Yemen between 2002 and 2014, she frequently publishes on Yemeni politics in international media and policy-relevant publications.

Index

Abu ʿAli *see* al-Hakim, ʿAbd Allah
Abu Luhum, Muhammad ʿAli, 156n.7
Abu Luhum, Sinan, 187
Abu Luhum, Tariq, 189
Abu Ras, ʿAbd al-Wahid, 166
Abyan
  1986 civil war, 105
  Ansar al-Shariʿa, 11
  Haytham, Ibrahim ʿAli, 127
  looting of museum, 285
  positions on unity, 96
  representation, 119, 120
Aden
  Ba Sindwa, Muhammad (Prime Minister Yemen, 2011–2014), 9
  federal regions, 313
  Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 20
  heritage destruction, 296
  Hirak, 101
  Islah, 191, 197
  marginalization, 98
  Muslim Brotherhood, 186
  protests, 101, 232
  Rashid, Wahid ʿAli, 197
  refugees, 11
  security, 100
  Aden University, 106
  women, 149
  youth, 100, 232
al-Aghbari, Samya, 58
al-Ahmadi, Jamal (b. 1987), 39–40
al-Ahmar, ʿAbd Allah, 118, 187–8
al-Ahmar family, 7, 18, 120, 167, 177, 189, 193, 195–6, 199
al-Ahmar, General ʿAli Muhsin
  Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 120, 122, 123, 130n.2
  Huthis, 195, 196
  Islah, 122, 123, 190, 192
  Islamism, 190
  presidential ambitions, 8
  revolution, 7–8, 10, 118
  Saʿda Wars, 7–8, 195
  Saudi Arabia, 197–8
  security sector reform, 120
  vice presidency, 198
al-Ahmar, Hamid, 7, 180n.5, 189, 196, 197, 247
al-Ahmar, Sadiq (b. 1956)
  al-Basha, Amal, 62, 180n.2

challenged, 196
Hashid *shaykh* of *shaykh*s, 7, 194
Huthis, 196
Islah, 7, 194, 196
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 165, 166, 180n.5
al-ʿAmiri, Muhammad Musa (b. 1965), 207–8, 211, 221
ʿAmiriya Mosque, 283–4, 285, 299
ʿAmran
conflict, 164, 167, 195, 196
federalism, 16, 174
al-Hakim, ʿAbd Allah, 174
Huthis, 11, 16, 18, 174, 175, 176, 177, 195, 196
Islah, 191, 195
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 165, 166
Ansar al-Shariʿa, 11, 174
Ansar Allah *see* Huthis
al-Ansi, ʿAbd al-Wahhab, 189, 196
apostasy
exploitation, 34, 59, 193–4
Ibrahim, Maryam Yahya, 35
al-Maqtari, Bushra (b. 1979), 37–8, 43n.14, 59
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 193–4
al-Waʾil, Dr. ʿAbd al-Rahman, 36
Yemeni uprising, 35–6
AQAP (al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula)
Ansar al-Shariʿa, 11, 174
Dammaj, 195
heritage destruction, 295–6
Huthis, 178, 195, 226n.19
imagery, 83
al-Iman University, 196
jihad, 199
Kitaf, 167, 195
Radaʿ, 283–4
al-Rashad Union, 196, 215, 216, 217–18, 224n.12
tribes, 84–5
Arab Spring
heritage, 285, 287–8, 290
Huthis, 160, 161, 163, 178
party research, 204
Saʿda, 160
Salafiyya, 208
social media, 40
Southern Movement, 97, 103
theatre, 274
women, 54, 134
Yemeni uprising, 2, 49, 93, 160, 231, 232
youth mobilization, 93, 234
army, 1, 10, 11, 177, 191, 195, 315
art, 231, 246–7, 249, 250–2
artefacts, 285–6, 295, 296
ʿAsiry, Ahmad, 247, 251
al-ʿAttas, Haydar Abu Bakr, 104, 109, 113n.12
al-ʿAttas, Huda (b. 1971), 44n.16, 109

Baʿath party, 121, 157n.12
Bafadhil, ʿAbd al-Rahman, 187
Bahah, Khaled (Prime Minister, 2014–2016), 19, 122, 123
Bakil, 187
Basement (cultural foundation), 249, 250–1, 253
Basha, Amal, 58, 62, 180n.2
Ba Sindwa, Muhammad (Prime Minister Yemen, 2011–2014), 9, 118–19, 126, 130n.5
al-Baydhaʾ, 135, 217, 221, 226n.19
Benomar, Jamal (b. 1957), 18, 80, 192
al-Bidh, ʿAli Salim (b. 1939, President People's Democratic Republic Yemen)
Aden Live, 101, 112n.6
historical leadership, 104, 109

National Dialogue Conference, 322n.2
National Liberation Front, 74
political role, 112n.6
secession, 111n.2, 112n.7, 113n.12, 113n.14
Southern Movement (role in), 101, 107, 112n.6, 112n.7, 322n.2
Tughma, 105
bin Mubarak, Ahmad ʿAwadh (b. 1968), 19, 120, 123, 323n.5
bin Shuʿayb, Husayn (b. 1960), 32–4, 42n.5
blood money, 144–5
al-Bukhayti, ʿAli, 164, 165, 168, 170, 173

Central Organization for Control and Auditing (COCA), 124, 125, 130n.6
Change Square
dynamics of protests, 8, 50, 55, 56, 248
Facebook, 250
Friday of Dignity, 6
Islah, 185, 190
women, 50, 52–53, 55–56, 247, 249
youth, 232, 246–8, 250, 253, 254n.5
al-Zindani, ʿAbd al-Majid, 192
child marriage *see* early marriage
citizenship rights, 53, 55, 64, 65, 142, 147, 148–9
collective memory, 6, 94, 95, 97–102, 105–6, 110
Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 16–17, 64, 122, 310
corruption
anti-corruption law, 127, 130n.4
heritage, 284–5
Huthi agenda, 5, 19, 178
Islah, 191, 193
Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), 18
Southern Movement, 5, 110
Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC), 124–6, 129, 130n.5
terrorism, 264, 269, 275n.7
transition process, 117, 121
youth protests, 4, 232
Council of the Youth Revolution for Change, 52
cross-tribal councils (in al-Mahra), 73, 82, 87
cultural change, 57–61
cultural heritage
al-Qaʿ, 290
definition, 280
destroyed, 21
exploitation, 284–6
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), 291–3
international aid, 299
preservation, 280–2
threats, 280
violence, 278
vulnerabilities, 279–80
cultural violence, 55, 57, 60

Dar al-Hadith (Kitaf), 167, 175, 195
Dar al-Hadith al-Khayriyya (Dammaj), 167, 175, 195, 196, 199, 218, 225n.16
Dar al-Hajar, 279, 287–91, 299
decentralization *see* federalism
Declaration of Youth Revolution's Demands, 52
democracy
2011 upheavals, 50, 53, 55
hizbiyya, 207
Islah, 192
local self-organization, 86
al-Rashad Union, 207–8, 212, 217, 218, 220, 223

Salafiyya, 207, 208
Southern Movement, 110, 315
women, 49, 50, 55
al-Dhaliʿ, 58, 106
Dhamar, 163, 174, 176, 279, 286, 295
Dhamar Regional Museum, 279, 295
al-Din, Ahmad Sharaf, 167, 168, 173, 196, 276n.17
Document of Pledge and Accord, 311
draft constitution (2015)
federalism, 81, 310, 320
House of Fatawa, 60
NDC recommendations, 16
presentation, 19, 123
women's rights, 61–8, 142, 144, 145, 149
al-Dubaʿi, Shaykhan, 189

early marriage, 237
history, 143, 157n.14, 157n.15
Islah, 193
Islamist parties, 154
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 65, 139, 143–4, 154
non-alignment of women, 139
scholarly debate, 157n.17
youth, 235, 237–8
education
de-radicalization, 273
gender segregation, 98, 243
Huthis, 160, 171, 178
al-Mahra, 77
marriage age, 143, 239
Muslim Brotherhood, 186, 238
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 232
prisons, 151
al-Qaʿida, 84
Salafiyya, 223n.3
Sanaʿa, 252–3
South, 98–9, 103
Southern Movement, 6, 11, 102, 106, 109, 110
system, 238
women, 63, 65, 148, 238, 245
youth, 232, 234
elections
Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 9–10
Islah, 140, 185, 189, 198
local councils, 311
al-Rashad Union, 213, 220, 224n.5
transition process, 1, 9–10, 174
women, 65, 138, 141
equality
citizenship rights, 65, 170
draft constitution (2015), 65, 67
quotas, 120, 141
women, 49, 50, 52, 57, 60, 63, 64, 141–2, 149
Executive Mechanism *see* GCC Initiative
extremism
cinema, 259–63
dialogue, 266
al-Rashad Union, 215, 222
Salafism, 215, 222
theatre, 258, 263–7, 268–74

faʿaliyya, 101–2
Facebook, 31, 35, 42n.2, 89n.2, 214, 249–50
fashion, 241, 245–6, 251
fatawa see fatwa
fatwa, 32–4, 59
federalism
challenges, 318–21
complexity, 321
composition, 320
Constitution Drafting Committee, 16–7
decentralization, 311–13

distribution of federal regions, 15–6, 19, 109, 174, 309, 313
draft constitution (2015), 19
Guarantees Document, 172
Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 174
Huthis, 19, 64, 174
implementation, 322
imposition, 310
introduction in Yemen, 14–5, 307
Islah, 192–3, 197
al-Mahra, 72, 81, 83, 89n.8, 90n.12
potential, 313–18
power structures, 312–13
Southern Movement, 174, 308–9
structure, 15–16
Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), 109
feminist resistance
acts of disobedience, 62
cultural change, 56
patriarchal power, 49
political culture, 58
Yemen, 4, 48–9, 69
Freedom Square (Taʿiz), 50, 200
fundamentalism, 32, 42n.4, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 65, 67, 219
Future Partners for Development Foundation, 266

GCC Initiative
exclusions, 9–10, 119, 232, 248
Executive Mechanism, 9, 10, 117, 134
Guarantees Document, 15, 168–74
Huthis, 163–4
Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), 190
political elites, 28, 232, 248
political quotas, 123
rejection, 11, 13
relationship to constitution, 127–8, 129
signed, 1, 9
transition process, 9–15, 93, 178
women, 134, 141
youth, 93, 232, 248
gender-based violence, 56, 65, 150
gender relations
equality *see* equality
Yemeni uprising, 4, 50–1, 190
youth, 233, 253
General People's Congress (GPC)
consensus government, 122, 130n.3
Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 310, 323n.5
foreign service, 120
Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 118, 119, 120, 123
history, 156n.2
Islah, 154, 156n.3, 248
Islamism, 187
Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), 157, 188
Justice and Building Party, 156n.7
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 137, 308
Saʿda Issue working group, 164, 165, 180n.5
Salih, ʿAli ʿAbd Allah (President Yemen, 1990–2012), 9, 118, 306
Shura Council, 126
transition government, 9–10, 18, 119
transition process, 119
Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC), 126, 128

Women National Committee, 158n.18
Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), 156n.5
Yemeni uprising, 118
Guarantees Document *see* GCC Initiative
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), 291, 293–4
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative *see* GCC Initiative

al-Haddad, ʿAmmar, 210–11, 215, 216, 225n.13
Hadhramawt
federalism, 81, 83, 313, 314–5
GCC development projects, 292
jihadism, 84
al-Mahra, 16, 78, 81, 82, 83
oil reserves, 5
population, 77, 89n.9
women (representation at the NDC), 135
Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present)
8 + 8 Committee, 322n.3
Bahah, Khaled (Prime Minister, 2014–2016), 19
cabinet reshuffles, 119, 121–2
Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 16, 310
Dar al-Hadith al-Khayriyya (Dammaj), 167, 225n.16
diplomatic appointments, 120
election as president, 9
federalism, 15, 64, 174, 309
flight to Aden and Saudi Arabia, 20, 161
GCC Initiative, 10
Guarantees Document (NDC), 15, 172
house arrest, 19, 20, 123
Huthis, 64, 166, 177, 306
Islah, 191–2
legitimacy, 118
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 79, 155, 308, 322n.2
Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), 122
power dynamics, 118, 120–3, 130n.2
resignation (and rescinding of), 19, 20, 123, 306
Saudi-led coalition, 306
Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC), 125–8
terrorism, 84
Hajja, 11, 16, 151, 163, 174, 195, 313, 315
al-Hajuri, Yahya, 196–7, 207, 223n.4, 224n.5
al-Hakim, ʿAbd Allah, 174
al-Hamdi, Ibrahim (President North Yemen, 1974–1977), 317
al-Harithi, ʿAbd Al-Hamid, 145
al-Hashidi, ʿAbd Allah, 210, 214, 216, 218, 220
Haytham, Ibrahim ʿAli, 127
healthcare, 63, 65, 151
Hirak *see* Southern Movement
al-hirak al-janubi see Southern Movement
Hizb al-Islah *see* Islah
hizbiyya, 207
House of Fatawa (Dar al-Iftaʾ), 59–60
human rights
cultural change, 36, 57–61
early marriage, 143
Huthis, 179
Karman, Tawakkul (b. 1979), 190
shariʿa, 36, 67–8
women, 50, 63

al-Humayqani, ʿAbd al-Wahhab (b. 1972), 206, 207, 210, 212–3, 215, 216, 221, 223
al-Huthi, ʿAbd al-Malik (b. 1979), 163, 175–6, 178
al-Huthi, Husayn, 5, 166, 169, 178, 180n.1, 181n.6
al-Huthi, Muhammad (b. 1979), 20
al-Huthi, Yahya (b. 1965), 164, 180n.1
Huthis
  al-Ahmar, ʿAli Muhsin, 7, 198
  Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 310
  Constitutional Declaration, 20
  Dammaj, 195
  al-Din, Ahmad Sharaf, 173
  expansion, 11, 18, 20, 122–3, 163, 169, 174–5
  federalism, 16, 19, 64, 81, 174, 309–10, 312, 313, 315
  formation and change, 160–1
  GCC Initiative, 10, 22n.9, 119, 163
  Guarantees Document (NDC), 172–4
  Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 19, 123
  Imamate, 170
  al-Iman University, 43n.9, 177
  Iran, 171
  Islah, 195, 196–7, 198, 200
  Jadban, ʿAbd al-Karim, 166
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 13, 161, 163–71, 308
  participation, 178–9
  participatory state, 169–70
  Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), 18–19, 122
  political transition, 204
  al-Qaʿida, 178, 195, 218
  al-Rashad Union, 196, 218, 219–22
  Rights and Freedoms working group, 136–7
  rise of, 197
  Saʿda Issue, 162–3
  Saʿda Issue working group, 166, 168, 169
  Saʿda Wars, 10–11, 162–3
  Sanaʿa, 18, 123, 175–7, 196, 219, 273, 306
  Sunni Islamists, 13, 171, 195–7, 199, 200, 219–22, 225n.16
  transformations, 178–9
  weapons, 172, 176–7
  women, 147, 154, 158n.22
  Yemeni uprising, 4–5, 6, 8, 11
  youth, 253

iitihad al-rashad see al-Rashad Union
al-Iman University, 7, 36, 43n.9, 143, 177, 196
Imam Yahya, 287
Imamate, 22n.2, 120, 162, 170, 287, 288
al-Iman University, 7, 35, 36, 43n.8, 43n.9, 143, 177, 196
information technology, 58, 71, 184, 238, 244
Inside Out Project, 251–2
International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, 298
International Monetary Fund, 175
Islah
  apostasy, 193–4
  Change Square, 190, 247–8
  consensus government, 18, 122
  Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 310

crisis, 199
diversity, 198
early marriage, 143–4
education, 98, 186, 238
evolution, 200
fall from power, 197
federalism, 192–3
gender-based violence, 150
history, 185–8
Huthis, 10–11, 167, 177, 195–6
identity, 188
integration (political and social), 188–91
Islam, 187, 193–4
Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), 188–9
Muslim Brotherhood, 185–8, 224n.9
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 13, 137, 165, 192, 193–4
networks, 189
Operation Decisive Storm, 197
political quotas, 119, 121
pressures, 195
al-Rashad Union, 209, 224n.11
Saʿda Issue working group, 164
Saʿda Wars, 11
Salih, ʿAli ʿAbd Allah (President Yemen (1978), 1990–2012), 123, 187
Saudi Arabia, 194, 198
Southern issue, 197, 308
Southern Yemen, 98
Taʿiz, 199–200
transition government, 9, 10
transition process, 191–3, 195–6
tribes, 186–8, 195–6
United Arab Emirates, 194, 198
women, 53, 165, 248–9
women's quota, 140–1, 154
women's rights, 149, 150, 152–3, 193
Yemeni Socialist Party, 22n.7, 98
Yemeni uprising, 6–7, 8, 118, 190, 248–9
youth, 7, 8, 190
Ismaʿil, Wafaʾ ʿAbd al-Fattah, 136

al-Jabali, Hani, 210, 213, 218, 220, 225n.13
Jadban, ʿAbd al-Karim, 166, 168, 196, 276n.17
janbiya (dagger), 260
Jarallah, ʿAli, 189
Jarallah, ʿUmar, 189
al-Jawf
conflict, 164, 176, 195
federalism, 16, 174, 313, 315
heritage, 286
Huthi expansion, 11, 163, 176
jihad
AQAP (al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula), 84, 199, 217
Arab Spring, 184
Dar al-Hadith, 167
Islah, 194, 199
militancy, 329
recruitment, 84
Salafiyya, 217, 223, 223n.3
Taʿiz, 200
theatre, 261, 262
Joint Meeting Parties (JMP)
GCC Initiative, 9, 190
history, 157n.12, 188–9
Islah, 7, 200
politics, 140
Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC), 126, 128
transition government, 10, 119, 120, 130n.3
judicial system, 59, 65, 119, 128, 129–30

jurisprudence, 22n.2, 32, 33, 36, 60, 220

Karman, ʿAbd al-Salam, 187
Karman, Tawakkul (b. 1979), 49, 58, 190–1, 196
al-Khaywani, ʿAbd al-Karim (1965–2013), 173
Kuwait, 226n.20, 291, 298

legitimacy
  decentralization, 308, 312
  GCC Initiative, 164
  Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 118, 123
  historical leadership (of the Southern Movement), 109, 111
  Islah, 191
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 164, 322n.2, 322n.3
  self-organization (al-Mahra), 75, 84
  Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC), 125–6
  transition, 123, 125, 219
  unity, 34
  Yemeni parliament, 128–9
  youth revolution, 231
local authorities, 311, 317, 318, 319–20
Local Authority Law (LAL, 2000), 311, 319, 321, 323n.6
Local Councils for Cooperative Development (LCCD), 317
local councils (LC), 289–90, 311–2, 319–20
Local Development Associations (LDAs), 316–17

al-Maflihi, Qasim, 141
al-Mahra (outside of chapter 3), 12, 16, 135, 314
al-Mahra Council, 81, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89n.2
al-Mahra Tribal Council, 73, 74–5
al-Mahra Youth Organization, 74
al-Mahra Youth Unity Association, 72, 75, 82–3
al-Mahwit, 135, 163, 210
Manaʿ, Faysal, 165, 166, 180n.4, 180n.5
al-Maqtari, Bushra (b. 1979), 37–9, 40, 43n.14, 44n.16, 58–9, 60
marginalization
  Change Square, 248
  decentralization, 312
  federalism, 316
  heritage preservation, 278
  Huthis, 4, 5, 170, 179
  Islah, 198–9
  al-Mahra, 77, 79
  marginalized groups, 12, 156n.9, 312, 316
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 165
  radicalism, 263
  Saʿda, 162, 170
  Southern Movement, 4, 11, 96
  Southern Yemen, 93, 95, 96, 98, 311
  women, 52, 68
  youth, 93, 232, 248, 251
Maʾrib, 163, 200
media
  Hollywood, 259
  Islah, 189, 192, 197, 200
  patriarchy, 51
  al-Rashad Union, 212, 215
  social media *see* social media
  Southern cause, 100–1
  Southern Yemen, 94, 102
  transition process, 80
  youth, 231

al-Mikhlafi, Hamud, 190, 200
al-Mikhlafi, Muhammad, 121, 126
*miliyuniyya*s, 101–2, 111n.2
Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA), 319, 321
Mubarak, Husni (President, Egypt, 1981–2011), 3
Muhammad, ʿAli Nasir (b. 1939), 104, 105, 107, 109, 113n.13
Mujalli, ʿUmar, 165–6, 180n.5
al-Mundhiri, Salih, 142
music, 98, 231, 241, 246, 247, 250–2
Muslim Brotherhood
  education, 238
  Huthis, 13
  Islah, 185–8, 197
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 13
  post-Arab Spring, 184–5, 197, 198, 200
  Qatar, 194
  al-Rashad Union, 193
  Saudi Arabia, 194, 198
  United Arab Emirates, 194, 198
  Yemen, 186, 189

Naji, Shaykh Yahya ʿAli, 287–8, 299
National Dialogue Conference (NDC)
  8 + 8 Committee, 14, 309, 322n.3
  apostasy, 59–60, 193–4, 201n.5
  conclusion, 168
  Consensus Committee, 136, 144, 172
  Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 16–17, 310
  decision making, 135–6
  draft constitution, 60
  extremism, 258
  federalism, 15, 174, 309–10, 312, 322
  Guarantees Document, 15, 172–3
  Huthis, 13, 161, 163–7, 168, 172–3
  Islah, 13, 192, 197
  loss of faith in, 17
  al-Mahra, 79–80
  Mövenpick Hotel, 12, 167
  National Authority for Monitoring the Implementation of the NDC Outcomes, 23n.10, 122, 123, 172
  New Yemen, 308–10
  objective, 10
  outcomes, 15, 60, 66 168–71, 155
  Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), 18
  al-Rashad Union, 13–4, 208–10
  shariʿa, 67–8
  Southern issue, 308
  Southern Issue working group, 315–6
  Southern Movement, 14, 308
  start, 12
  structure, 12
  Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC), 125
  women, 134
  women's agenda, 63–4
  women's empowerment, 67
  women's participation, 12–3, 47, 61, 64, 139–53
  women's rights, 61–8, 134–159
  youth, 232
  al-Zindani, ʿAbd al-Majid, 193–4
National Liberation Front, 73–4, 108, 112n.10
National Local Authority Strategy, 319, 323n.6

nationality, 146–7
new Yemen
  cooperative project, 264
  federalism, 307, 310, 321
  GCC Initiative, 134
  Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 79
  heritage, 278
  Islah, 192
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 308–10
  new South, 108
  September, 2014 events, 18
  South Yemeni identity, 314
  women, 247
  Yemeni uprising, 1, 20, 321

Operation Decisive Storm, 161, 197, 279
Operation Restoring Hope, 279
othering, 17–18, 259–60, 273

patriarchal power
  feminist resistance, 48, 49, 53–4, 55, 58–9
  morality, 56
  against women, 68, 150
  Yemeni uprising, 51, 54, 55–6
  youth, 57, 236
Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), 18, 122
People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY)
  1986 civil war, 105–6
  al-ʿAttas, Haydar Abu Bakr, 113n.12
  al-Bidh, ʿAli Salim (b. 1939, President People's Democratic Republic Yemen), 112n.6
  crimes, 106
  flag, 6, 93
  historical leadership, 112n.10
  legitimacy, 111
  political capital, 108
  remembrance, 97, 110, 111
  Southern Movement, 93–4, 110
  unity, 22n.4
  women, 138, 148
  youth, 110
police, 11, 65, 151, 190, 237

al-qadiyya al-janubiyya see Southern Issue
qadiyya Saʿda see Saʿda Issue
Qahtan, Muhammad, 189, 194, 196, 197, 200
al-Qaʿida *see* AQAP
al-Qasim, ʿAbd al-Majid, 208–9, 211–12, 214, 217, 220, 221, 224n.8
Qatar, 194–5, 293
al-Qubati, Yassin, 189, 200
al-Qushaybi, Hamid (1940–2014), 23n.11, 195, 196

Radaʿ, 283–4, 285
al-Rashad Union
  apostasy, 193–4
  categorization, 215–19
  democracy, 207–8, 212
  establishment (2012), 205, 206
  hizbiyya, 207
  Huthis, 196, 219–22
  international relations, 212–13
  Islah, 193, 209, 224n.11
  membership, 210–12
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 208–10
  outreach, 211–12
  political transition, 204–5
  politics, 14, 214, 222–3
  professionalism, 213, 216
  al-Qaʿida, 215, 216, 217, 224n.12
  Saʿda Issue working group, 164, 165, 166
  Salafiness, 205, 207, 214, 215, 223n.2

Salafism, 216–17
shariʿa, 209, 210
Shiʿa, 220
transition, 208–15, 219, 222
women's rights, 137, 141, 142, 144, 145, 146, 152, 154, 165, 209, 210
Yemeni uprising, 222
Rashid, Wahid ʿAli, 197
remittances, 316
Rights and Freedoms working group
blood money, 144–5
citizenship, 148–9
gender-based violence, 147–8, 149–51
early marriage, 143–4
female prisoners' rights, 151–2
marriage, 152–3
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 136–7
nationality, 147
women activists, 145
women's participation, 139–53
women's quota, 140–2
women's rights in case of divorce, 145–6
rule of law, 124–9

Saʿda
Dar al-Hadith Institute(s), 167, 195
federalism, 313
governance, 169–70
Huthis, 4–5, 11, 160, 163, 178, 180
Saudi Arabia, 171
Sunni Islamism, 171
Yemeni uprising, 160, 195
Saʿda Issue, 162–3, 168, 169
Saʿda Issue working group, 12, 13, 62, 164, 165–6, 168, 170–2
Saʿda Wars, 5, 10–11, 160, 162–3, 169, 170, 180n.3, 195
Salafism, 4, 205, 207, 214–15, 215–17, 222–3, 226n.20
Salafiyya
democracy, 205–6
Islah, 197
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 13–14
al-Rashad Union, 205, 217
Saʿda Wars, 11
Taʿiz, 200
Salam, ʿAbd al-Karim (lawyer), 120
Salih, ʿAli ʿAbd Allah (President Yemen, 1990–2012)
al-Ahmar, ʿAli Muhsin, 7–8
Change Square, 247
corruption, 1, 264, 284
GCC Initiative, 1, 9, 134
General People's Congress (GPC), 118, 156n.2, 165
Huthis, 18, 19, 20, 161, 162, 197
immunity, 9, 10, 37, 190, 306
intimidation against women, 55–6, 58, 247
Islah, 156n.2, 187, 188, 189–90
Local Development Associations, 317
mosque attack, 8
parallel revolution, 10
power, 118, 160, 188
resigned, 190, 232
Salih, Ahmad ʿAli, 120
security sector, 120
Southern Yemen, 98–9
system of governance, 123, 125, 156n.3, 165, 275n.7
transition process, 204
war on terrorism, 5
Yemeni unity, 34, 94, 112n.6
Yemeni uprising, 1, 3, 49–50, 190

al-Saman, Muhammad Sulayman, 210, 216, 220, 222, 225n.13
Sanaʿa
  artefacts, 286
  central state, 316
  Change Square, 8, 18, 50, 52
  education, 238–9
  federalism, 313, 315
  Huthis, 5, 18,19, 122, 163, 175, 176, 191, 273, 306
  Idanoot Foundation for Folklore, 290
  Inside Out Project, 251–2
  Islah, 6, 185, 190
  Karman, Tawakkul, 49
  National Democratic Institute (NDI), 212
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 10, 12
  normative geopraphies, 240, 242, 247
  al-Qaʿ, 290
  al-Rashad Union, 211
  Social Fund for Development, 293
  young women, 246
  youth, 232, 236–9, 240, 241, 252–3
  youth protests, 5
Sanaʿa University, 6, 247, 248
Saudi Arabia
  aid to Yemen, 291
  heritage, 294–5
  International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, 298
  Islah, 197–8
  al-Mahra, 71
  Muslim Brotherhood, 186, 194–5
  Operation Decisive Storm, 20, 161, 197, 273, 278, 279
  Operation Restoring Hope, 279
  regional policy, 294
  Saʿda, 171
  Sunni Islamism, 171, 175
  Yemen, 293–4
  youth, 253
Saudi-led coalition (SLC), 20, 185, 273, 278, 279, 297, 300n.3, 306
secession, 22n.4, 22n.6, 32, 307, 308, 311, 316
security
  Aden, 100
  federalism, 314
  Islah, 191, 193
  Middle East, 234
  migration, 85, 89n.9
  security sector, 1, 8, 10, 12, 18, 152, 171, 191, 204, 316
  theatre and film (depiction in), 260, 262, 265, 267, 268, 269, 275n.5
  women, 63, 68
  Yemen, 11, 178, 193, 316
self-determination, 34, 85, 108
sexual harassment, 149–51
sexuality, 245–6
shariʿa
  constitution, 67
  early marriage, 143
  gender-based violence, 148
  gender equality, 67, 149
  gender relations, 55
  human rights, 36
  Islah, 192
  marriage, 153
  al-Rashad Union, 209, 210
  sexual harassment, 150
Shiʿa
  AQAP, 217
  Huthis, 8, 28, 160
  Imamate, 162
  Islah, 195
  Salafiyya, 171, 195, 225n.18
  Sunna, 220
  Zaydiyya, 22n.2

Shura Council, 126–8, 130n.4, 143, 172–3, 193, 194
Social Fund for Development, 293
social media
  alternative discourses, 3, 36–7
  Facebook, 249–50
  feminist resistance, 58
  increased use, 40–1
  influence, 30–1
  women, 4, 49, 51
  youth, 231, 233
Southern issue, 12, 34, 42n.5, 308
Southern Issue working group, 14, 164, 309, 315, 316, 322n.3
Southern Movement
  1986 civil war, 105
  Aden, 110
  al-Bidh, ʿAli Salim (b. 1939, President People's Democratic Republic Yemen, 1994), 104
  Bin Shuʿayb, Husayn (b. 1960), 33
  Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 310
  federalism, 16, 308–9
  GCC Initiative, 10, 11, 119
  gender relations, 155
  grievances, 313
  identity, 314
  independence, 16, 107–8, 109, 308
  Islah, 191, 197
  Ismaʿil, Wafaʾ ʿAbd al-Fattah, 136
  legitimacy, 34
  marginalization of the South, 96
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 14, 308
  political and generational change, 110, 111
  protests, 5–6 96, 101–2
  secession, 307, 308
  Southern Yemen, 94
  unity, 33, 95
  workshops, 100
  Yemeni uprising, 4, 8
  youth, 93
Southern Yemen
  autonomy, 312
  political change, 110, 111
  protests, 96
  remembrance, 94–7
  secession, 307
  terrorism, 174
  Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), 110
  youth, 94, 102–10
  youth mobilization, 93
state-building
  federalism, 314, 318
  Islah, 193
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 12
  women, 48, 53, 61
  Yemen, 313–18
State-Building working group, 309, 323n.12
Subayʿ, Murad, 247
al-Sulayhi, Sabaʾ, 250
Sultan, Fahd (b. 1980), 35
Sunna *see* Sunnis
Sunnis
  Bin Shuʿayb, Husayn (b. 1960), 34
  conflict, 8, 11, 164, 167, 168
  crisis, 197, 198
  identity, 199
  al-Iman University, 177
  Islah, 188, 193
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 13, 28, 164, 168, 171
  radicalism, 162
  al-Rashad Union, 193
  reversal of fortune, 184
  Saʿda Issue working group, 168

Salafiyya, 216
Saudi Arabia, 175, 198
Shafiʿiyya, 22n.2
Shiʿa, 4, 22n.3, 220
state, 162, 170, 185
Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (SCER), 138
Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC), 124–5, 126–8, 129
sustainable development, 281, 299
symbolism
al-Bidh, ʿAli Salim (b. 1939, President People's Democratic Republic Yemen), 104
Dar al-Hajar, 288
flag, 6, 93–4
heritage, 280–1, 282, 288
manhood, 236
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 62
political elites, 62, 187
Southern independence, 6, 93–4, 104
Southern past, 296
terrorists, 258
violence, 57
women, 55, 57

Tahrir Square, 49
Taʿiz
Freedom Square, 50
Haʾil Saʿid Anʿam family, 189
Huthi expansion, 176, 199–200
Islah, 199–200
al-Maqtari, Bushra, 58–9
al-Mikhlafi, Hamud, 190
Muslim Brotherhood, 186
Qaliyat al-Qahira (Cairo Castle), 279
Yemeni uprising, 58, 190
al-tajammuʿ al-yamani li-l-islah *see* Islah
terrorism
corruption, 265
al-Humayqani, ʿAbd al-Wahhab (b. 1972), 215
Irhab ya Nas! (It's Terrorism, People! 2014*)*, 269–71
al-Mahra, 84–5, 88
martyrdom, 271
Muslim Brotherhood, 194
portrayal, 273
radicalism, 266
Southern Yemen, 174
stereotypes, 259
tactics, 268
terrorists, 272
theatre, 258, 267–8, 274
trauma, 266
Yemen, 266
theatre, 258, 263–7, 268–74
Thula, 260, 285, 289–90
tourism, 282, 283, 285, 287, 288, 289, 293
transition process
credibility, 129
Executive Mechanism (GCC Initiative), 9, 117
failure, 15, 117–18
fragility, 306
GCC Initiative, 1, 9–15, 93
transition government, 121
Guarantees Document, 15
Hadi, ʿAbd Rabbuh Mansur (President Yemen, 2012–present), 15
legitimacy, 123
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 10
peaceful period, 61
political elites, 28
political order, 123
al-Rashad Union, 208–15, 219–22
trust, 17

weakened institutions, 124–9
women, 49, 53, 54, 62
Yemen, 2, 204
transitional government, 9, 10, 17, 18, 119, 161, 175
transitional justice, 10, 12, 106
tribes
Islah, 187, 196, 198
al-Mahra, 74, 82, 86, 87
norms, 236
political transition, 204
al-Qaʿida, 84
Saʿda Wars, 163
Saudi Arabia, 186–7
Southern Yemen, 107

ʿUmar, Jarallah, 189
umma, 32, 33, 42n.6, 83, 224n.5
unemployment, 93, 218, 220, 232, 239
UNESCO, 289, 296–7, 300n.5
United Arab Emirates (UAE), 194, 198, 291, 292, 293
United Kingdom
British colonial rule, 73, 99, 104, 111n.1, 112n.10, 156n.5, 157n.12
Saudi-led coalition, 20
United Nations, 9, 18
United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), 124
United States of America (USA), 11, 20, 196, 212, 215, 245, 266
unity
federalism, 307, 312, 314
legal framework, 311
Yemen, 32–3, 34, 95–96
universities, 11, 238–9, 243, 245
University of Science and Technology, 189, 200
ʿUthman, Arwa, 44n.16, 58, 136, 146, 150

Wadi Dhahr, 287
al-Wadiʿi, Muqbil, 207, 223n.4
al-Waʾil, Dr ʿAbd al-Rahman, 36
women
activism, 54–5, 60–1, 63
cultural change, 57–61
delayed marriage, 239
disagreements, 139
discrimination, 145
elections, 138
exclusion from power, 64
exclusions, 52
expertise, 153
fashion, 245–6
female prisoners, 151–2
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 12–3, 61–2, 134, 139–53
norms, 236
patriarchal power, 4, 54, 236
political representation, 63
public life, 245–6
al-Rashad Union, 209, 210
revolution, 47
Rights and Freedoms working group, 136
seclusion, 237
symbolism, 55
violence, 54–5, 147–8
women's leaders database, 67
Yemen, 47
Yemeni uprising, 4, 8, 49–54, 134
Women's Demands Declaration, 53
women's leaders database, 66–7
Women's National Committee (WNC), 63, 145
women's quota, 139, 140–2, 154, 209, 210, 213
women's rights
advocacy, 154
blood money, 144–5
draft constitution (2015), 61–8

early marriage, 143–4
equal citizenship, 148–9
divorce, 145–6
female prisoners' rights, 151–2
Islah, 193
morality, 59
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 135
nationality of husband and children, 146–7
political debate, 137–9
right to choosing a husband, 152–3
role of activists, 68
sexual harassment, 149–51
violence against women, 147–8
women's quota, 140–2
Yemen, 135
World Bank, 127, 128, 129, 175, 280, 281, 300n.6

al-Yadumi, Muhammad, 187, 189
Yemeni Congregation for Reform *see* Islah
Yemeni parliament, 20, 126, 127, 128–9, 130n.4, 138, 157n.13, 172, 194
Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP)
1986 civil war, 105
al-Bidh, ʿAli Salim (b. 1939, President People's Democratic Republic Yemen), 112n.6
federalism, 308
historical leadership, 104
history, 156n.5
Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), 188–9
Rights and Freedoms working group, 137
Southern cause, 110
Southern Movement, 109, 110
ʿUmar, Jarallah, 189
weakness, 98
Yemeni uprising
Change Square, 6–9, 246–8
future visions, 2, 3, 232, 321
goals, 50
Huthis, 4, 6, 219
Islah, 6–8, 190
al-Mahra, 79
Southern Movement, 4, 8
transfer of power, 306
women, 4, 49–54
youth, 4, 8, 93, 246–8
Yemeni Women's Union, 63
youth
art and music, 250–2
coffee shops, 243, 244, 245, 246, 249, 252, 253
Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), 310
definition, 3
Facebook, 249–50
fashion, 241–2
GCC Initiative, 10
generational knowledge, 96–7
intellectuals, 30
Islah, 189–90
al-Mahra, 85, 88
mobilization in the South, 93
National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 12, 62
non-movements, 234, 240, 252–3
passive networks, 243–4
political transition, 204
restaurants, 244
Rights and Freedoms working group, 136
Sanaʿa, 236–9
social change, 21, 253
Southern Movement, 107
Southern Yemen, 102–10
spaces, 240, 248–52
Yemeni uprising, 3–4, 8, 49, 51–2, 231–2, 246–8
youth movements, 235

Zaydiyya, 4, 22n.2, 22n.3, 34, 162, 220, 287
al-Zindani, ʿAbd al-Majid
  apostasy, 194
  early marriage, 143
  education, 98
  al-Iman University, 43n.9, 196
  Islah, 7, 143, 187, 191, 192, 198
  National Dialogue Conference (NDC), 193–4
  Saudi Arabia, 197–8
al-Zubayr, Nabila Muhsin ʿAli (b. 1954), 62, 164–5, 180n.2
al-Zubayri, Mahmud (1910–1965), 186