

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

from [*The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*](#)

View article on [Credo](#)

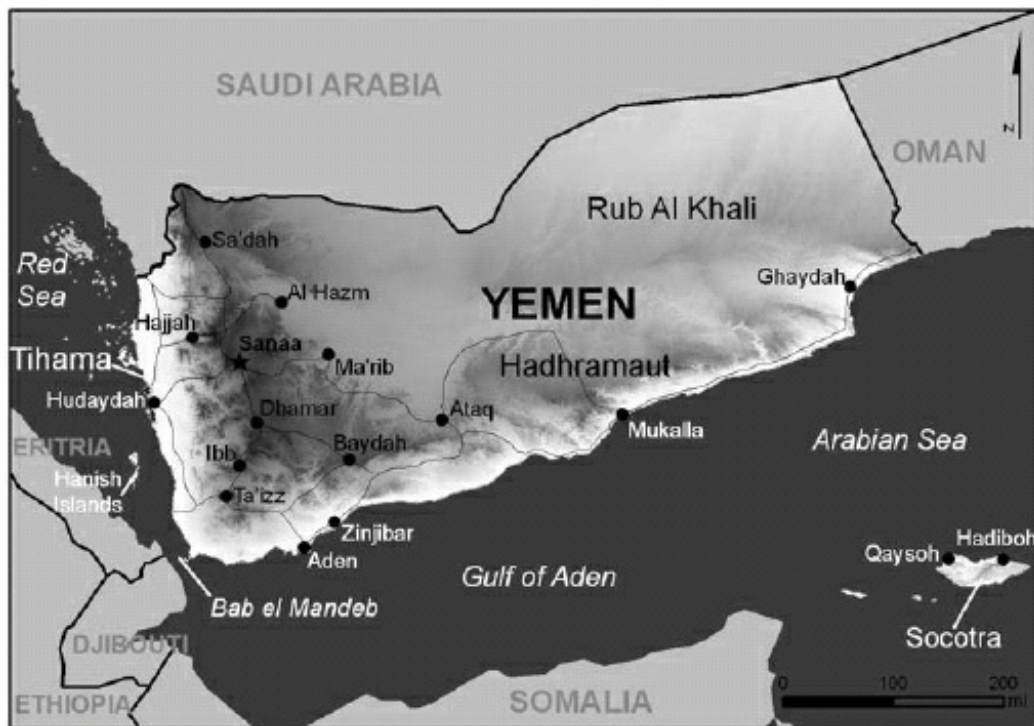
The Republic of Yemen (ROY) is the product of the unification of North Yemen and South Yemen in May 1990. It covers an area of 207,286 square miles (530,000 square kilometers), less than three-fourths the size of France, and its population is approaching 25 million. The ROY occupies the southernmost corner of the Arabian Peninsula. The location of the two Yemens on the world's busiest sea lane, at the entrance to the Red Sea, where Asia meets Africa, gave them strategic significance from the age of imperialism through the Cold War. More relevant today are the facts that Yemen shares a long border with oil-rich Saudi Arabia, serves as a bridge between Arabia and the Horn of Africa, and is well placed to spread or contain global revolutionary Islam.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Arabia Felix

Yemen has been dotted with human settlements for several thousand years, perhaps since humans first came out of Africa. Geography largely determined Yemen's history after the rise of great civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean basin. Roughly from 1000 BCE to 500 CE, this corner of Arabia provided the caravan route to these civilizations for highly prized goods from South Arabia, East Africa, and India, among them spices, myrrh, and frankincense. These were the centuries of the several pre-Islamic trading kingdoms astride the "frankincense trail" along the edge of the desert from the Arabian Sea northwest to the Nabatean city of Petra and beyond. These kingdoms included Saba, ruled from Marib by Bilqis, allegedly the Queen of Sheba (Saba). The last of the kingdoms was Himyar, the only one ruled from the Yemeni highlands rather than the desert's edge. The Sabean and Himyarite kingdoms embraced much of historic Yemen. Over these early centuries, the ideas of Yemen as a place and the Yemenis as a people probably emerged.

Occupying what Roman cartographers called Arabia Felix, these states depended for their prominence and prosperity upon their ability to protect and tax the passage of prized goods. When the Romans occupied Egypt in the first century BCE, they soon learned both the secret of the monsoon winds and the true source of the luxuries they desired. They then made the Red Sea their primary avenue of commerce, sending the interior of Yemen into a decline from which it never recovered. Indicative of the decline, weakened indigenous regimes were unable to prevent Yemen's occupation by Christian Abyssinia and the Sassanids of Persia in the centuries before the rise of Islam.



Republic of Yemen

The Islamic era, beginning in the seventh century CE, contains many events critical to the making of Yemen and the Yemenis. The force with which Islam exploded out of nearby Mecca made almost inevitable the early Islamization of Yemen. Yemeni converts provided many of the first soldiers of Islam, those who marched north and then west across North Africa. In the late ninth century CE, the founding of an indigenous dynasty in Yemen, the Zaydi (Shi'a) imamate, ended Abbasid rule from distant Baghdad, freeing Yemen to develop in relative isolation its own variant of Arab-Islamic civilization.

The occupation of Yemen by the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century and the Turks' expulsion after a long struggle led by the imamate over the next century served to deepen a sense of Yemeni identity. Despite the rapid growth of the coffee trade on the coast at al-Mukha (Mocha), the interior highlands of Yemen remained largely cut off from and unknown to the rest of the world from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. During this period western Europe was transformed and came to exercise control over much of the rest of the world.

The Two Yemens: 1839–1999

The process by which one Yemen and Yemeni people, albeit still vaguely defined, became two Yemens began with both Great Britain's seizure of Aden in 1839 and the second Ottoman occupation of North Yemen in 1849. By the time the Turks and the British had delineated the border between their domains in 1904, the bifurcation of Yemen and development of two polities and political cultures were well under way. Politics in the north, led by the imamate, turned increasingly on opposition to Ottoman rule. In the south, politics revolved around Britain's position in Aden and efforts to extend its sway beyond Aden's environs.

Defeat in World War I forced Ottoman withdrawal from North Yemen. During the first six decades of the twentieth century, two willful and able imams, Yahya Hamid al-Din and his son Ahmad, acted to forge a monarchical state in North Yemen, much as the kings of England and France had centuries earlier. They strengthened the state, enabling them to expand their domain and considerably secure the borders and interior. Their claim to and defense of Yemen fostered a nascent Yemeni nationalism.

The two imams isolated North Yemen's traditional Islamic culture and society. The result was a “backward” Yemen, quite frozen in time, and a tiny but increasing number of Yemenis who, exposed to the outside world, wanted progress and blamed the imamate for its absence. This produced the chain of events that resulted in revolution in 1962, the imamate's abolition, and the declaration of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).

The history of the YAR can be divided into three periods: first, the wrenching first five years under President Abdullah al-Sallal (1962–1967), which were marked by military rule, a long civil war in which an Egyptian military presence backed the republicans and Saudi Arabia backed the royalists, and—above all—the sudden, irreversible opening of Yemen to the modern world; second, a ten-year period (1967–1977) distinguished by the republican-royalist reconciliation ending the civil war, adoption of the 1970 constitution and the holding of elections under President Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani, and the brief attempt by President Ibrahim al-Hamdi to build the state and turn it to the task of modernization; and third, the twelve-year tenure of President Ali Abdallah Salih, a soldier and tribesman, and the change from political and economic weakness to political stability, the discovery of oil, and the prospect of oil-driven change and prosperity.

President Salih consolidated his rule by defeating a leftist rebellion and by creating his ruling party, the General People's Congress (GPC). Important though Salih's era was, the 1967–1977 period provided needed breathing space for a Yemen so buffeted by change during the five years after 1962 that it was unable to retreat into the past and ill-equipped to go forward.

South Yemen's history after the British occupation of Aden in 1839 was different. Of critical importance were Britain's focus on Aden and its neglect for decades of the dozen statelets in the hinterland. As a consequence, no single polity embraced what became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDY) at independence in 1967. Instead, it consisted of Aden Colony—a partly modern city-state and world-class port—and a vast, remote, and politically fragmented hinterland.

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

Capital city	Sanaa
Chief of state, 2012	President Abd Rabu Mansur Hadi
Head of government, 2012	Prime Minister Muhammad Salim Ba Sindwah
Major political parties (seats in most recent election, 2003)	General People's Congress (238), Islamic Reform Grouping (47), Yemeni Socialist Party (6), 2003) Nasserite Unionist Party (3), National Arab Socialist Ba'th Party (2), Independents (5)
Ethnic groups	Predominantly Arab, but also Afro-Arabs, South Asians, Europeans
Religious groups	Predominantly Shaf'i (Sunni) and Zaydi (Shi'a) Muslim, small numbers of Jews, Christians, Hindus
Export partners, 2011	China (27.3%), Thailand (12.4%), India (10.9%), South Korea (9.8%), Japan (5.6%), United States (5.4%), South Africa (4.5%), United Arab Emirates (4.3%)
Import partners, 2011	United Arab Emirates (18.5%), China (11.6%), Saudi Arabia (8.7%), Kuwait (6.5%), India (6.4%), France (4.6%), United States (4.1%)

At independence, the infrastructure barely holding the country together consisted of un-paved roads, airstrips, and the telegraph. Most of what little market economy existed centered on Aden and its environs, and this in turn was plugged less into the hinterland than into international commerce. This modern sector was dealt devastating blows in 1967. The blocking of the Suez Canal during the Arab-Israeli War nearly halted port activity, and Britain's withdrawal ended both aid and the economic activity tied to its presence.

The history of independent South Yemen has four periods: first, the period of takeover and consolidation (1967–1969), a phase in which the National Liberation Front (NLF) established control over the country at the same time that power within the NLF passed from the nationalists to the socialist wing; second, the period of uneasy coleadership of Salim Ruba'i Ali and Abd al-Fatah Isma'il (1969–1978), distinguished by the efforts of these two rivals to transform the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) into a vanguard party, to organize the country around “scientific socialism,” and to align the PDRY with the socialist camp and liberation movements; third, the era of Ali Nasir Muhammad (1980–1985), a period marked by consolidation of power in a single leader and growing moderation in both domestic and external politics; and fourth, after the violent end of the Ali Nasir era, a period of collective leadership (1986–1990) in which a weak, decapitated YSP had to cope with worsening economic conditions and

<https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?>

[url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0](http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0)

declining aid from the Soviet Bloc.

The era of the PDRY saw considerable conflict and violence, including executions and assassinations. Nevertheless, the regime had some notable successes: it established order in the country, made progress in bridging the vast gap between Aden and the hinterland, and made good use of limited resources to advance literacy, health care, and women's rights.

Yemeni Unification and the ROY

Although long desired by many, unification in May 1990 took most Yemenis and non-Yemenis by surprise. The Salih regime took the initiative in the late 1980s, but both sides got caught up in the process in 1989 and 1990; new political parties, organizations, newspapers, and magazines sprang up and occupied the new, open public space. Under transition terms, Ali Abdullah Salih became president and Ali Salim al-Baydh, YSP's secretary-general, became vice president. Sana'a was declared the capital. The two cabinets merged, with positions shared equally between the GPC and YSP, and the parliaments were merged and renamed the Council of Deputies.

The transition period ended with the 1993 parliamentary elections. The GPC won about twice as many seats as either of its main opponents, the YSP and the Yemeni Reform Grouping (Islah), a party formed at unification by anti-YSP tribal shaykhs and conservative Islamists. The GPC, YSP, and Islah formed a "grand coalition" cabinet, and other top positions were allocated roughly on a 2:1:1 basis. Shaykh Abdullah ibn Hussayn al-Ahmar, head of Islah and an ally of President Salih, became the council's speaker.

The honeymoon between the GPC and YSP had actually ended with acrimony in 1992. Their closing of ranks for the 1993 elections was quickly replaced by bitter conflict. The hostility rapidly escalated, punctuated by violence and second thoughts about unification.

Rapidly worsening economic conditions in the early 1990s had helped fuel the political conflict. Less than three months after unification, Yemenis focusing on that process were blindsided by Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. Yemen refused to join the effort to expel Iraq by force, and in reprisal the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf Arab states slashed foreign aid. Far more damaging, the Saudis expelled about 800,000 Yemeni workers, thereby cutting off the remittances upon which Yemen depended and creating for the first time massive unemployment.

Many efforts to stop the conflict were made and failed. What followed was the brief War of Secession in mid-1994. The ROY survived, as largely northern forces loyal to President Salih prevailed over southern forces led by most of the YSP leaders. Militant Islamists and forces loyal to Ali Nasir supplemented the northern side.

War of Secession Through 2010

The War of Secession over, the Salih regime faced the need both to deal with an economy in free fall and to reintegrate the defeated south into the ROY. The regime acted quickly on the latter, granting amnesty to all but the secession's top sixteen leaders and urging those who had fled abroad to return to Yemen. Most did.

Yemen's economy was halved by the costs of unification, the War of Secession, and, above all, the loss of remittances. Massive unemployment and rising poverty indicated that the economy had ceased to be viable and sustainable. In mid-1995, the regime adopted major financial and economic reforms, which initially seemed to be effective.

<https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?>

[url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0](http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0)

On the political side, President Salih was reelected by parliament in late 1994. Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, a southern general who had opposed secession, became vice president. A new coalition government was also approved, which included the GPC and Islah—but not the YSP. In 1997, a still-reeling YSP boycotted parliamentary elections. Winning a huge majority, Salih's GPC then chose to rule alone, with the result that Islah became the major opposition party. Shaykh al-Ahmar remained speaker, demonstrating his and Islah's ambiguous relationship to President Salih. Two years later, in 1999, the GPC used its dominance in parliament to prevent a revived YSP from running its leader in the ROY's first direct popular presidential elections. Virtually unopposed and backed by Islah, Salih was elected to a new term.

Peaceful elections notwithstanding, politics had become increasingly acrimonious and divisive by the late 1990s, and behind this lay the effects of the grim state of the economy on most Yemenis. Unemployment persistently held at about 40 percent, as did the percentages of those malnourished and living below the poverty line. The middle class shrank and was pauperized. Most Yemenis were just trying to make ends meet and openly expressed their anger.

These conditions probably contributed to increased violence involving al-Qaida and other Salafi groups in the late 1990s. The kidnapping of twelve tourists in 1998 ended in the deaths of four, and the suicide bombing of the USS *Cole* in Aden in October 2000 killed seventeen US sailors. These events became more salient in 2001 after the suicide bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—9/11—and the US declaration of a war on terror.

Despite the upsurge in Islamist violence and worsening economic conditions, the GPC reaffirmed its dominance in the 2003 parliamentary elections. The party increased its majority, taking more than two-thirds of the seats. Islah remained in second place, but with fewer seats than before. The YSP, returning after boycotting in 1997, made a very modest comeback. Al-Ahmar remained speaker.

Against this backdrop, several opposition parties moved haltingly toward creating a unified opposition to the Salih regime. In late 2002, they created the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), consisting of five members: the YSP, Islah, the Nasirist party, the Union of Popular Forces, and al-Haq (Truth). The parties that counted were Islah and the YSP. Their initial task was to resist the tendencies of the YSP to go it alone and of Islah to form temporary alliances with the GPC, and with the later two parties' compliance, the JMP's five members increasingly began to speak and act together.

By 2005, attention turned to the 2006 presidential and local council elections. Both the GPC and the JMP drew up reform programs. The JMP's program was very critical of the regime's economic performance. In early 2006, President Salih, yielding to “popular demand,” reversed his decision not to run. For its part, the JMP chose a credible candidate who waged a vigorous campaign. Despite this, President Salih again won decisively, and the GPC also swept the local council elections. The JMP remained intact after the elections, pledged to hold the regime accountable, and began planning for the parliamentary elections in 2009 and the next presidential contest in 2013.

By this time, however, electoral politics were being eclipsed by more confrontational and violent actions. The Houthi Rebellion erupted in June 2004 in Sa'da in the far north. Led by Husayn al-Houthi, a Zaydi sayyid (descendent of the Prophet), the Houthis' chants of “Death to the Israelis, death to the Americans” masked a deeper dissatisfaction with their social and political lot during the Salih era. Before a truce in September, many lives were lost and homes destroyed. Partly as a result of the regime's harsh response, the rebellion erupted several times over the next four years, each time growing more

violent. Despite a truce in 2008, conflict turned into all-out war in 2009 and continued thereafter. President Salih named his response Operation Scorched Earth.

Beginning in mid-2007, a rash of protests and demonstrations, some of them violent, occurred across South Yemen. Initially these events involved military officers angered by being forced into retirement on meager pensions after the War of Secession. This activity soon broadened to include civil servants, lawyers, teachers, professors, and unemployed youth protesting against what they saw as the north's systematic exploitation of the south since 1994. The actions of the newly proclaimed Southern Mobilization Movement (SMM, Hiraak) and the regime's harsh reactions continued throughout 2008 and grew more violent in 2009.

The Houthi Rebellion and the protests in the south challenged the legitimacy of the Salih regime and unification. Some protesting southerners, moving beyond charges of unfairness, began asserting that unification was occupation and called for secession. Even more fundamentally, some of the Houthis questioned the very idea of republicanism, explicitly calling for restoration of the Zaydi imamate.

As if this were not enough, bombings by al-Qaida and its allies occurred in the diplomatic quarter of San'a in 2008. This violence spread to Wadi Hadhramaut later in the year, targeting tourists and security forces. The suicide bombing at the US embassy in September, taking nineteen lives, was only the worst event. In early 2009, a new al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) announced itself, merging al-Qaida's Yemeni and Saudi branches. It later declared jihad against the regime and expressed support for the SMM and the Houthis. The Salih regime's response to the terrorist acts was swift and harsh, reaching a peak in late 2009.

The GPC and JMP had negotiated for months on electoral and other political reforms in advance of the 2009 parliamentary elections. In February 2009, with the violence continuing on all fronts and the threat of a JMP election boycott looming, the GPC and JMP agreed to a two-year postponement of elections. The violence continued through 2010, despite President Salih's warning that conflict with the southern secessionists, AQAP, and the Houthis could result in many—not just two—Yemens.

Yemen's Arab Spring

In early 2011, political dynamics changed dramatically in response to events in Tunisia. Beginning in late January, popular protests by mostly young people new to politics erupted throughout Yemen. Moribund civil society organizations revived, and new ones were created. The organized opposition got on board. The growing movement quickly climbed to another level in March, when the regime responded with extreme violence to peaceful protests in San'a. Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, long President Salih's chief supporter and likely successor, turned his crack military brigade against the regime. The unrelated al-Ahmar tribal family, led by Shaykhs Sadiq and Hamid, soon did the same with its well-armed tribal forces.

Deeply concerned, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in April 2011 proposed a transition plan under which President Salih would resign in exchange for immunity for himself, his family, and his colleagues; this plan was soon endorsed by the United Nations, the United States, and other key parties. Under the package, presidential power was to be transferred to Vice President Hadi, who was to appoint a national unity government drawn equally from the GPC and the JMP. This was to be followed within three months by the uncontested “consensus” election of Hadi to the presidency, at which time Salih would formally cease to be president. The next two years were to involve an organized “national dialogue,” the drafting of a constitution based on that dialogue, a referendum on the constitution, electoral reform, and finally presidential and parliamentary elections in early 2014. At the outset, a

military commission was to be created and charged with the task of unifying the military and security forces and subjecting them to state control.

Over the next several months, President Salih agreed to sign the transition package three times—and reneged each time. During these months, heavy fighting occurred in and around San'a and Taiz, raising fears that Yemen was on the verge of slipping into civil war. In addition to forces loyal to Salih, the fighting involved those of Ali Muhsin, the al-Ahmars, and other tribal leaders.

In June 2011, President Salih was severely injured in an assassination attempt. Under great domestic and international pressure, he finally signed the package on November 23. Vice President Hadi immediately assumed power and, in early December, appointed the national unity government. In January, Salih left for the United States, as parliament had granted him immunity and approved Hadi as sole candidate for the presidency. On February 21, despite calls by the SMM and Houthis for a boycott, Yemenis turned out in large numbers to vote for Hadi.

With Hadi's election, however, regime change was only partial. Not out of the picture, ex-president Salih returned on February 25, claiming leadership of the GPC. His son, Ahmad, remained commander of the powerful Republican Guards, his half brother remained head of the air force, and three of his nephews continued in top security and military positions. As importantly, many family members and others close to Salih remained in control of major economic entities dominated by the military.

President Hadi, judged something of a cipher since becoming vice president in 1994, proved to have some backbone—and, perhaps more importantly, the support of many Yemenis, some quite influential. Over the first half of 2012, he set up the military commission and the outreach committee charged with getting all groups on board for the national dialogue conference. More tellingly, he ousted or reined in some of ex-president Salih's allies in the military and security services, including his half-brother and two of his nephews. In August, he stripped Salih's son of control over part of the Republican Guards. Allegedly corrupt and close to the ex-president, the head of the national airline was also ousted.

Although most of the parties and other actors initially endorsed the transition plan, they were increasingly at odds over its details and implementation. In particular, efforts to get all actors on board for the dialogue without preconditions bogged down. Many of the protesting youth, criticizing the transition as designed to preserve existing elites, remained dubious or alienated. The Houthis and the SMM imposed, removed, and then reimposed conditions for their participation. There was the question of whether dialogue was possible with a GPC led by ex-president Salih and of what role Ali Muhsin could or should play. The JMP seemed on the verge of coming apart, with Islah and Hamid al-Ahmar, in particular, on the verge of going their own ways. In general, once Salih was ousted from the presidency, the fragile consensus diminished, largely replaced by narrowing self-interest and increased conflict within and between parties and coalitions.

Beginning in early 2011, the redeployment of forces to the north to defend the Salih regime—or, as some said, to prove Salih's indispensability in the war on terror—had left a security vacuum in much of the south. Ansar al-Shariah, a mix of al-Qaida elements and local Salafis, quickly occupied and began to administer most of Abyan and much of Shabwa provinces. The regime's control also was challenged in parts of Aden and Wadi Hadhramaut. In April 2012, President Hadi launched a military campaign and, with assistance from civilian militias, recovered most of this territory over the next two months. Control of this territory remained tenuous, and the campaign triggered suicide attacks by AQAP elsewhere in the country.

Preoccupied with transition politics and the conflict with the Islamists, the Hadi government neglected the growing humanitarian crisis as well as long-term economic and social issues. Postponement of the Friends of Yemen donors' conference until September 2012 was indicative of the latter. In the meantime, those in command of the economy, who had served most Yemenis so poorly during the last two decades of the Salih regime, remained in place.

The year 2012 also saw a further breakdown in public safety and order. Kidnappings, theft, and random violence increased. Extreme shortages of electricity and water persisted. Many lacked the money to buy food, even when it was available.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Geography

Yemen is marked by a high, steep, jagged mountain range that forms the western and southern edges of a high plateau that descends gradually east and north into the desert interior and to the Saudi border. The mountains rise abruptly about twenty-five miles inland from a flat coastal desert plain, the Tihama. They parallel the Red Sea, running north to south along the length of North Yemen, abruptly turn ninety degrees near the old border between the two Yemens, and then head east parallel to the Gulf of Aden for part of the length of South Yemen. The northern highlands, averaging several thousand feet and including the highest point on the Arabian Peninsula, have a largely semiarid but otherwise temperate climate. By contrast, the southern uplands are lower and quite verdant. The Tihama and the southern coast are hot and humid much of the year.

Groundwater and surface runoff are in very short supply in most of Yemen. However, the annual monsoon winds blow inland after picking up moisture from the sea; the mountains then force the warm air to rise, cool, and drop its moisture. This considerable, albeit erratic, seasonal rainfall in the mountains and highlands in the spring and summer accounts both for intensive cultivation of crops, much of it in streambeds and on steep, terraced hillsides, and for the relatively dense population in these areas. The highlands in North Yemen are loftier and more extensive than those in South Yemen, explaining the former's greater rainfall, more intensive and extensive agriculture, and considerably larger population. By contrast, the eastern two-thirds of South Yemen are all but uninhabitable, except for coastal fishing villages and ports and, deep in the interior, the well-populated Wadi Hadhramaut. Half again larger in area than North Yemen, South Yemen has about one-fourth as many people—roughly 5 million. In the north nearly all of the population is sedentary, and this is only slightly less so in the south. What nomads there are mostly live on the edge of the desert near Saudi Arabia.

Regions and Population Centers

Yemen has six major regions. The northern highlands include much of the upper half of North Yemen and are bound on the west by the mountains. The southern uplands consist of the lower half of North Yemen and include Taiz and Ibb provinces. The coastal Tihama runs the length of North Yemen, between the Red Sea and the mountains. The arid east, on the edge of the desert, consists of the remote provinces of Marib, al-Jawf, and Shabwa. Far to the south are Aden and the area running from the Arabian Sea up to the mountains between the two Yemens. To the east is large, arid Hadhramaut province and Wadi Hadhramaut. Finally, farther to the east are the culturally distinct Mahra region, bordering Oman, and the otherworldly island of Socotra.

The country has four major cities: San'a, Aden, al-Hudayda, and Taiz. Aden and al-Hudayda are the major ports, Aden's being natural and world-class. There are several large towns: Sa'da, far to the north;

Dhamar, Yarim, and Ibb, in the middle region; Mukalla, on the southern coast; and in Wadi Hadhramaut, the trio of Shibam, Seiyun, and Tarim. The population of South Yemen is highly concentrated in a few places—in Mukalla and the towns of Wadi Hadhramaut, in the highlands northeast of Aden, and, above all, in Aden and its environs. By contrast, the much larger population of North Yemen is more widely scattered over many towns, villages, and hamlets. Still, Taiz and al-Hudayda have experienced much growth, and San'a's exploding population approaches 2 million.

Economy

Yemen has long been, and remains, an extremely poor country, the poorest in the Arab world. For centuries its economy was largely self-sufficient, based mainly on subsistence agriculture. Although North Yemen moved quickly from self-sufficiency to dependence on the outside world after 1962, as part of South Yemen had done earlier, farming and animal husbandry remain chief sources of livelihood for a majority of the population—even though they contribute only a small percentage of total gross domestic product (GDP). Fishing, trade, and traditional artisanship are also important. Modern industry remains rare, marginal, and small in scale. Finally, the viability of the Yemeni economy after the 1960s increasingly depended on remittances and the employment of Yemenis abroad. In sharp decline after 1990, remittances still contribute to the economy. In 2009, Yemen's estimated annual per capita income was about \$1,250—less than \$3.50 per day.

Until the mid-1980s, Yemen had no exploited natural resources of consequence other than its fisheries, and these were barely tapped. Modest amounts of oil were discovered in the north, in Marib, and first exported in 1987. At the time of unification in 1990, larger amounts of oil were discovered in Masila, an area northeast of Mukalla in the Hadhramaut. Oil production peaked at 465,000 barrels per day in 2003 and then began to decline. Predictions have reserves depleted by 2020. The development of Yemen's modest gas reserves in Marib got under way in 2005, and liquefied natural gas exports began in late 2009.

Culture and Society

Nearly all Yemenis are Muslim Arabs. Christian communities disappeared early in the Islamic era. Most of the sizable Jewish community migrated to Israel shortly after that country's creation in 1948; only a few hundred Jews remain, mostly in and north of San'a. The once large and powerful Isma'ili Shi'a population was reduced through persecution over the centuries to an insignificant, though reviving, minority in the mountains between San'a and al-Hudayda.

The establishment of the Zaydi imamate stamped the northern highlands and their towns and tribes with the Zaydi strand of Shi'a Islam. By contrast, the two-century rule of the Rasulids, beginning in the twelfth century, stamped South Yemen and the southern uplands and coast of North Yemen with the Shafi'i form of Sunni Islam. There remains an old and still politically and socially salient cleavage between the Zaydis and Shafi'is. The Zaydis, although only a minority, dominated politics and cultural life in North Yemen for centuries through the Zaydi tribes and the imamate. With unification and the addition of South Yemen's almost totally Shafi'i population, the numerical balance shifted dramatically away from the Zaydis, who now make up little more than 20 percent of the combined population. Nevertheless, the Zaydis remained overrepresented in the government and armed forces. While sectarianism has not played a prominent role in Yemeni politics for generations, the Houthi Rebellion and the Salafi response to it suggest it remains a possibility.

For millennia, tribal ties have been the most important basis of social organization and identity in the northern highlands, in the mountainous region between the two Yemens, and in remote parts of the

Hadhramaut. Two large tribal confederations predominate in the northern highlands, the Hashid and the Bakil. Less important is the Madhhij confederation, east of the other two.

While many people in other parts of Yemen claim some tribal affiliation, these ties are less important as bases of identity and solidarity than the extended family, locality, class, caste, and occupation. Atop the traditional nontribal social system was the sayyid caste—those Zaydis and Shafi'is who claimed descent from the Prophet. The imams had to be Zaydi sayyids. Beneath this caste was the *qadi* class, usually learned Zaydis and Shafi'is who served as judges, administrators, teachers, and religious figures. In the middle was the relatively large and varied class of peasants, merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans. At the bottom were two groups: the *muzayyin* class that provided the butchers, barbers, and those who performed other “demeaning” tasks, and, at the bottom, the *akhdam* caste of servants, street sweepers, and popular musicians.

Despite great differences in status, North Yemen's economy of scarcity fostered a social system that was not marked by great inequality. The imams did live better than most other Yemenis, but not that much better. After the 1962 revolution, inequality increased both within the modern sector and between that sector and traditional Yemen, much as had happened in British-ruled South Yemen earlier in the century. In the PDRY after 1970, the regime's Marxist ideology and economic scarcity served to temper the inequality that usually accompanies early stages of development. Moreover, the tendency of long-entrenched one-party states to widen class divides was countered by relatively wide access to education, health care, and housing and by efforts to integrate the rest of the country into more-modern Aden.

Rugged terrain, widely separated population centers, and primitive means of transportation and communication have made for diversity among the considerably homogeneous Yemeni people. Although Arabic is spoken by nearly all, there are several dialectical differences, most notably between the dialect of North Yemen's highlands and that of the southern part of North Yemen and Aden. Beyond language, other sociocultural and regional differences abound. The subtlest and most important is the difference between northerners from the highlands and southerners from the southern half of North Yemen and Aden. The former are stereotyped as having strong tribal ties, claiming a warrior tradition, and, at least in the past, being more parochial. The latter are stereotyped as being of nontribal peasant origins, peaceful or docile, engaged in commerce, and more traveled and cosmopolitan. Going east, many people in Wadi Hadhramaut reflect the cultural influence of Southeast Asia, with which they have long social and commercial ties. The people of Mahra and Socotra share a non-Arab language and culture. Finally, the people of the coastal desert and ports reflect the long racial and cultural influences of nearby Africa—Somalia and Ethiopia—and Aden still carries hints of India and the British Raj.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The ROY's constitution, ratified by the people in 1991, closely resembles the YAR's 1970 constitution. However, in the absence of a tradition of constitutional government in Yemen, the constitution neither closely reflects political reality nor tightly constrains the use of power—it is not yet a “living constitution.” Free speech, the right to organize, and the other rights it enshrines are largely aspirational, and the system of courts and appointed judges does not constitute an independent judiciary.

The constitution originally called for a plural executive, a feature that was changed in 1994 to a singular presidency and a Council of Deputies, the 301 members of which are chosen by voters in single-member constituencies. The terms of office for legislators and the president were four and five years, respectively, and were changed to six and seven years in 2001. In addition to its legislative duties, the

Council of Deputies selected the president, a provision that was changed in 1994 to direct popular election. A second chamber, the Shura Council, appointed by the president and with mostly advisory powers, was created in 1997. The constitution provided for provincial and local council elections and for the appointment of provincial governors by the executive. Local elections were finally held in 2001 and again in 2006. The selection of governors was changed to elective, and their first election was held in 2008.

Opponents of the Salih regime had persistently demanded fundamental constitutional changes, and these demands became central in the post-Salih transition. Key proposals would increase legislative power at the expense of executive power and institute some form of federalism and local autonomy. Some would replace the presidential system with parliamentary government, base elections on proportional representation, and give the Shura Council legislative power equal to that of the Council of Deputies.

In a break with the YAR's theoretical no-party system and the PDRY's one-party system, the 1990 constitution explicitly allowed for a multiparty system. The GPC came to dominate politics in the YAR and the ROY. Islah, with its organization, cadre, and grassroots support, remained a potential challenge to the GPC. The YSP, with some of the ideology and organization of its glory days, retained a base of support in the south and in pockets of the north. For their part, the Ba'th and Nasirist parties had little popular support, lived in the pan-Arab past, and were of no real consequence. Tiny conservative Islamic parties, such as al-Haqq and the Union of Popular Forces, were just that—tiny. With the exception of the Ba'th, these parties formed the JMP in 2002. All parties, including the GPC, were challenged and put to the test by the events of 2011 and 2012, and the post-Salih era is marked by party fragmentation and reconfiguration.

Unification witnessed the explosive growth and freedom of newspapers and magazines, while radio and television remained government monopolies. Organized interest groups—civil society or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—sprang up by the hundreds and openly voiced their concerns. Although the print media and NGOs remained outspokenly critical, the Salih regime learned over the years how to subvert them through an array of carrots and sticks. Yemen's Arab Spring has reinvigorated them.

The three parliamentary elections have been, to a degree, free and fair. Arguably, the 1993 elections were the most significant because the new Council of Deputies at that time was a focus of attention—even excitement—and accordingly of some influence in the new ROY. By contrast, the 1997 and 2003 elections were for a legislature that, formal powers notwithstanding, was rarely assertive and served largely as a rubber stamp. Perceiving it as irrelevant, the public paid little attention to the legislature, diminishing its role in public discourse and as a shaper of public opinion. This tendency was reinforced by the events of 2011 and 2012.

The military played an important role in the PDRY and a dominant one in the YAR and the ROY. Although falling short of the *makhbarat* (secret police) states elsewhere in the Arab world, both Yemens had security services that were strong and deeply involved in politics. Despite pledges to dismantle them at unification, the security forces have had a strong and growing role since 1994. In particular, the Political Security Organization became a force of real consequence. Nevertheless, compared to some other Arab states, there was relatively little physical repression in the ROY.

POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Yemen's political dynamics since unification have largely revolved around three issue clusters: the shift from remittances to rents and kleptocracy, economic crisis and failed economic reform, and Yemeni political Islam and global revolutionary Islam.

From Remittances to Rents and Kleptocracy

Many North Yemenis remember the decade through the mid-1980s as the halcyon years, the best of times. Remittance money flooded into the country from those working abroad, mostly in Saudi Arabia. The remittances were distributed widely, with some going directly or indirectly to nearly all families in all parts of the country. In the late 1980s, oil revenues began to flow in, as did considerable foreign aid. By contrast, the PDRY's situation was very different. Its people experienced a smaller flow of remittances, a drastic cut in aid from a faltering Soviet patron, and the failure of expected oil revenues to materialize.

The creation of the ROY in 1990 held out to most Yemenis hope for a stronger and more prosperous Yemen. Months later, Iraq's occupation of Kuwait dashed these hopes. Most foreign aid to Yemen was terminated; more importantly, Saudi Arabia expelled its many Yemeni workers. The expulsion virtually destroyed Yemen's remittance economy and left it with massively increased unemployment—which had profound political implications.

The Salih regime that took shape in the YAR in the 1980s is best described as an oligarchy. Most of the relatively small number of people who got the little there was to get—be it political power or economic well-being—came from North Yemen's northern highlands. They had strong tribal or military (or security) connections, or both. To the military-tribal complex that accumulated power in the YAR was added in the early 1980s a northern commercial-business element, the result of an informal affirmative action program that favored northerners over their long-dominant colleagues from the southern uplands, especially Taiz. The ties between the military-tribal and business leaders found institutional expression in the Military Economic Corporation that dated back to the mid-1970s.

From 1990 until 1994, unification interrupted this trend toward the concentration of power in the hands of these northern oligarchs. However, it resumed and increased after the War of Secession, as that event eliminated or weakened politicians from the former PDRY. Moreover, as a result of increasing oil revenues and aid, the state quickly became the principal source of wealth and private gain for the well-placed and fortunate few. Transformation of the republican state into such a source—something the relatively impoverished imamate had not been—had begun modestly when aid began to flow into the YAR in the mid-1970s. But this trend had been countered by remittances that were spread widely and, most importantly, did not pass through the state.

By the end of the 1990s, the end of the remittance system and the rise in oil revenue and development aid had combined to rapidly transform the ROY into a variant of oligarchy, a kleptocracy—government of, by, and for the thieves. Occupants of key government offices through which these funds flowed were able to use their positions in the state—these “profit centers”—to extract a price for providing services or permissions. Those close to occupants of key offices were also enriched, the reaping of riches being a matter of connection as well as location.

Graft, bribery, and other forms of corruption came to pervade all levels of a steeply sided pyramid of patronage. At the broad base of this pyramid are the hundreds of thousands of government employees who are paid extremely low salaries and have to take petty bribes—have to “eat money”—to make ends meet. High up the pyramid, perhaps the most visible measures of this corruption are the growing number of high-end SUVs and virtual castles on the outskirts of San'a, most of which are owned by

government officials on modest salaries.

This nouveau aristocracy of shaykhs, officers, and businessmen has a strong sense of entitlement. Its second generation is now slipping into key positions and questions even less its entitlement. This small part of the total population is on the take—and without apology. Some sense that this cannot last much longer and that they must get as much as they can while the getting is still good. Although some public servants choose not to participate in this system, and others are simply not in offices through which much money flows, they do not define the new order.

The ROY also exhibits arrested statehood, a legacy of North Yemen's history. The imamate, although dominant, did not approximate Max Weber's classic definition of a state; it did not have a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in its territory. In this regard, the description of the Hashid and Bakil tribal confederations as “the wings of the imamate” is suggestive. These tribes and their leaders conceived of themselves, and were conceived of by others, as outside the imamate and not subjects of the state.

The YAR's modernists were prevented by events after the 1962 revolution from creating the state to which they aspired. Conclusion of the civil war in 1970 dictated that the republic that prevailed would be a conservative one; it would preserve much of the traditional order, in particular, a prominent role for the tribal leaders and tribal system. Subsequently, President al-Hamdi's failed attempt at modern state building allowed arrested statehood to persist into the Salih era.

Reflecting this history, Yemen's state today is in vital ways more like the imamate than a modern state. It is severely limited in terms of what it has the power to do and where it can do it. This arrested statehood is both the cause and effect of the tribal-military-business regime that remained in place as of this writing. The weak state nicely suited a regime inclined to minimize efforts at state building, especially those that require reining in rampant corruption and incompetence.

Economic Crisis and Reform—and Crisis

By late 1994, Yemen's economy was in free fall and well on its way to becoming nonviable and unsustainable, despite the steady rise of oil revenues. The situation was extremely grim. GDP for 1995 was reduced to less than half that of 1990. The value of the Yemeni rial had plunged, raising the cost of goods, especially needed imports. Because of the massive unemployment and loss of remittances, gross inequality and abject poverty were increasing at alarming rates.

In mid-1995, the Salih regime agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to a program of economic stabilization, structural reforms, and IMF/World Bank aid. The premise was that significant IMF/World Bank aid and the major reforms upon which that aid was conditioned would begin to turn the Yemeni economy around. This and the stamp of approval of these bodies would begin to attract other aid donors and, most importantly, private investors, both Yemeni and non-Yemeni. The promise was that the belt-tightening initially required of the Yemeni people (e.g., elimination of subsidies for essentials) would produce an economic setting that would attract investment, stimulate business, and create jobs. Initially, the public accepted this trade-off.

At first, Yemen's collaboration with the IMF/World Bank on reform closely followed the best-case scenario. In the first year, the Salih regime put in place stabilization measures and the initial set of structural reforms designed, among other things, to rein in inflation. In late 1996, the regime took a cautious first step to lift subsidies for essential goods, repeating this process in 1997 and 1998. In return, the IMF/World Bank loaned Yemen roughly \$1 billion to support reform projects over these years. In addition, they helped organize two donors' conferences that yielded pledges of another \$2 billion. IMF

commitments also paved the way for a big reduction of Yemen's foreign debt.

The IMF/World Bank reform program faltered in late 1997, in part because of political protests and sharply declining oil revenues. Perhaps more importantly, some of the new reforms reached beyond the majority and directly threatened the interests of the privileged and highly placed. Among them were measures designed to fight corruption, increase transparency, make the courts more effective, and reform the banking and financial sectors. Many of the well-off simply lost whatever appetite they had had for reform.

Nevertheless, a new IMF/World Bank agreement calling for further reforms was negotiated in 2000. It required the complete lifting of most subsidies and the loss of many jobs through a downsizing of the civil service and the privatizing of bloated public corporations. Within a year, however, the program was virtually abandoned. Most of the measures agreed to were implemented partially and half-heartedly, if at all. Reforms of the judiciary and the civil service lagged, and the rampant corruption in the public and private sectors was barely addressed.

As a consequence, Yemen failed to attract foreign and Yemeni investors in the late 1990s and after. Wealthy Yemenis who had jumped in early, especially those with origins in Wadi Hadhramaut, quickly retreated after bad personal experiences or hearing the woeful tales of others. Many foreign investors decided that the risks relative to potential gains were too great, based partly on well-publicized cases of corruption, nepotism, and political favoritism.

As with the IMF/World Bank program, major development projects failed to move forward rapidly or fell short of expectations. The Aden free zone and container port project, touted in the early 1990s as Yemen's most important, promised to create many jobs and much wealth. In operation in 2000, after numerous delays, the project produced modest results due to regional security problems and serious mismanagement and corruption. Similarly, the development of Yemen's natural gas reserves was delayed until 2005 partly by fighting between two groups of Yemeni politicians, each with its own multinational gas developer as client.

Despite higher oil revenues in 2005, due to soaring prices, the overall performance of the economy did not improve. The growth rates for GDP and job creation were at best barely keeping up with the high population growth rate of about 3.5 percent. The levels of the unemployed, the malnourished, and those living below the poverty line persistently held at about 40 percent. The pauperization of the shrinking middle class continued, and the modern institutions in which they worked and had placed their hopes were hollowed out. The gap between the few rich and the many poor widened visibly. The education system declined, and medical services were in shorter supply and of poorer quality. On the personal level, most Yemenis lost hope, ground down by the effort to make ends meet. More and more people were openly expressing anger and seemed ready to act on it.

Arguably, Yemen's economy and society had ceased to be viable and sustainable by 2010. As importantly, despite public pronouncements, the Salih system seemed to lack the will and capacity to adopt and implement reforms needed to accomplish what needed to be done. Behind this lack were Yemen's oligarchs—its kleptocrats—and the pyramid of patronage they had come to depend upon. The limited capacities of the state made it unlikely that they could effect needed change, even if they wanted to. They seemed unable to act in terms of their own self-interest in survival, much less in the interest of the Yemeni people.

Political Islam in Yemen

<https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?>

[url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0](http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0)

Modern political Islam came to North Yemen when the Muslim Brotherhood started a branch there in 1947. The Brotherhood survived the 1962 revolution and persisted into the republican era; indeed, in the 1970s, it was regarded as a major threat due to its organization and grassroots support. Its top leader in the 1970s was Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, the spiritual leader of Islah since 1990.

The growth of political Islam in Yemen and the role of al-Zindani in that process were largely the result of Saudi Arabia's systematic use of Islam for foreign policy purposes. First, the Saudis tried to influence the YAR in the 1970s and 1980s by promoting their brand of Salafi fundamentalism, Wahhabism, through schools and "scientific institutes." Second, the Saudis in the 1980s recruited a large number of Yemenis for jihad against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, a struggle that served as the incubator for the next generation's global revolutionary Islamists. Al-Zindani, working with the Saudis, was involved in promoting Salafism in Yemen and then in the jihadist project in Afghanistan.

When Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, many radicalized, battle-hardened Yemeni "Afghani Arabs" came home. In 1990, many got caught up in the politics of unification and the first Gulf War, the latter causing them to perceive the Americans and Saudis as Islam's main enemies. Some created the Yemeni Islamic Jihad (YIJ).

As political conflict between the GPC and the YSP escalated after 1991, President Salih often ignored the killing of southern leaders by returning militants with old scores to settle. Ali Muhsin folded many of the Afghani Arabs into units of the northern army, and many of them participated in the War of Secession in 1994, placing the Salih regime in debt to them. Thereafter, when the regime balked at their demands, armed conflict occasionally occurred between them and the security forces.

In the mid-1990s, preoccupied with the YSP, President Salih viewed militant political Islam largely as a troublesome domestic matter. The YIJ bombing of a hotel in Aden at the end of 1992 targeted American military personnel staying there. Yemeni forces responded with the arrest of Tarik al-Fadhli, an Afghani Arab leader of YIJ and heir to one of the sultanates abolished in 1962. Al-Fadhli "escaped" and soon pledged loyalty to President Salih.

Some of al-Fadhli's colleagues who refused to follow him created the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA), a group with which the Salih regime waged a low-intensity fight through the rest of the 1990s. In late 1998, the death in Abyan of four tourists kidnapped by the AAIA suggested that the Islamists posed a broader threat to the Salih regime. The sequence of events had started days earlier with the arrest of several armed young Muslims from Britain. The AAIA's kidnapping of the tourists had been requested by the father of one of those jailed, a militant ulema in London. This strained British-Yemeni relations. Alarmed, the government quickly tried and executed the kidnappers' leader.

The Salih regime became increasingly concerned with al-Qaida after militants bombed the USS *Cole* in Aden in fall 2000. In late 2001, Yemeni troops failed in an attempt to eliminate Qaid Sinan al-Harithi, an al-Qaida leader and the alleged mastermind of the *Cole* bombing. Major events rocked the regime in 2002: the suicide bombing of the French oil tanker *Limburg* off Yemen's southern coast; the killing of al-Harithi with a rocket from a US drone in a strike coordinated with the regime; the assassination by a militant of YSP's thinker-activist, Jarullah Omar; and the murder two days later of three American medical missionaries by another militant, a colleague of Jarullah's assassin. In mid-2003, the AAIA ambushing of a military convoy led to a battle in which several militants were killed. Among them were individuals involved in the *Cole* and *Limburg* bombings who had recently escaped from prison.

On another front, President Salih moved in 2002 to bring the Salafis' "scientific institutes" under

government control and to close down unofficial religious schools. The state also removed militant ulema from mosques, replacing them with moderates. Both efforts triggered outcries over interference and censorship.

Having pledged full support for the US war on terror, President Salih had to balance meeting US demands with a domestic political landscape marked by Yemeni nationalism, strong Islamic sensibilities, and growing anti-American feelings. As importantly, military officers and politicians inside the regime were themselves Islamists or politically tied to them (e.g., Ali Muhsin). From the Co/e bombing and 9/11 on, President Salih carefully picked his way with difficulty among these often contradictory forces.

In late 2002, criticized by both secular nationalists and Islamists, President Salih authorized creation of a religious dialogue council responsible for reeducating persons charged with terrorist activities. Between then and 2005, a few hundred went through rehabilitation, were released, and often received jobs in the military. This program did lessen some of the domestic pressure on President Salih.

The coming of the Houthi Rebellion illustrates the complexities Islamic politics posed for President Salih. Husayn al-Houthi, who had helped found al-Haqq and was elected to the Council of Deputies in 1993, also founded a network of Zaydi schools and a youth movement, the Believing Youth. President Salih had supported al-Houthi's efforts, concerned as he had become about the assertiveness of the Salafis with whom he had earlier allied himself in his struggle with the YSP. But when the Houthis began challenging the regime, the president directed the governor of Sa'da to crack down on the movement—and he did. In response, al-Houthi launched his rebellion. Thereafter, the large, indiscriminant military response, led by Ali Muhsin, served to deepen and perpetuate the rebellion.

During the struggle to oust President Salih in 2011, the activities of the Houthis and AQAP were overshadowed by the activities of mostly non-Islamist actors. In the south, however, Ansar al-Shariah proclaimed a caliphate over territory it had occupied. In the summer of 2012, President Hadi launched a two-month military campaign that recovered most of this territory. This triggered lethal AQAP suicide attacks against military and security forces in San'a and elsewhere in the country.

FOREIGN POLICY

The regional relations of both Yemens focused largely on their rich, worried, and over-bearing neighbor, Saudi Arabia. Imamate Yemen lost a short war with the newborn Saudi Kingdom in 1934, forcing it to cede control of “the northern provinces,” Asir, Najran, and Jizan. After the Yemeni Civil War, in which the Saudis supported the royalists, their strategy became one of controlling the republicanism on their border by making the YAR dependent on them for aid. Nevertheless, the YAR got a good bit of aid over the years and retained a good bit of independence. As the PDRY moved toward Marxism and supported rebellion in Oman, the Saudis worked to undermine their radical neighbor. Above all, they did what they could to discourage Yemeni unification, especially if a united Yemen were dominated by the Marxist south.

Generally, the two Yemens and inter-Yemeni relations were viewed in Cold War terms by the two superpowers and treated accordingly. During the civil war, the Soviet Union supported the YAR. By 1970, however, the victorious YAR was successfully seeking good relations with—and aid from—the West while maintaining close ties to the Soviets. As the PDRY moved left, it became dependent economically and politically on the Soviet Bloc. Both relied heavily on the United Nations and other multinational bodies for aid.

Creation of the ROY in 1990 and increasing conflict between the GPC and the YSP over its future added

a new dimension to Yemen's external relations. In 1992, Saudi Arabia approached the YSP and offered support if it sought to secede. During the War of Secession in 1994, the Salih regime tried to stall a UN cease-fire until its forces had won, fearing that a troop pullback would mean de facto separation. Saudi Arabia, which by then was aiding the secessionists materially, urged the United States to support a quick cease-fire. President Salih's representative worked successfully to hold the United States off until Aden had fallen.

Thereafter, the ROY placed priority on undoing the damage caused by its failure to join the effort to expel Iraq from Kuwait in 1990. This mainly involved efforts to restore good relations with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United States. Good relations meant foreign aid and, in terms of Yemen's neighbors, the possibility of jobs, remittances, and a neighborhood safer for foreign investment and tourism. These efforts were superseded in 1995 by armed conflict with newly independent Eritrea over a cluster of Red Sea islands. Although angered by Eritrea's seizure of the islands and capture of Yemeni forces, Yemen dealt in a statesmanlike way with a situation that, if allowed to spin out of control, could have scared off investors and tourists. The dispute was submitted for international arbitration and resolved amicably in 1998, with most of the islands going to Yemen.

Among the Arab Gulf states, Kuwait was the most reluctant to forgive. Persistence by Yemen finally resulted in the reestablishment of diplomatic relations in 2000. Over the second half of the 1990s, relations with Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman also improved. The Salih regime campaigned hard to join the GCC, but its requests were denied. It was, however, allowed to join some agencies, and full membership was held out as a future possibility.

Ambivalent about reconciliation after 1994, Saudi Arabia financed vocal Yemeni dissidents in London and elsewhere. In addition, subsidies paid to the tribes helped enable them to carry out the many kidnappings that made foreigners wary. Clearly, however, the biggest obstacle to restoring good relations between the two neighbors remained their long, undemarcated border, for decades a source of violent incidents. Rather suddenly, but after years of negotiations, this thorn in the side of Saudi-Yemeni relations was removed in June 2000 in an agreement covering the entire border. Yemen gave up all claims to the provinces seized by Saudi Arabia in 1934, and the Saudis made some concessions along the long desert border east to Oman.

Thereafter, some Saudi aid began to flow, and some Yemeni workers were allowed to return to the kingdom. With terrorist bombings in Riyadh in 2003, the Saudis increased pressure on Yemen regarding security along their porous shared border. Over the next few years, the neighbors strengthened their extradition treaty, exchanged dozens of prisoners, and agreed to undertake joint operations to block border infiltration and smuggling. Nevertheless, the Saudis did become annoyed as it became apparent that Yemeni frontier forces were sometimes party to border violations. In early 2006, the escape of twenty-three terrorists from the security prison in San'a, apparently with inside help, alarmed and angered the Saudis, as did similar, less dramatic events over the next two years.

Late in the decade, however, faced with the Houthi Rebellion, the creation of the AQAP, and the possibility that the growing chaos in Somalia could be replicated in Yemen, the Saudis found themselves in the unfamiliar position of providing major support to the Salih regime and the ROY. It is rumored that the Saudi kingdom provided as much as \$2 billion in 2009 to cover the budget shortfall caused by declining oil revenues. Beginning in November 2009, moreover, the Saudis took cross-border military action by the Houthis as reason for unleashing sustained air strikes and some ground actions against them. Coordinated with the Yemeni military's Operation Scorched Earth, the Saudi intervention

amounted to part of an effort to defeat the Houthis once and for all.

Long concerned about turmoil in Somalia, the mass exodus of refugees to Yemen, and the US tendency to view events in the Horn of Africa solely in terms of its war on terror, President Salih convened a summit in 2002 with the presidents of Sudan and Ethiopia. This led to the formation of the San'a Forum for Cooperation, which thereafter met annually and later included the presidents of Djibouti and Somalia. Over the rest of the decade, the forum addressed, with little effect, the worsening situation in Somalia, the intervention by Ethiopia and the United States in that country, Eritrea's conflicts with Ethiopia and Djibouti, and the dramatic increase in Somali piracy and the international community's naval response.

The US drastically reduced relations with the ROY after it failed to support action against Iraq in 1990. Relations began to thaw in mid-1994, during the War of Secession, when Washington sided with a unified Yemen. In 1995, the United States strongly backed the IMF/World Bank aid-for-reform package with Yemen and, in something of a first, publicly chastised Saudi Arabia for attempting to pressure oil companies to refrain from activity near the two countries' disputed border. Military ties increased modestly in 1997 with, for example, the refueling of US warships in Aden. Still, the rebuilding of strong relations, desired by Yemen, was low on the US list.

Two events caused the United States to reorder priorities: the bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000 and, far more crucial, the suicide bombings of 9/11. The latter made US-Yemeni relations more salient and made global revolutionary Islam and terror the main focus of those relations. Days after 9/11, President Salih flew to Washington and pledged full support for the war on terror. US military aid increased significantly. For its part, the Salih regime stepped up its effort against militants in Yemen.

Thereafter, the dynamics of US-Yemeni relations revolved around Washington's insistence on Yemen's full support in the war on terror and its attempt to do as much as politically possible to meet this demand. The Salih regime clearly wanted to avoid repeating the punishment meted out in 1990. Still, the new relationship was uneasy. President Salih tried to do what Washington wanted, but in a manner politically palatable to the Yemeni public. When caught between the two, he usually chose to risk angering Washington rather than his domestic audience. For example, when Washington sought to connect the dots in the *Cole* investigation back to Osama bin Laden, President Salih balked out of fear that the dots might come uncomfortably close to colleagues in high places.

The United States has been insensitive to the Salih regime's political situation. When al-Harithi was killed in 2002 by a missile deep in Yemeni airspace, Washington's public self-congratulations embarrassed and angered the regime. The response was similar when a popular ulema from San'a was entrapped by the FBI in Germany in 2003, extradited to the United States, and then convicted of financing terrorism. In 2004, over Yemeni objections, Washington placed Islah's Shaikh al-Zindani on its list of supporters of terrorism and later asked Yemen to extradite him. Finally, the detaining of many Yemenis at Guantánamo since 2001 was hard for the regime to explain to its people. As non-Yemeni detainees were released, leaving a big plurality of Yemenis, the issue became a source of growing acrimony. Washington's preference that Yemeni returnees from Guantánamo go to Saudi Arabia for rehabilitation clearly indicated that the United States did not believe Yemen up to the task.

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a political nightmare for President Salih. He tried, with difficulty, to distinguish between Washington's action in Iraq and the effort against terror, opposing the former and supporting the latter. He was not helped by President George W. Bush's efforts to equate the two.

Nevertheless, beginning in 2003, there was a stream of very senior visitors from the US government, usually bringing praise and promises of additional aid. In 2004, the United States lifted a ban on supplying new military equipment to Yemen and raised the possibility of again refueling warships at Aden.

In early 2006, however, questions about Yemen's willingness and ability to do its part in the effort against terrorism were raised anew by the escape of convicted al-Qaida figures involved in the *Cole* and *Limburg* bombings. Thereafter, US confidence was shaken further when it was learned that, after release from prison, three graduates of the “national dialogue” process had turned up as jihadists in Iraq, and other convicted terrorists were freed or placed under loose house arrest.

By 2000, the United States had strained to make President Salih something of a symbol of democratization and economic reform in the Middle East. By 2004, however, a growing number of donors had begun to criticize Yemen over economic reform and governance—and acted on the criticism. The IMF and World Bank expressed displeasure with Yemen's failure to completely lift subsidies and implement civil service reforms. They warned that aid remained contingent on Yemen's keeping its part of the aid-for-reform bargain.

The donor community, now joined by the United States, kept up the pressure. In October 2005, the US ambassador flatly asserted that Yemen's progress toward democracy had stalled. A month later, President Salih was surprised in Washington when told that Yemen was no longer eligible for a Millennium Challenge grant because of failures regarding corruption, governance, and individual freedom. Shortly thereafter, the World Bank announced a one-third reduction of its aid for the same reasons. In early 2006, the ambassadors of Yemen's top donors—the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands—met with President Salih and told him that their countries wanted to see measures taken quickly to address these problems.

Attacks on Western targets in San'a in 2008, especially on the US embassy, and evidence that the new generation of AQAP leaders was willing to wage jihad in Yemen restored lagging cooperation between Washington and Yemen. High-level visits increased, and projected military assistance in 2009 was about double that of 2007. In 2009, the United States sent CIA antiterrorism specialists and Special Forces commandos to train Yemeni forces, restored economic aid, and authorized a three-year, \$120-million “stabilization program” to create jobs and improve health-care and other social services.

In December 2009, based on intelligence that AQAP was about to launch attacks on Western targets in San'a, Yemen carried out a series of arrests and a major air attack on bases in Abyan and Arhab, aided by US “firepower, intelligence, and other support.” Days later, another air strike in Shabwa targeted an alleged meeting of top AQAP leaders, producing many casualties. The new collaboration seemed warranted by the failed attempt to blow up a jet over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009 by a Nigerian who had been groomed for the mission in Yemen in 2004. However, increased collaboration came at the risk of perceptions of Yemeni subservience to an increasingly unpopular United States, and civilian casualties threatened to lessen support for both the United States and the Salih regime and to win support for and recruits to AQAP, the Houthis, and the SMM.

In September 2011, Anwar al-Awlaki, a high-profile al-Qaida ideologue and alleged mentor of a number of would-be terrorists, was killed in a US drone strike in Shabwa. He was a US-born American citizen, as was another operative killed in the attack. However, given that Yemenis were preoccupied with the struggle to overthrow President Salih, these events did not seriously affect US-Yemeni relations.

In 2012, President Hadi cooperated with the United States on the issue of terrorism more fully and less ambiguously than had President Salih. With US assistance, President Hadi's forces recovered territory lost to Ansar al-Shariah in 2011. However, while Washington pledged to support regime change and development in post-Salih Yemen, the war on terror seemed to trump these matters when push came to shove. For example, after President Salih stepped down, the United States initially argued that for security reasons his son and nephews should retain their military and security positions.

PROSPECTS

The tasks facing President Hadi and the transitional government are daunting. To realize the goals of Yemen's Arab Spring, they must quickly complete the regime change that began in late 2011. Ending the Salih regime means removing the rest of his family members and close associates in the military and security services and possibly forcing some of them into exile. It probably means that Ali Muhsin and his close associates must also be neutralized politically as well. More generally, the military and security services must be brought under the control of the state, meaning the ministers of defense and interior and, indirectly, the president. Moreover, the capacity of the state must be increased if it is to do what needs to be done to better meet the wants and needs of most Yemenis.

These tasks must be accomplished in ways that do not unite the still strong remnants of the Salih regime in armed struggle—a fight to the death. Even if the remnants of the Salih regime are dealt with successfully, Yemen will still be subject to strong centrifugal forces—especially the Houthi Rebellion and the southern secessionist movement—which must be addressed now. Yemen was close to state failure and civil war by 2010 and remains extremely fragile. Lebanon, Somalia, and Afghanistan attest to how quickly fragile polities can unravel.

These difficult political changes must be made at the same time that the current humanitarian crisis is addressed. The extremely high levels of poverty, hunger, and displacement have continued down to the present and are intolerable and unbearable.

President Hadi's government must also begin to address the need for long-term economic development, and to this end it must begin dismantling the kleptocracy that the Salih regime became and the systemic corruption and staggering economic inequality it spawned. Given the degree of its penetration by the state during the Salih era, the economy will still be dominated by remnants of the Salih regime even with the removal of those in state positions. These are the same kleptocrats who fifteen years ago blocked the demanding IMF/World Bank reforms that are still needed to make Yemen attractive for investors and to begin making the economy and society viable and sustainable again.

Even with greatly improved governance and high levels of external funding and technical assistance, it will take great effort for Yemen to become much more than minimally viable and sustainable. Its known oil reserves are nearly depleted, and its known gas reserves are modest. Other possible natural resources, long talked about, have yet to materialize.

More importantly, and making this a race against time, Yemen's water resources are rapidly being depleted. In the absence of managed water use, its once-ample aquifers are being drawn down far more rapidly than they can be replenished. At the same time, its population growth rate remains one of the highest in the world. Simply put, Yemen risks running out of the water required to sustain its projected population. The Hadi transitional government must at least begin to address these challenges.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

<https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?>

[url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0](http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wviewephb/republic_of_yemen/0)

For North Yemen's political history, see

Stookey, Robert W. , Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic (Westview Press Boulder CO, 1978);. 

Wenner, Manfred W. , Modern Yemen, 1918-1966 (Johns Hopkins University Press Baltimore, 1967); and. 

Burrowes, Robert D. , The Yemen Arab Republic: The Politics of Development, 1962-1986 (Westview Press Boulder CO, 1987). 

For South Yemen's political history, see

Stookey, Robert W. , South Yemen: A Marxist Republic in Arabia (Westview Press Boulder CO, 1982), and. 

Lackner, Helen , PDR Yemen (Ithaca Press London, 1985). 

For both Yemens, see

Halliday, Fred , Arabia Without Sultans (Penguin London, 1974), and. 

Bidwell, Robin , The Two Yemens (Westview Press Boulder CO, 1983). 

For politics before and since unification, see

Carapico, Sheila , Civil Society in Yemen (Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 1998);. 

Dresch, Paul , A History of Modern Yemen (Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 2000);. 

Phillips, Sarah , Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective: Patronage and Pluralism (Palgrave Macmillan New York, 2008); and. 

Wedeen, Lisa , Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen (University of Chicago Press Chicago, 2008). 

For external relations, see

Halliday, Fred , Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen, 1967-1987 (Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 1989), and. 

Gause, F. Gregory III, Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence (Columbia University Press New York, 1990). 

For tribes and tribalism, see

Dresch, Paul , Tribes, Government and History in Yemen (Oxford University Press Oxford, 1989), and. 

Caton, Steven C. , Peaks of Yemen I Summon: Poetry as Performance in a North Yemeni Tribe (University of California Press Berkeley, 1990). 

For law, religion, culture, and society, see

Messick, Brinkley , The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society (University of California Press Berkeley, 1993);. 

Haykel, Bernard , Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad al-Shawkani

(Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 2003); and. 
Weir, Shelagh , A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen (University of Texas
Press Austin, 2007). 

For qat, see

Kennedy, John G. , The Flower of Paradise: The Institutionalized Use of the Drug Qat in North
Yemen (D. Reidel Publishing Dordrecht, Holland, 1987). 

For an encyclopedia/bibliography, see

Burrowes, Robert D. , Historical Dictionary of Yemen, 2nd ed. (Scarecrow Press Lanham MD,
2010). 

And for good reads, see

Caton, Steven C. , Yemen Chronicle: An Anthropology of War and Mediation (Hill and Wang New
York, 2005), and. 

Smith, Tim MacIntosh , Yemen: Travels in Dictionary Land (John Murray London, 1997). 

For websites, see

Yemen Times (www.yementimes.com),.

Yemen Observer (www.yobserver.com),.

Chatham House—Yemen Forum (<http://www.chathamhouse.org/research/middle-east/current-projects/yemen-forum>), and.

Brookings—Yemen (<http://www.brookings.edu/research/topics/yemen>).

Robert D. Burrowes



Copyright © 2013 by Westview Press

APA

Burrowes, R. D. (2013). Republic of Yemen. In M. Gasiorowski, D. E. Long, & B. Reich, *The government and politics of the Middle East and North Africa* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Westview Press. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wwiewephb/republic_of_yemen/0?institutionId=577

Chicago

Burrowes, Robert D. "Republic of Yemen." In *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, by Mark Gasiorowski, David E. Long, and Bernard Reich. 7th ed. Westview Press, 2013. https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wwiewephb/republic_of_yemen/0?institutionId=577

Harvard

Burrowes, R.D. (2013). Republic of Yemen. In M. Gasiorowski, D.E. Long & B. Reich, *The government and politics of the Middle East and North Africa*. (7th ed.). [Online]. New York: Westview Press. Available from: https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wwiewephb/republic_of_yemen/0?institutionId=577 [Accessed 3 April 2017].

MLA

Burrowes, Robert D. "Republic of Yemen." *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, Mark Gasiorowski, et al., Westview Press, 7th edition, 2013. *Credo Reference*, https://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wwiewephb/republic_of_yemen/0?institutionId=577. Accessed 03 Apr 2017.