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**THE EFFECTS OF THE ARAB SPRING ON SECURITY CONCERNS  
IN YEMEN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE HOUTHIS, THE SOUTHERN  
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ANALYSIS OF THE HOUTHIS, THE SOUTHERN MOVEMENT, AND AL QAEDA IN THE  
ARABIAN PENINSULA

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## The Effects of the Arab Spring on Security Concerns in Yemen: an Analysis of the Houthis, the Southern Movement, and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Yemen's strategic location on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, poised on the world's busiest sea-lane, has granted the region a historic significance within the last few centuries. From the nineteenth century imperialist power of Great Britain to the Cold War superpowers, the region has been constantly beleaguered by foreign influence. These influences would serve to strain internal relations within the region as well as marginalize any hope for the rise of a stable regime. The history of foreign powers in Yemen would also complicate matters of international support, as these years under western powers would contribute to anti-western sentiment within the region.

Thus, Yemen's major place in the world as it exists today is that of a failing state that shares a long border with the powerful Saudi Arabia. Its internal chaos, led by a series of factionalized groups who have refused to accept prior, western-backed regimes, makes the region a fertile breeding ground for global revolutionary Islam. Therefore, the region has the crucial potential to either foster or dispel such elements within its borders and to resist or accept them from beyond its borders.

This volatile and internationally crucial backdrop served as the setting for the events of January 2011, as the wave of the Arab Spring finally washed over Yemen. The country was already an effective nightmare in terms of security, with multiple different concerns threatening the central regime, led by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In the North, Saleh was combating a rebel insurgency by Houthi tribesmen, disgruntled after years of religious mistreatment by the regime and by their region's devastation. This deterioration of the tribesmen's homelands was

due in no small part to the years of conflict with Saleh's regime that had covered Sa'dah in hatred towards the central government. Southern Yemen proved equally explosive, as the movement in the formerly Soviet-dominated South began to turn its eyes away from simple autonomy within a united Yemen and instead considered outright secession. Amidst this political uncertainty, the Arab Spring struck, and the people of Yemen began to organize in mass protests against their government.

As the country teetered on the brink of an all-out civil war, Saleh's regime left many regions politically vacuous, unable to bolster the arms to maintain control. Into this void would step a familiar group, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), an extremely active and volatile cell, and its insurgency arm Ansar al Sharia. These groups began making strong gains across Yemen as Saleh began to lose control over more and more regions. With a newfound presence in the countryside, AQAP was able to increase support for its cause dramatically, indicative of the failing status of Saleh's government.

Although Saleh's eventual removal and the election of his successor Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi in February 2012 calmed tensions to some extent, the regime change and the deteriorating security conditions present difficult challenges for President Hadi's transition path. Hadi's ultimate challenge, to conduct a successful national dialogue on transition that includes both the Houthis and the Southern Movement, seems simultaneously impossible to achieve yet crucial to the survival of a united Yemen. If either group remains unappeased by the talks, there is a strong possibility that more severe violence looms on the horizon. Civil war remains a distinct possibility, with both factions seemingly wanting to carve away sections of the country for their own purposes.

Thus, Hadi's task truly seems mountainous. It may very well prove impossible to appease either the Houthis or the Southern Movement. It might be unachievable to win back those Yemenis who have been won over by AQAP. Further, this chaotic miasma that so haunts the internal political landscape seems dwarfed by the ever-growing importance of neighboring international powers, specifically Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both countries exercise a great deal of political influence within Yemen. Yet it seems certain that, if Hadi and the new regime cannot find some way to bring peace to this teetering place, the country will plummet into another bloody civil war. By analyzing the parts of Yemen's history that contributed to factional divisions, by explaining the recent history of Yemen's major security concerns, and by examining the state of Yemen following the Arab Spring transition, this thesis will illuminate the factors that will affect Yemen in the coming years and forecast what Yemen's future will likely hold.

## 1. Background

An examination of the history of Yemen serves to illuminate the factors that contributed to the rise of the Houthis, the southern separatists, and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The events of Yemen's Islamic era, starting in the seventh century CE, have had a significant effect on the development of the country. The Yemeni people converted early to Islam and the founding of an indigenous dynasty in Yemen in the late ninth century CE allowed Yemen to develop its unique Arab-Islamic civilization (Burrowes xiii). In 893 CE, Yahya bin al Husayn established the first Zaydi state in Yemen (Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells 65). His theology, mainly that the head of the state should also be the Islamic spiritual leader and should be descended

from the Prophet, left a lasting mark through successive Zaydi imamates. The northern highlands and tribes, therefore, adopted and kept the Zaydi strand of Shi'a Islam. The capital of Yemen was established in the northern province of Sa'dah with the institution of this Zaydi imamate (Winter, "Yemen's Huthi" 13-14). The capital was moved to its present location in Sana'a in the 1700s, but the imam remained the hub of political power. In contrast, southern Yemen adopted the Shafi'i form of Sunni Islam, due to the two-century rule of the Rasulids in Aden (Burrowes xiv). This significant religious distinction is one of the root causes of the Houthi movement, prominent in the lasting Zaydi communities in northern Yemen.

### **Separation of Northern and Southern Yemen**

The divide between north and south Yemen began in the nineteenth century with the seizure of Yemeni territories by colonial powers. In 1839, Great Britain took control of the southern city of Aden as it served as a significant port on the route from the Red Sea to India (Kostiner, "The Struggle for South" 3). In 1849, the Ottomans began occupying northern Yemen (Burrowes 142). These two areas, therefore, developed separately in response to their respective colonial regimes. In southern Yemen, the developmental focus was placed solely on Aden, isolating it from the rest of the southern protectorate. The hinterland was divided into small semi-autonomous regions governed by tribal alliances, each headed by a Sultan (Kostiner, "The Struggle for South" 4). Following World War I, Great Britain's attitude towards Yemen began to change as the breakup of the Ottoman Empire necessitated Ottoman withdrawal from northern Yemen. Great Britain began extending its influence across its protectorate, intensifying relations with local Sultans to guard against northern overreach (Kostiner, "The Struggle for South" 21).

In northern Yemen, the imams, Yahya Hamid al Din and his son Ahmed, forged a monarchical state which promoted modern Yemeni nationalism (Schanzer 519). They enforced northern Yemen's traditional Islamic culture, and Yemenis, fed up with the lack of progress, revolted against the imamate in 1962, launching an eight-year-long struggle that quickly spun into a proxy war with pan-Arabist Egypt under Gamal Abdul Nasser aiding the republican rebels and Saudi Arabian royalists backing the imamate. This struggle ended in republican victory and resulted in the creation of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).

From 1978-1990 President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a soldier and tribesman, exerted control over YAR, making the country more politically stable and initiating his own political party, the General People's Congress (GPC) (Burrowes 438). Also, under his administration, modest amounts of oil were discovered, suggesting a potential for increased prosperity in the country. As Saleh gained control of the presidency in 1978, a movement of Salafist educators and religious figures was spreading across the republic, undermining Zaydi practices (Vom Bruck). Saleh lent his support to this movement because he wanted to lessen the power of Zaydi elites and because the Salafist religion emphasizes the importance of obeying the ruler. In addition, Saleh wanted to maintain good ties with Saudi Arabia, and this Salafist movement became part of Saudi Arabia's patronage system in Yemen (Vom Bruck).

South Yemen finally achieved independence from colonial rule in November 1967, yet the withdrawal of Great Britain from the region created a power vacuum that other foreign powers were anxious to fill (Kostiner, "South Yemen's Revolutionary" 28). The legacy of British occupation left the new south Yemen with little infrastructure, a fragile economy, and a divided hinterland (Kostiner, "The Struggle for South" 14). Following independence, South Yemen was first controlled by the National Liberation Front (NLF), a radical Arab nationalist



group whose guerilla activities had been instrumental in influencing Britain's decision to withdraw from Yemen (Halliday 17). The NLF ruling organization evolved into a more formal party based on the ruling parties of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its satellite states (Halliday 34). The NLF transformed into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), strengthening the leaders' favored alliance with the USSR and reorganizing the state into the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The PDRY increasingly came to rely on support from the Soviet Bloc as well as other communist countries such as China, fostering a revolutionary communist agenda in the state (Schanzer 520).

Relations between YAR and PDRY deteriorated rapidly following both states' formation. In mid-1972 after several skirmishes along the countries' border, southern Yemeni forces entered the North's territory and killed approximately forty fugitive southern tribal chiefs (Stookey 95). Despite a mediated ceasefire, PDRY continued its attempts to undermine the YAR regime, launching two more invasions into YAR between 1972 and 1979 (Schanzer 520). The divisions between YAR and PDRY were aggrandized by the roles of foreign actors in the region. Saudi Arabia deliberately encouraged hostilities between north and south Yemen in order to use YAR as a more effective defense between its kingdom and PDRY (Stookey 96). In addition, the United States positioned naval units in the Arabian Sea and increased its supply of arms to YAR, shipping the weaponry first to Saudi Arabia, which increased the influence of both foreign powers on YAR (Stookey 98). In PDRY, the USSR, East Germany, and Cuba stationed military and security advisors, many of whom were regular military personnel (Schanzer 520).

The balance between north and south Yemen shifted in the North's favor after a month-long civil war in south Yemen resulted in approximately 10,000 south Yemeni casualties (Schanzer 520). The resulting turmoil and purges in south Yemen destroyed the state's civil

infrastructure. This, coupled with the fall of the USSR and the resulting loss of foreign aid, greatly disenfranchised the PDRY.

### **Yemeni Unification (1990) and the War of Secession (1994)**

A single Yemeni political unit had only rarely governed geographical Yemen prior to 1990, but the increase in pan-Arab sentiments and Arab nationalism served to convince the Yemeni peoples of the appeal of unification (Stookey 94). In the late 1980s, Saleh's regime began making strides towards unification of the two Yemens. In May 1990, the two entities decided officially to merge, with Saleh becoming the new president of the united Republic of Yemen and Ali Salem al Beidh, the Secretary General of YSP, serving as the vice president (Burrowes 392). The 1993 parliamentary elections marked the end of the transition period. GPC won more than twice the number of seats won by either YSP or by the Yemeni Reform Grouping (Islah), a new political party formed at unification by tribal chiefs and conservative Islamists opposed to YSP (Burrowes 110-111). Relations between GPC and YSP had been increasingly strained up to this point, and following the elections, hostilities intensified, increasingly turning violent as the two parties reconsidered the benefits of unification.

In May 1994, the conflict escalated into a brief civil war. The war was largely precipitated by northern aggression, particularly a number of political assassinations carried out by the North since unification that had devastated the ranks of YSP (Parodi). Northern forces loyal to Saleh decimated the forces of the South led by YSP, causing many southern leaders to flee the country. The fighting mainly occurred in the South, destroying the region's infrastructure and leading to a costly rebuilding effort. The legacy of this war left the Southerners feeling even more marginalized, contributing to later southern calls for separation. The end of the 1994 civil

war saw the survival of a unified Yemen, but under the control of northern forces and political parties (Parodi).

### **Economic Situation and the Rise in Islamist Militant Activity**

From the 1970s-1980s remittances, mainly from Saudi Arabia, and oil revenues began pouring into the country, mostly benefitting north Yemen as it also began receiving increased foreign aid at a time when the Soviets were beginning to cut off aid to the PDRY (Burrowes 312). Due to the Gulf War, this upsurge in economic growth was rapidly reversed in 1990 following Yemeni unification. After Yemen's refusal to join in the international effort to force Iraq out of Kuwait, the international community cut off aid to Yemen, and Saudi Arabia expelled Yemeni workers, devastating Yemeni employment and the country's economy, which was based largely on these remittances (Colton 414-415). Over the course of a few months, the country was forced to absorb an estimated 880,000 returnees. This economic crisis exacerbated the corrupt nature of Saleh's government as he created a kleptocracy that relied heavily on rents from oil revenues to limit his opposition ("Yemen's Uncertain Political Future"). Yemen's oil became depleted, its population increased, and it did not make the necessary developmental strides. By 1995, the country's GDP was less than half of the GDP for 1990 and the number of Yemenis living in absolute poverty had skyrocketed (Burrowes 175).

In 1995, Saleh's administration agreed to an International Monetary Fund and World Bank economic reform package that attempted to create an environment attractive to foreign investments through austerity measures and cuts to vital subsidies (Colton 417). Yemen lacked the political and social will to commit to these reforms, however, and the program stagnated in 1997; in 2000, a new agreement was reached but it was nearly completely discarded by 2011.

This refusal to address the corruption of government institutions and to reform financial sectors kept investors away from Yemen.

These economic conditions have exacerbated social concerns facing Yemen including steep population growth, food shortages, and limited access to water (Graff). The country has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, aggravating social tensions. A look at poverty indicators for Yemen in 2010, on the precipice of the Arab Spring, demonstrates the significance of the abject poverty facing its citizens, particularly noteworthy is the approximately forty-five percent of Yemeni households living below the poverty line (see table 1).

Table 1: Poverty Indicators for Yemen

Households living below the Poverty Line	45.2%
<b>GDP</b>	
GDP per capita	\$2,500
<b>Education</b>	
Illiterate Males	30%
Illiterate Females	70%
<b>Health</b>	
Access to Health Services	55%
Life Expectancy at Birth	63 years
Infant Mortality (per 1000 Live Births)	79.5
<b>Population</b>	
Population Size	23 million
Population Growth Rate	2.78%
Population Less than 14 Years of Age	43.9%
Household Size (On Average)	6.5 members
Households in Rural Areas	69%

Source: Nora Ann Colton, "Poverty Indicators for Yemen," "Yemen: A Collapsed Economy,"

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Where the government has failed to help its people, religious institutions have intervened, particularly in the areas of health and education (Graff). The lack of options for young men and their disillusionment with the government's ability to aid them has facilitated their recruitment in Yemen's Islamic schools and mosques as well as their radicalization by AQAP and its affiliates.

In 1947, modern political Islam came to Yemen through the creation of a Muslim Brotherhood branch (Burrowes 357). Abd al Majid al Zindani, the spiritual leader of Islah since 1990, served as the Muslim Brotherhood's head in the 1970s. The spread of political Islam in Yemen was largely due to Saudi influence, promoting Wahhabism in education and recruiting Yemenis to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The growth of Islamist militant activities in Yemen was closely related to the return of Yemenis from the fight in Afghanistan (Schanzer 521).

A combination of the economic situation in Yemen and the return of jihadists from Afghanistan contributed in large part to a rise in Islamist militant activity in the 1990s, as unemployed Yemenis became increasingly frustrated with foreign powers, whose involvement in the Middle East contributed to the economic disenfranchisement of Yemen (Burrowes 8). A structured Al Qaeda affiliate emerged in Yemen, threatening both Saleh's government and Western ambassadors (Schanzer 517). The group launched a major attack on December 28, 1998 with the capture of sixteen Western tourists in Abyan; Yemeni forces staged a rescue, but four European tourists were killed and one American citizen was injured (Schanzer 524).

## 2. Houthis

### **Background of the Movement**

The current Houthi movement in northern Yemen developed out of the political and educational group Shabab al Mu'minoon (Believing Youth) created in the 1990s by Hussein Badr al Din al Houthi, a scholar of Islamic law (Zimmerman and Harnisch). Al Houthi promoted a revivalism of Zaydi Islam, gaining support by invoking the Zaydi community's feelings of suppression and discrimination at the hands of Saleh's government (Kamrava 549). The group increased its anti-government and anti-American rhetoric and protests following Saleh's agreement to cooperate with the U.S. in the wake of the September 2001 attacks. The Yemeni government increased their monitoring of the group in the early 2000s after the movement adopted as its slogan, "Allahu Akbar! Death to America! Death to Israel! Curse the Jews! Victory to Islam!" (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 68). Tensions between the organization and the central government peaked in June 2004 when hundreds of al Houthi's followers were detained for chanting this slogan outside the Great Mosque of Sana'a.

In June 2004, the Shabab al Mu'minoon launched a rebellion in Sa'dah in response to their deep-seated frustration with Saleh's regime, prompting a severe government reaction. The Yemeni government issued a reward for the capture of Hussein al Houthi, and he was killed in September 2004 by security forces (Zimmerman and Harnisch). His followers, galvanized to violence by his death, became known as the Houthis, though they officially refer to themselves as "Ansar Allah" (Winter, "Yemen's Huthi" 13). They continued their rebellion over the next six years, despite multiple attempts to broker a lasting truce. Casualty estimates from this conflict hover between 20,000 and 30,000, including combatants and noncombatants (Salmoni), and displaced Yemenis number up to 300,000 (Wells). The fighting has destroyed much of Sa'dah,

exacerbating a humanitarian crisis to which the government has been slow to respond (Winter, “Riyadh Enters” 69). In addition, the meddling of foreign powers, mainly Saudi Arabia and Iran, has served to aggravate the conflict and its detrimental effects on the region.

### **Organization of the Movement**

The Houthi movement is primarily based in the Sa’dah and Amran provinces in northern Yemen, drawing its members from the Zaydi population. The movement is symptomatic of the failures of Saleh’s government in attempting to exert control over Yemen’s periphery (Winter, “Yemen’s Huthi” 13). Sa’dah is one of Yemen’s poorest provinces, exhibiting underdeveloped infrastructure and insufficient public services (Winter, “Riyadh Enters” 69). Significant numbers of Houthi members also come from other areas including parts of Sa’dah city, Marran, Dahyan, and Harf Sufian in Amran province. Smuggling of weapons, qat, and humans along the western border of Sa’dah into Saudi Arabia is widespread, and Houthis have used their position in Marran to ally themselves with smugglers, since both groups oppose the central government (Winter, “Riyadh Enters” 70).

The Houthis protest against their economic and cultural mistreatment at the hands of the Saleh regime, particularly opposing the Yemeni government’s alliances with Saudi Arabia and the U.S. and the imposition of Wahhabism on education and government policy. Although Saleh is also a Zaydi, the Houthis claim he is not a legitimate president because he is not of the Haashimite bloodline, meaning he is not descended from the Prophet (Zimmerman and Harnisch). Houthi leaders assert that the movement’s objective is autonomy for the Zaydi population and deny that the group aims to reestablish a Shi’a imamate in northern Yemen.

Hussein's father Badr al Din al Houthi, a prominent Zaydi cleric, served as the movement's religious leader following Hussein's death and Abdullah Ayed al Ruzami became the head of military operations (Zimmerman and Harnisch). Al Ruzami remained a critical leader while Abdul Malik al Houthi, Hussein's brother, took over the movement in February 2006. Reportedly, Abdul Malik al Houthi's brother-in-law Youssef al Midani assumed leadership when Abdul was injured in an air raid, but Abdul has returned to his leadership position and now heads the movement.

### **The Insurgency From 2004-2007**

The first cycle of violence, which lasted from June 2004 to September 2004, centered primarily in the Marran Mountains as government forces attempted to capture Hussein al Houthi, eventually succeeding in killing him (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 68-69). Al Houthi's followers, spurred on by his death, continued the insurgency, with upticks in fighting from March 2005 to May 2005, during late 2005 to early 2006, and from February 2007 to June 2007 (Kamrava 549). The first two rounds were mainly motivated by the government's desire to detain or kill the Houthi leaders. The third and fourth rounds greatly expanded the violence to include much of Sa'dah province and parts of neighboring provinces, particularly Harf Sufian in Amran province, located along the highway from Sana'a to Sa'dah (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 69). The government drew in previously uninvolved actors, namely tribal groups, to fight against the Houthis (Freeman 1015). The fighting provided economic opportunities for unemployed youths, contributing to the conflict's length.

Initially, the insurgents were able to use their familiarity with the terrain of northern Yemen to their advantage, launching ambushes, sniper attacks, and small- to medium-sized



bombings (Freeman 1013). As the conflict progressed, the Houthis gained control of various government bases giving them access to advanced weaponry (Winter, “Riyadh Enters” 73). They secured a high-quality stock of munitions including advanced RPG warheads and antipersonnel and antitank mines (Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells 41). They have captured equipment from Saudi and Yemeni government troops, including weapons supplied by the United States to the Yemeni government to fight AQAP that were misappropriated for use against the Houthis (Salmoni). The Houthis’ guerilla attacks and bombings became increasingly sophisticated due to this additional access to arms (Freeman 1013).

The capture of American weapons has aided the Houthis’ campaign to gain public support. Over the course of their rebellion, the Houthis were able to exert growing control over the educational, medical, religious, transportation, and military resources in the Sa’dah and Amran provinces (Winter, “Riyadh Enters” 74). In addition, the security forces’ assault on the region has turned public sentiment against the central government. The government’s counterinsurgency strategy focused mostly on arresting political activists, creating roadblocks and vehicle checkpoints, conducting artillery strikes and airstrikes, and a food blockade (Freeman 1015). These tactics, particularly the food blockade begun in 2004, have had a devastating effect on the region. Meant to inspire the civilian population to give up the Houthis and aid the government, they have instead fomented increased resentment of northern Yemenis towards the central government (Freeman 1015).

### **Qatari-Mediated Ceasefire**

In May 2007, during the fourth round of fighting, Qatar’s Emir Shaykh Hamad visited Sana’a and declared Qatar’s desire to mediate a ceasefire between the Houthi rebels and the

Yemeni government, announcing that if fighting ceased Qatar would allocate funds to rebuild Sa'dah (Kamrava 549). Mediators from the Qatari Foreign Ministry, operating in Sana'a and Sa'dah, were able to negotiate a ceasefire, announced on June 16, 2007, and facilitate a peace treaty signed in Doha on February 2, 2008. Qatar agreed to donate approximately \$300-500 million for reconstruction efforts and to take in Houthi exiles (Kamrava 550). However, fighting between the rebels and government forces never fully stopped during the ceasefire as dissidents in the Houthi ranks and the Yemeni administration refused to accept the peace treaty. By October 2008, fighting had resumed in full force and continued to varying degrees throughout 2008.

### **2009 Operation Scorched Earth**

During the sixth cycle of violence, the Houthis used three principal strategies: isolating areas of fighting from being accessed by government forces, targeting prominent government leaders or allies, and attempting to seize military bases (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 73). Fighting had spread in northern Yemen from the Ghamr district to Razih and then into Shada district by the end of July 2009 (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 72). The Houthis had cut off government forces and their tribal allies in Ghamr and were suppressing those in Razih. On August 4, the Houthis seized the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade's base in Shada district, gaining access to large stocks of ammunition, tanks, and rockets.

This action precipitated the launching, a week later, of Operation Scorched Earth, a full-scale military offensive by the Yemeni government aimed at finally suppressing the Houthi rebellion. In addition, Saudi Arabia launched air and ground attacks in November 2009 against the Houthis in response to military action taken by the Houthis across the Saudi border (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 72). Even before their explicit involvement in the conflict, Saudi Arabia had

begun increasing its border security. In the summer of 2009, Riyadh began constructing a high-tech razor wire fence along its border with the western portion of Sa'dah (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 71). Houthi activity near the border increased as Yemeni government roadblocks necessitated a surge in Houthi reliance on goods smuggled in from Saudi Arabia. In addition, Yemeni government troops had accidentally exploded some rockets inside Saudi territory in October 2009, exacerbating tensions (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 72). In November, Houthi rebels attacked a border post, killing one Saudi guard and injuring eleven. The Saudi government responded swiftly by bombing Houthi strongholds along the border. These Saudi military strikes, coordinated with Yemen's Operation Scorched Earth, lasted over three months and resulted in over one-hundred Saudi casualties. The Houthis have been very critical of the Saudi regime's financial and military aid for the Yemeni government, tying it to a greater Saudi plan to spread Wahhabism in northern Yemen (Winter, "Yemen's Huthi" 17).

In February 2010, a ceasefire was adopted as the Houthis yielded to avoid war with both the Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia and the government yielded due to its need to focus on threats from AQAP and southern secessionists (Salmoni). The Houthis agreed to six conditions developed by the Yemeni government in order to achieve a cessation of hostilities (Winter, "Riyadh Enters" 73). The conditions, set forth by the Supreme Security Committee include the opening of roads, the return of seized assets, the release of prisoners, the withdrawal from all governates, an end to interference in state affairs, and a cessation of aggression towards Saudi Arabia ("Yemeni-Saudi Strikes"). However, the conflict continued in July 2010 as Houthis seized a military base and detained hundreds of soldiers; they then decided to release the soldiers after a few days ("Houthis Release"). In August 2010 the two sides demonstrated their renewed desire for a truce by signing another Qatari-brokered agreement in Doha (Kamrava 550). Since

this truce, the rebels and the government have released detainees to build trust, and Houthis have begun to return seized military equipment (Winter, “Riyadh Enters” 73).

### **Iranian Involvement**

Fears of Iranian influence on the Houthi movement have had a great effect on the Yemeni government’s response to the insurgency. The Believing Youth’s slogan seems to have its roots in similar slogans displayed during the Iranian revolution, explaining the severity of the government crackdown in 2004 on its use (Winter, “Yemen’s Huthi” 17). There is likely something to the government’s belief that the movement has a relationship with Iran, indicated by Hussein al Houthi’s meeting in 1993 with the Iranian president (Overton 8-9). The Yemeni government’s qualms about Zaydi revivalism and its potential connection to Shi’a Iran have contributed to the government’s magnification of Iran’s role in the Houthi rebellion, describing the conflict through the sectarian lens of Sunni versus Shi’a (Winter, “Yemen’s Huthi” 17). The central government put to death Yahya Hussein al Duleimi, a Zaydi cleric, for asking the Iranian ambassador for financial and political support (Freeman 1014). In addition, Saleh’s administration increasingly, though unofficially, charged Iran with aiding the Houthis. These accusations served to advance the likelihood that the conflict would expand into a real proxy war.

The Yemeni government claims that Iran is providing the Houthis with financial support and military training. In 2008, Rashad al Alimi, the deputy premier for defense and security affairs for Yemen made the claim that the movement was created with Iranian backing and with the goal of completing acts of terrorism (Freeman 1014). In October 2009, the Yemeni regime claimed that it had captured in its waters an Iranian ship smuggling arms to the Houthis

(Harnisch). In an interview with *The New York Times*, President Saleh claimed that Iran is using the Houthi insurgency to wage a proxy war against the United States, getting revenge against the U.S. by attacking its Middle East ally, Yemen (Freeman 1014).

Once Saudi Arabia became more involved in the conflict the accusations against Iran became even more pronounced as these two nations increasingly fight for influence in the region. In November 2009, as Saudi Arabia prepared to take military action against the Houthis, the Saudi-owned satellite ArabSat ceased transmitting the Iranian news channel Al Alam, which had been very critical of Saudi policy in Yemen (Winter, “Riyadh Enters” 67). In addition, tensions built later that month when Tehran deployed warships to the Gulf of Aden, claiming that the ships were meant to protect Iranian commercial shipping from pirates (Lefebvre 126). Saudi Arabia, believing that Iran had a part in fostering the Houthi rebellion and that Hezbollah officers were advising Houthi rebels, was distressed by this warship deployment. Riyadh, therefore, sent three warships to guard the northern Yemeni coast from potential Iranian arms smugglers.

### 3. Southern Movement

#### **Background of the Movement**

Yemen’s Southern Movement, al Hiraak al Junuubi, is a loose grouping of many anti-government factions based in the former PDRY, whose roots stretch back to the 1994 civil war. The war served to economically and politically disenfranchise the South (Parodi). The fighting destroyed much of the South’s infrastructure and forced it to undertake a costly reconstruction. When it lost the war, the South lost much of its political leverage, including the YSP’s

parliamentary veto (Parodi). The GPC-Islah coalition was, therefore, able to consolidate power within the northern-dominated executive office. Because political power is focused in the northern city of Sana'a, southerners often find themselves excluded from political profits.

The southerners' grievances were only aggrandized by their loss in the war. Southerners protest the illegal acquisition of southern land by northerners after the fighting ended, forced retirements from civil and military positions, and the absence of pensions for southern military officers, maintaining that the central government is imposing a northern occupation of the South (Zimmerman, "Yemen's Southern Challenge"). This occupation is underlined by northern military governors under Saleh's governance ruling each major southern province (Parodi). Although the South provides vital hydrocarbon resources and its ports facilitate trade and growth, many of the economic benefits of its assets accrue instead to northern governors and the central government in Sana'a (Alley). Particularly maddening is the perception that Saleh's family is embezzling revenues from the local oil and gas resources (Day, "Challenge" 10). These economic conditions in the South fuel the grievances of the Southern Movement. The central government has sought to diminish the popularity of the Southern Movement by shutting down sympathetic news organizations, increasing government troops in the South, and detaining the movement's supporters (Zimmerman, "Yemen's Southern Challenge"). However, these actions have served to convince other southerners of the necessity of joining the movement. The marginalization of the South unites southern citizens behind this movement, and southerners increasingly call for separation from the North as the central government has rebuffed attempts for greater federalization.

Due to concerns that support for the Southern Movement could lead to civil war, international opinion has supported Yemeni unity. The continued demonstrations by the

Southern Movement have contributed to foreign fears that the security concerns precipitated by the southern separatists and the Houthi rebels could topple the Yemeni government and create a power vacuum for Al Qaeda to fill (Parodi). Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have, therefore, increased aid to the central government, hampering separatists' aims.

### **Organization of the Movement**

Though largely united in its aims, the movement is disorganized in its makeup. It is composed of many factional groupings and its leadership consists of both domestic and exiled figures, with five separate councils claiming to represent it (Alley). Al Hiraak al Junuubi began in 2007 under the leadership of local elites but lacking any formal management or control. Al Beidh and Tariq al Fadhli have emerged as important leaders in the movement (Zimmerman, "Yemen's Southern Challenge"). Al Beidh fled Yemen to Oman and then to Germany after leading the movement to secede in 1994. On May 21, 2009 al Beidh declared himself the leader of the southern separatists, but al Fadhli has served as the main leader still operating within Yemen.

Al Fadhli's father was a former Sultan in the southern Abyan province, and al Fadhli himself fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets and has alleged ties to Osama bin Laden (Day, "Challenge" 9). Al Fadhli claims he fought alongside local mujahedeen leaders in Afghanistan, not with bin Laden, but his presence within the movement's leaderships amplifies claims of the movement's connection with Al Qaeda. The secessionists, however, maintain that they are not an Islamist group; in 2009 when Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula announced their support of the movement, the secessionists swiftly rejected ties with AQAP (Alley). Al Fadhli supported Saleh during the 1994 civil war but defected from the government in 2009 to support the separatist

cause (Zimmerman, “Yemen’s Southern Challenge”). Al Fadhli enjoyed a close relationship with Saleh throughout the 1990s, so his joining the Southern Movement in 2009 presents a significant example of the regime’s southern supporters increasing rejection of Saleh’s practices (Day, “Challenge” 10). After al Fadhli joined the leadership, the movement became more militaristic, as he began showing up armed at demonstrations along with his armed bodyguards. He controls militia forces in Abyan and has been connected with violent attacks against government troops and officials, leading the central government to call for his surrender or exile. In July 2009, security forces attacked his home in Zinjibar, killing some of his bodyguards.

### **Operations of the Movement**

In the spring of 2007, a group of PDRY veterans began protesting their insufficient pensions and compulsory demobilization at the hands of the North (Alley). These demonstrations spawned the current form of the Southern Movement, as the fervor spread to other southerners who were dissatisfied with inadequate public services and the unemployment rate. The group seeks an enhanced rule of law, improved resource management, and more economic and political control in the hands of southerners (Alley). As the North failed to adequately respond to these demands, the movement turned gradually from a desire for greater autonomy within one, united Yemen to calls for the separation of north and south Yemen. These new goals were highlighted by the use of the former south Yemen flag during demonstrations in 2009 (Day, “Challenge” 9).

Throughout 2007 the Southern Movement remained peaceful but demonstrated regularly against Saleh’s government. The leader of the original grouping of retired soldiers, Nasir Ali an-Nuba, was arrested in the late summer (Day, “Challenge” 9). However, the movement continued



spreading and was drastically galvanized in October by the killing, by government forces, of four men in Radfan district (Day, “Challenge” 9). These men were killed on the eve of October 14, 2007, the forty-fourth anniversary of an incident in 1963 when British soldiers killed seven men in the same town in Radfan, launching South Yemen’s revolution to overthrow colonial rule (Day, “Updating” 420). This huge, symbolic betrayal increased opposition to Saleh’s government and, in December 2007, a funeral procession held for these men drew hundreds of thousands of mourners. President Saleh suppressed media coverage of the event to downplay the extent of the movement. The demonstration so worried Saleh that he offered to compensate the families of the victims, and his administration began referring to those killed as martyrs and claiming that they had been betrayed by foreign actors (Day, “Updating” 420). However, many eyewitnesses attest that it was indeed government forces that killed the four men, spurring the public’s opposition to the Sana’a government.

In 2008, the movement expanded and supporters began to call for armed revolution in response to the central government’s continued suppression. A coordinating committee for nonviolent demonstrations associated with southern Socialist Party members promoted plans for an event on January 13, 2008 to foster “reconciliation and forgiveness” amongst southerners and build new bonds (Day, “Updating” 427). This rally took place in Hashimi Square in a district of northern Aden and was open to people in both the southern and northern provinces. Saleh attempted to disrupt the event by sending security forces to block traffic and accost demonstrators. Eventually shots were fired, resulting in the death of two rally participants and spurring a riot as police attacked the crowd with tear gas and rubber bullets, and the demonstrators responded violently. The events that transpired before the first shots were fired remain unclear, with organizers of the rally accusing local police and the central security forces,

and the government accusing and arresting dozens of rally participants (Day, “Updating” 428). These events further roused protestors opposed to Saleh’s regime, and the killing in Hashimi Square of a supporter of the Islamic Islah party served to incite greater cooperation among members in their opposition to Saleh.

In January 2008, Saleh acquiesced to some of the demands of the Southern Movement. He announced that he would rehire some southern military officers and increase the pensions of others (Day, “Updating” 428). He stressed his commitment to settling land disputes in southern provinces, declaring that local military officers could regain the properties that had been seized from them. Through February, Saleh began to coordinate with representatives from the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), the political coalition in opposition to the GPC (Day, “Updating” 429). Many southerners, however, feared these actions were just a smokescreen to distract as the police continued to harass protest leaders and the media.

In March 2009, Saleh’s military associates invited hundreds of southern men to an army recruitment conference in Dhamar, suggesting that Saleh intended to honor his promises to hire more southern military officers (Day, “Updating” 429). However, once they reached Dhamar these youths were lectured, deemed unfit for service, and then sent home. When they returned, these young men began rioting throughout the Lahij and Dhale provinces. Tens of thousands of protesters joined in the violence, setting fire to police stations and army property (Zimmerman, “Yemen’s Southern Challenge”). In Radfan district the rioting turned increasingly violent, prompting a severe government crackdown as Saleh deployed his tanks, artillery, and aircraft against the youths (Day, “Updating” 430). The central government then aggravated tensions by arresting over five-hundred southern elites (Zimmerman, “Yemen’s Southern Challenge”).

Some members of the Southern Movement referred to this as the “northern army’s second war on the South” (Day, “Updating” 430).

In 2008, there were twenty-one counts of political violence in Lahij province, eleven in Abyan province, and fifteen in other southern governorates (Alley). From 2009-2010, there was an upsurge in violent incidents and an increase in the severity of the government response, which began using heavy weapons to suppress separatist supporters. A 2009 Human Rights Watch report accused government troops of firing on civilians, illegally detaining and killing movement supporters, and suppressing the media and free speech (Alley). The government’s response to the initial protests increasingly emboldened the southerners to take up arms against security forces. Approximately sixteen died during a southern rally held on July 23, 2009 in a clash between security forces and protesters in Abyan (Zimmerman, “Yemen’s Southern Challenge”). Separatists retaliated by attacking and killing four soldiers five days after the rally and by bombing a GPC office building. Further, the Southern Movement conducted mass demonstrations in October 2009 during a visit by the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, to demand that the Arab League oversee secession talks with the government (Zimmerman, “Yemen’s Southern Challenge”).

Following the February 2010 ceasefire with Houthi rebels, the government has diverted its attention and resources to suppressing the Southern Movement (Alley). Its heavy-handed approach has only served to revitalize the movement, increasing violent attacks by both sides. The broad political and economic goals of the movement as well as its potential to extend violent protests to all-out guerrilla warfare have limited the ability of the government to respond constructively to the movement (Alley).

#### 4. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

##### **History of Al Qaeda in Yemen**

Al Qaeda has been active in Yemen since the early 1990s. No government has truly been able to enforce its will on all parts of Yemen, and many regions remain largely lawless, making it an attractive stronghold for Al Qaeda operatives (Riedel). One of Al Qaeda in Yemen's first major operations came on October 12, 2000 when militants attacked the United States Navy destroyer USS Cole, detonating several hundred pounds of C-4 plastic explosives (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 30). The attack, funded by Osama bin Laden, was planned largely by Abd al Rahim al Nashiri, a Saudi veteran of the Afghan war and the leader at the time of Al Qaeda's regional operations in the Persian Gulf and East Africa. The assault killed seventeen Americans and cost the Yemeni government over \$1.5 billion in lost tourist and shipping revenue (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 31). Those involved in the plot neither played a major role in later attacks in Yemen nor contributed heavily to the leadership of Al Qaeda in Yemen. Still, the bombing of the USS Cole was a significant herald of further Al Qaeda involvement in Yemen, particularly noteworthy was the ascent around that time of Qa'id Salim Talib Sinan al Harithi to the head of the Al Qaeda in Yemen leadership (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 32).

After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, joint U.S. and Yemeni counterterrorism operations effectively suppressed most Al Qaeda operations in Yemen (Alterman and Nelson). The group did manage to carry out an attack on October 6, 2002 of the French tanker M/V Limburg. Though similarly orchestrated by al Nashiri, this suicide bombing was a weak follow-

up to the Cole bombing (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 33). Yemeni President Saleh cracked down on the organization and arrested many suspected terrorists, and since 2002 more than one hundred Yemenis have been imprisoned at the U.S. prison facility in Guantanamo Bay, decimating Al Qaeda's leadership (Fontaine). In addition, unmanned CIA aircraft launched attacks, killing al Harithi in 2002 (Graff).

After these initial successes, Saleh focused his military attention on the insurgency by Houthi tribesmen in northern Yemen and the growing separatist movement in southern Yemen (Alterman and Nelson). Al Qaeda operatives were therefore able to reorganize and launch several attacks from 2006-2008 on Yemeni and foreign interests. This rebuilding was aided by a prison break in Yemen in February 2006 that freed 23 high-value militants (Alterman and Nelson). Many of the men who had been serving time in this Political Security Organization prison in Sana'a went on to hold leadership positions in the organization (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 34).

Seven months later, these men launched a synchronized set of attacks against Western oil facilities in Marib and Hadramawt governorates (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 36). Though the attacks failed to achieve their objectives, they did show a move back towards the more tactical ambitions of the group, which had been suppressed by the government crackdown. The group then demonstrated its increased resolve by killing a local police chief in April 2007 before formally recognizing, two months later, Nasir al Wahayshi as the leader of the group now calling itself Al Qaeda in the Land of Yemen (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 37). Two weeks after his appointment, the cell drove an SUV filled with explosives into a tourist convoy, killing eight Spaniards near Marib. Another member of the 2006 prison break, Hamza Salim `Umar al Qu`ayti, formed the cell Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula—Soldier's Brigade of

Yemen, which was the most active terrorist organization in Yemen until his death in 2008 (Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation?* 38).

### **Evolution of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula**

In January 2009, Al Qaeda in Yemen and Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia merged to form Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). This was due to a crackdown by Saudi Arabia on Al Qaeda operatives that largely destroyed the organization's infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, forcing operatives to flee to Yemen (Riedel). Battle-hardened militants who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, many of whom had also been imprisoned in American and allied detention centers, moved into Yemen to strengthen AQAP's ranks. The group began working on propaganda campaigns meant to bolster public support by framing their operations as advantageous to Yemenis.

AQAP drew substantial international attention on Christmas Day of 2009 when Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian student aided by the AQAP, attempted to detonate an explosive device on Northwest Airlines Flight 253 to Detroit (Alterman and Nelson). Anwar al Awlaki, an American-born, radical Yemeni cleric and the leading English-language Al Qaeda propagandist, had helped to train Abdulmutallab. Al Awlaki was also in contact with U.S. Army major Nidal Hasan, who opened fire at Fort Hood in November 2009, killing thirteen (Fontaine). These incidents increased U.S. officials' fears about AQAP.

In addition to its "far war" against the West, by 2009 AQAP was increasingly conducting a "near war" against the Yemeni government (Gallagher). AQAP attacked Saleh and other Arab leaders as corrupt betrayers of the Muslim faith who were beholden to their American masters. The group urged military and security forces to defect from any regime that "fights Allah" and

“follows Jews and Christians” (Gallagher). An AQAP declaration in September 2009 justified the attempted assassination of Saudi Deputy Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef by claiming that he defended Americans (Gallagher). The group stated that Saudi and Yemeni security forces would be held accountable if they continued to obey these leaders.

In the late summer and autumn of 2009, AQAP became increasingly threatening towards the Saleh regime. Al Awlaki described clashes between AQAP and Yemeni security forces as the “beginning of the greatest Jihad...to free the Arabian Peninsula from tyrants” (Gallagher). AQAP criticized Saleh for his support of American fighters and for the increasing intelligence sharing between the U.S. and Yemen that came due to an influx of U.S. government officials and intelligence operatives. AQAP was “unequivocally damning” of President Saleh’s coordination with the U.S. (Gallagher). The group’s attacks against Yemeni government and security forces increased in 2010, targeting military checkpoints, security convoys, and other military and intelligence locations. They justified the attacks as deterrence against Yemeni counterterrorism operations. In addition, from November to December 2010, AQAP committed two suicide bombings against Houthi followers and then declared war on adherents of Shi’a Islam in Yemen. These attacks demonstrate a shift from Al Qaeda’s focus on its “far war” to an intensification of its “near war” operations (Gallagher). However, as illustrated by events in October 2010, when several complex parcel-bombs were discovered on passenger and cargo planes bound for Chicago, AQAP is still committed to its attacks on Western interests. AQAP is now widely considered the most “visible and active arm of Al Qaeda currently operating” (Gallagher).

## **Reversal of Yemeni Policy**

Before the September 11th terrorist attacks, Yemen did not seriously heed U.S. calls to contain Al Qaeda operatives. This was mainly due to Yemen's desire not to seem overly friendly towards the U.S., as well as the wishes of Salafi sympathizers in the government, and the weak abilities of Yemen's military (Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells 124). After September 11, 2001, Yemen became much more cooperative with the U.S., siding publically with the U.S. in the global war on terror and achieving great strides in eliminating Al Qaeda threats from 2001 to 2004. This reversal was largely because a number of the September 11 hijackers were born in Yemen and because U.S.-Yemeni relations had been very adversely affected by Yemen's opposition to the 1990-1991 Gulf War (Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells 124). Additionally, Saleh likely believed that support for U.S. counterterrorism operations would help him maintain his control over Yemen.

Since the Christmas Day attempted attack, the U.S. has redoubled its efforts in working with Yemeni officials to combat AQAP. In 2010, the U.S. doubled its security aid to Yemen, investing approximately \$150 million in building Yemeni counterterrorism capacity (Alterman and Nelson). The U.S. has trained Yemen's Special Operations Force, a unit in the Republican Guard, providing them with advanced vehicles and weapons (Zimmerman, "Insurgency in Yemen"). Moreover, the U.S. has worked to advance the Yemeni Air Force, donating four Huey II helicopters and a CN-235 aircraft to assist counterterrorism forces as well as training the Central Security Forces' Counter Terrorism Unit.

American drone strikes in Yemen have yielded controversial and limited results. The CIA drone strike that killed al Harithi in 2002 was hugely embarrassing for Saleh as he lost any possibility for plausible deniability when the U.S. claimed responsibility for the attack (Koehler-



Derrick, “Developing Policy” 8). In addition, a missile strike in December 2009 resulted in many civilian casualties and drew strong condemnation from human rights groups and Yemeni officials. In May 2010, a missile strike killed a deputy provincial governor, worsening the criticisms faced by the Saleh administration.

Since May 2011 the CIA and Special Operations forces have conducted about a dozen drone strikes in Yemen (Schmitt). One of the strikes in September 2011 killed Anwar al Awlaki and Samir Khan, another American who edited AQAP’s English-language online magazine. Despite these apparent successes, the U.S. intelligence community does not consider these operations as having significantly lessened the threat of AQAP, for though they may have diminished the strength of AQAP’s propaganda arm, those actually responsible for crafting bombs and plots still remain (Zimmerman, “Recipe for Failure”).

### **Limitations of This Strategy**

According to Garry Reid, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for special operations and combating terrorism, the Yemeni security forces have not shown much progress despite training from U.S. special operations forces because the Yemeni leadership has failed to institutionalize the training (Ricks). In addition, the best military forces and equipment are concentrated in the capital and on the president’s detail, making it difficult for counterterrorism efforts to succeed in the outer reaches of Yemeni territory. The primary problem with the counterterrorism program in Yemen is the difference in priorities between the U.S. and the Yemeni government. Saleh routinely redirected Yemen’s counterterrorism forces, supported by the U.S. and Great Britain, from the fight against Al Qaeda in order to fight the Houthi rebels

(Knickmeyer). Leaked diplomatic cables reveal objections from the former U.S. ambassador to Yemen against this misuse of U.S. military aid.

Despite reports in 2009 revealing this misuse, the United States increased its supply of weapons, helicopters, and other military resources to Yemen in 2010. Saleh proved unwavering in his resolve to receive more war materials and aid money from the United States, pledging to use these resources against Al Qaeda only to continue transferring their use to military operations against the Houthi rebels (Knickmeyer). In addition, the aid may have encouraged Saleh to act more aggressively towards the Houthis, worsening their rebellion and therefore diminishing Yemen's capacity to be a stable, reliable partner in the fight against AQAP (Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells 274).

Many of Yemen's policies and counterterrorism attempts have actually inhibited the success of its efforts to respond to Al Qaeda. For example, Yemen has exhibited a "catch and release" approach to dealing with terrorists meaning that the government has strongly supported the release of many suspects with ties to Al Qaeda, who have promised to renounce violence ("Transnational Threats"). In addition, Yemen released multiple Osama bin Laden supporters, including Fawzi al Wajeh, bin Laden's former bodyguard, and Ali Mohammed al Kurdi, who had been sentenced to death for bombings in Iraq and Yemen ("Transnational Threats"). In 2010, Yemeni security forces attempted to fight AQAP in the Abyan governorate in response to increasing AQAP attacks in this area (Gallagher). These operations, however, were reported as cruel and indiscriminate attacks by the government's security forces on villages in the area. As public opinion turned against the military operations, the Southern Movement accused Saleh of overstating the threat of AQAP in order to receive military aid, which he could then use to attack the South's movement (Gallagher). AQAP reiterated this sentiment as part of its strategy of

trying to turn domestic opinion against Saleh and to increase foreign criticism of his misappropriation of counterterrorism aid.

## 5. Arab Spring and Hadi's Governance

### **Effects of the Arab Spring**

In late January 2011, Yemen's years of regional protests against Saleh coalesced into nation-wide demonstrations, fashioned after those in Tunisia and Egypt (Vom Bruck). Saleh responded by declaring that he would not run for re-election in 2013 and would not cede power to his son, but protests continued and were ultimately met with violent security force suppression ("Arab Uprising"). Protestors in Sana'a, numbering in the tens of thousands, remained largely peaceful, despite consistent attacks and killings by government forces, including the massacre of over fifty demonstrators on March 18, 2011 (Vom Bruck). Security forces also clashed with protestors in the southern provinces, killing dozens in the city of Taiz on May 30<sup>th</sup>. General Ali Mohsen al Ahmar, Yemen's most powerful officer, defected to join the protestors against Saleh, causing a rift in the military structure (Fontaine). In April, the GPC agreed to a deal brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to yield power in exchange for immunity from prosecution, but Saleh refused to sign ("Arab Uprising"). Many protestors rejected this deal as well, adamant that Saleh should stand trial (Vom Bruck).

Young people experiencing high unemployment rates and political disillusionment increasingly joined the protests, calling for an end to government corruption and an increase in economic opportunities (Vom Bruck). The role of women in the demonstrations was also

noteworthy. Tawakkul Karman, leader of the NGO Women Journalists without Chains, united with other political activists in encouraging the Southern Movement, the Houthis, the army, and tribal leaders to join the demonstrations (Vom Bruck). Women's involvement in the protests was not without significant risks, however, as they were threatened both by security forces and by radical protestors who, after Saleh declared that the mixing of men and women protestors was un-Islamic, attacked the women protesting with them. Still, the protests served to unite those Yemenis living in tent cities as they demonstrated, where they shared daily their meals, their qat, and their call for "the night to come to an end" (Vom Bruck).

During early 2011, the deteriorating situation led to increasing talk of the possibility of civil war as the government and security forces lost control of entire regions of the country (Fahim and Kasinof). In June, Saleh was injured in a bombing of the presidential compound, and he was taken to Saudi Arabia and later the United States to seek medical treatment ("Arab Uprising"). Many believed this would convince him to relinquish his power, but in September he returned to Yemen, sparking a fresh round of fighting.

The protests put the U.S. in a difficult situation as its counterterrorism plan was coordinated with Saleh and hinged on a stable Yemeni government and military apparatus. The Obama administration initially feared that Saleh's removal would disrupt American counterterrorism operations in Yemen (Fahim and Kasinof). As it became increasingly clear that Saleh's stubborn refusal to yield office was creating a huge security threat on its own, the Obama administration moved to enter negotiations to ease Saleh out of office. The U.S., other Western powers, and Persian Gulf leaders eventually aggressively urged the adoption of the GCC agreement, concerned with the increasing breakdown of security. On November 23, 2011 Saleh yielded to the protestors and international pressures and signed an agreement, at a

ceremony hosted by Saudi King Abdullah at the royal palace in Riyadh, which immediately transferred power to his vice president Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi (Fahim and Kasinof). Then in February 2012, Yemenis voted in Hadi for president in an election in which he was the only candidate.

### Challenges facing Hadi

The circumstances surrounding Hadi's assumption of office put him at a disadvantage for making any significant advancements in the country. Yemen has been beset for years with such deeply entrenched political, economic, and social difficulties that the removal of Saleh is unlikely to bring about any fixes that are both quick and meaningful. The state of affairs in Yemen from 2009-2012 was such that the country consistently ranked in the top twenty most critical failed states according to the Fund for Peace index (see table 2).

Table 2: Failed States Index, 2009-2012

Rank	2009	2010	2011	2012
1	Somalia	Somalia	Somalia	Somalia
2	Zimbabwe	Chad	Chad	Congo (D.R.)
3	Sudan	Sudan	Sudan	Sudan
4	Chad	Zimbabwe	Congo (D.R.)	Chad
5	Congo (D.R.)	Congo (D.R.)	Haiti	Zimbabwe
6	Iraq	Afghanistan	Zimbabwe	Afghanistan
7	Afghanistan	Iraq	Afghanistan	Haiti
8	Central Afr. Rep.	Central Afr. Rep.	Central Afr. Rep.	<u>Yemen</u>
9	Guinea	Guinea	Iraq	Iraq
10	Pakistan	Pakistan	Cote d'Ivoire	Central Afr. Rep.
11	Cote d'Ivoire	Haiti	Guinea	Cote d'Ivoire
12	Haiti	Cote d'Ivoire	Pakistan	Guinea
13	Myanmar	Kenya	<u>Yemen</u>	Pakistan
14	Kenya	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria
15	Nigeria	<u>Yemen</u>	Niger	Guinea Bissau
16	Ethiopia	Myanmar	Kenya	Kenya
17	North Korea	Ethiopia	Burundi	Ethiopia
18	<u>Yemen</u>	Timor-Leste	Guinea Bissau	Burundi
19	Bangladesh	North Korea	Myanmar	Niger

<b>20</b>	Timor-Leste	Niger	Ethiopia	Uganda
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Source: “The Failed States Index,” The Fund for Peace, 2012, Web, 10 Mar. 2013.

President Hadi may indeed be hampered in his ability to respond to security concerns and to fight AQAP, as he is faced with a large variety of obstacles including the unification of the divided military under his command (Gordon). Reportedly, some military commanders appointed by Saleh have been working to handicap the fight against AQAP and to undermine Hadi. Hadi’s success in restructuring the armed forces will be crucial for Yemen’s security capabilities. If he fails, there will be devastating consequences for American and Yemeni security interests (Gordon). Hadi has begun by replacing commanders loyal to Saleh, including Saleh’s half-brother. This shake-up has produced severe criticisms and unrest from the dismissed commanders loyal to Saleh, including threats from Mohammed Saleh al Ahmar, who was removed from his post as commander of the Air Force, to attack planes at Sana’a airport (Gordon). In December 2012, Hadi launched a mass restructuring of the military to remove more of the commanders, whose loyalty to Saleh might produce a negative effect on the country’s security situation (Fahim). He centralized the command of the military under five branches and ordered the dismantling of the Republic Guard. He replaced Yahya Saleh, former President Saleh’s nephew, who led a U.S.-backed counterterrorism unit in addition to his leadership role in the central security forces. The disruption of the Republican Guard and the Special Forces aimed to diminish the power of their head, President Saleh’s son Brig. Gen. Ahmed Ali Saleh. His forces have engaged the government in quarrels following his father’s removal from power (Fahim). It remains to be seen whether this reshuffling will result in a unified Yemeni military or

whether the heavy politicization of the forces will have a detrimental effect on security conditions.

### **Political Integration of the Houthis and the Southern Movement**

President Saleh was adept at managing the complexities of Yemen's tribal structure; through his use of the tribal support for the government, he helped to counter the influence of AQAP in rural areas that lacked government troops (Boone). Hadi, however, has little influence over northern Yemeni tribes and his close connection with Saleh has lost him a lot of credibility with southern tribes despite the fact that he hails from that region (Boone). He will likely struggle to gain the continued support of rural Yemeni tribes in the rejection of AQAP.

As well, Hadi must deal with the political integration of the Houthis and the Southern Movement. This is complicated by the fact that both factions chose to boycott the elections, which gave Hadi the presidency (Saeed and Sallam). The two groups also refused to recognize the Gulf Cooperation Council deal, backed by the United States and Saudi Arabia, between outgoing president Saleh and the opposition coalition. The pro-Houthi Shabab al Sumud ("Steadfast Youth") leader Ali al Imad stated that the Houthis are "anti-oppression, for freedom of expression, and against American invasions and foreign influence. The GCC agreement is none of these" (Wells). The Houthis' media office has stated that since the Arab Spring protests began, leaders of the Southern Movement have been meeting with Houthi leaders (Saeed and Sallam). The groups claim to sympathize with one another but not to be coordinating.

Hadi is also charged with conducting a National Dialogue Conference, supported by the Gulf Cooperation Council and permanent members of the UN Security Council. The dialogue will discuss the concerns of transition and the drafting of a new constitution. Hadi is working to

include the different groups in Yemen, but elements of both the southern separatists and the Houthis have threatened to boycott the national dialogue, attempting to hold Hadi hostage to their demands (“Yemen’s Road”). The conference was initially scheduled to begin in November 2012, but it was delayed as southern secessionists, many returning from exile after Saleh’s ousting, initially refused to participate, as they were only interested in forming their own independent state (“Yemenis Agree”). In order to convince them to attend, Hadi’s administration offered southern Yemenis a large bloc of the seats of the conference and promised that they could raise any issues they wanted during the dialogue. Yemeni political parties managed to reach an agreement in late November on the distribution of delegates to the conference. The GPC and its political allies received 112 seats out of 565 total seats (“Yemenis Agree”). The Southern Movement received eighty-five seats, women and youth groups both gained forty seats, and sixty-two seats were designated for Hadi to fill. The conference continued to be delayed multiple times as organizers scrambled to convince all of the important Yemeni factions to send delegates (“Yemen’s Road”).

### **Houthis After the Arab Spring**

Deciphering what the Houthis truly want from the political shakeup is a difficult task. The Houthi supporters operating out of Change Square in Sana’a, where much of the Arab Spring protests took place, have expressed positions largely in line with those of the revolutionary youth, notably also choosing to reject the GCC deal (Winter, “Yemen’s Huthi” 16). In addition, the Houthis since the Arab Spring have expanded their calls for regional autonomy and freedom of religious Zaydi education, putting them at odds with radical Sunni Salafis and AQAP (Wells). While they are increasingly linked to the Southern Movement, they



maintain that they are not secessionists, highlighting that they did not try to expel the remaining military forces and border guards surrounding their territory in 2011 when the protests started and Saleh's military control was weakened. The movement's leader, Abdul Malik al Houthi, sent unarmed Houthi rebels to Sana'a to contribute to the protests. The group has demonstrated its desire to become officially involved in Yemeni politics if the political progress is "democratic and free" (Wells). Al Houthi promised that his supporters would form a political party to join in the national reconciliation dialogue, though it remains to be seen if Houthi participation in the process will actually achieve a fulfilling conclusion.

Though the group boycotted the presidential election in February 2012, they maintained that voters would have their rights respected in Sa'dah. However, reports indicate that only one polling station was operational in the province, and intimidated voters who feared Houthi retribution were allowed to not dip their fingers in ink (Wells). In addition, the policies in Sa'dah are proving much less democratic and free than the rhetoric of the Houthi youth leaders in Change Square. Non-Zaydis are not allowed to live in the city of Dahyan in Sa'dah and women in the city must adhere to an early curfew (Wells). The Houthis have also started an online campaign to remove the U.S. ambassador from Yemen. Sa'dah's strict Zaydi fundamentalism and anti-American rhetoric provide noteworthy challenges to Houthi attempts to integrate into the Yemeni transitional democratic process.

The U.S. Ambassador to Yemen Gerald Feierstein suggested that Houthis are attempting to expand their influence across the North, leading to conflicts that have left hundreds dead and thousands displaced (Wells). As the central government turned its attention towards the protests in Sana'a, the influence of the state in Sa'dah declined significantly, and the Houthis were able to exert their control over the province (Winter, "Yemen's Houthi" 15). Once the group gained

responsibility for the administration of Sa'dah, it turned its attention to spreading its influence across other areas of northern Yemen. Following the March 18<sup>th</sup> massacre, Sa'dah's provincial governor fled to the capital. The power vacuum in Sa'dah was filled by Faris Mana'a, named the region's unofficial governor with the support of the Houthis (Winter, "Yemen's Huthi" 15). The Houthis were also able to settle conflicts with the local al Abdin tribe, decimating its leader Othman Mujalli and his followers once the tribe was no longer receiving government support. The group began fighting with Islah adherents, who had seized control in al Jawf province, over government and military facilities. A truce was eventually reached and in August 2011 a new governor, affiliated with Islah, was appointed in the province. The Houthis then turned their focus to a violent attempt to take over Hajjah province. The Houthis justify their expansion into these areas as defensive measures to protect from attacks by Saudi Arabia (Winter, "Yemen's Huthi" 17). Critics of the Houthis view these moves as attempts to recreate a Zaydi imamate in the northern provinces, but the Houthis continue to deny these claims.

In September 2012, the Houthis took advantage of the protests against an American-made video insulting Islam that rocked the Middle East in order to advance their message. Yemen experienced the worst of the hostility as at least five Yemenis were killed as Yemeni security forces drove back hundreds of protesters storming the American Embassy (Arrabyee, Cowell, and Gladstone). The Yemen protests were spurred by Muslim cleric Abdul Majid al Zindani and condemned by President Hadi. Houthi rebels demonstrated their strength in Sana'a during the riots, covering the capital in propaganda denouncing the U.S. (Hammond). Western diplomats suggested that the Houthis' extensive strategy to increase their political and social influence will be used for negative purposes, and their rhetoric is likely due to the influence of Iran on the group. The posters and slogans placed by the Houthis around Sana'a use Iranian rhetoric to

criticize the United States with such phrases as “the great Satan” and “global arrogance” (Hammond). President Hadi appears to echo this belief, maintaining that Iran is trying to lend aid to different Yemeni factions in order to increase its influence in the state. He claimed to have uncovered an Iranian spy ring in Sana’a, precipitating icy diplomatic relations with Tehran (Hammond).

In addition, on January 22, 2013, the Yemeni military, in conjunction with American forces, seized a sailboat in the country’s waters that contained a stockpile of explosives, weapons, and money (Shanker). American officials briefed on the operations claimed that Iran was responsible for attempting to smuggle the goods to Houthi insurgents. This event provides a concrete example of the escalation of a proxy war in Yemen, with American and Saudi support and intelligence aiding the central government and Iranian support influencing the Houthi insurgents. American military and intelligence officials believe that this shipment is part of a larger Iranian expansion of influence in Yemen, following the Arab Spring (Shanker).

### **Southern Movement After the Arab Spring**

Following the transition of presidential power, the Southern Movement leader, al Beidh, has criticized the united state led by Hadi, calling it a “collection of tribal, military, and security cliques fighting over [who will] hold power” that is “not capable of building a democratic, civil state” (Logan). According to al Beidh, the northerners “cannot live within a state” whereas the southerners “cannot live without one” (Logan). Al Beidh suggested that international and regional governments should back the southern secessionists because, with foreign support, they would be able to quell the threat from Al Qaeda more successfully than the government led by Saleh and now Hadi (Logan). He highlighted the efforts of southern forces in accordance with

regional militias to resist Ansar al Sharia. He noted that he was open to any aid from the region towards the southerners' cause, including support from Iran (Logan).

The southern secessionist group led by al Beidh has been ratcheting up their calls for an independent South in the lead-up to the National Dialogue Conference. Political sources suggested that the southern separatists might turn to violence if the National Dialogue Conference fails to fully recognize their grievances and instead endorses the moderate forces in the South, led by former Presidents Ali Nasser Mohammad and Haidar al Attas, supporters of the establishment of a federal state (Al-Ghobari). Recent events in southern Yemen suggest that the movement is, in fact, headed towards increasing violence, though in response to other governmental failures.

Preempting scheduled demonstrations to take place in Aden on February 21, 2013, the anniversary of Hadi's first year as president, government forces arrested Qassem Askar, head of a radical faction of the southern movement, and Sheikh Hussein bin Shuaib, a well-known southern cleric ("National Dialogue Loses"). These arrests greatly angered southerners, leading three of the members of the Technical Committee in charge of the National Dialogue Conference to quit in protest. The Technical Committee's Secretary General Ahmed Awadh Mubarak, therefore, suspended all of the group's meetings, placing the much-delayed National Dialogue Conference back on unsure ground ("National Dialogue Loses"). In addition, during the February 21st rally, eye witnesses attested to gunfire by the central security forces against the crowd of demonstrators, which killed four protestors ("National Dialogue Loses"). The repressive actions taken by Hadi's government in the lead-up to the National Dialogue Conference serve to make southern politicians increasingly skeptical of the possibility that the North will legitimately respond to the requests of opposition forces.

Following this skirmish and the resulting backlash from southerners, President Hadi traveled to Aden to address tensions in the region (“Southern Movement Declares”). Recent reports from the area suggest that the Southern Movement leaders responded to Hadi’s arrival by officially declaring the commencement of the movement’s armed struggle against the central government (“Southern Movement Declares”). Though many of the movement’s militants had agreed to participate in the National Dialogue Conference, the acts of continued repression by the central government spurred leaders, including al Beidh, to turn to armed conflict, believing that Sana’a was never actually planning to tackle southern grievances. Residents in Aden claim that violent skirmishes between militants and government forces have continued throughout the region following this declaration (“Southern Movement Declares”).

### **AQAP After the Arab Spring**

The events during the Arab Spring protests did have an adverse effect on the security situation in Yemen, especially counterterrorism efforts to subdue AQAP. As the political uprisings threatened President Saleh, many Yemeni troops abandoned their posts or were sent to the capital to support the president (Schmitt). Saleh focused his resources on protecting his regime rather than pursuing Al Qaeda (Zimmerman, “Recipe for Failure”). U.S.-led counterterrorism training halted as the U.S. removed about seventy-five Special Forces trainers and support personnel from Yemen during the turmoil (Schmitt). In addition, the events surrounding the Arab Spring allowed AQAP and its insurgent arm, Ansar al Sharia to extend their control in Yemen considerably (Zimmerman, “Insurgency in Yemen”). AQAP and Ansar al Sharia threatened Aden and raided Yemeni military supplies from munitions storehouses in Jaar. Ansar al Sharia moved into Jaar in March 2011 and then took control of Zinjibar in May.

The group took control over the Abyan and Shabwa governorates of southern Yemen in the late spring of 2011.

Having seized territories during the power vacuum created by the protests against Saleh, AQAP increased attacks after President Hadi's inauguration in February 2012 (Zimmerman, "Insurgency in Yemen"). In addition, Ansar al Sharia militants began fighting the Yemeni military in defense of their recently acquired territories. They were forced out in June 2012 by the Yemeni government and local militias, strengthened by American airstrikes. Although Ansar al Sharia imposed a rigid interpretation of sharia law on the governorates, they were also able, during their time in power, to provide services like electricity and education that the central government was no longer able to supply (Zelin). This demonstrated the weaknesses of the Yemeni government and bolstered the political strength of AQAP, suggesting that citizens in the more desperate regions of Yemen may be willing to welcome back the group.

President Hadi has pledged to collaborate with the Obama administration to continue counterterrorism efforts, and U.S. officials have stated that U.S. security aid to Yemen, which was suspended in 2011, will slowly begin again (Schmitt). According to State Department figures, the U.S. allocated \$53.8 million in security aid for Yemen in 2012. The Obama administration is now coordinating with Hadi to help the new government revamp its military to fight AQAP. The U.S. and Yemen intend to cooperate to kill or capture around two dozen of Al Qaeda's most wanted agents, with the United States launching a renewal of its drone strikes. The U.S., in conjunction with Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf allies, has pledged to continue training and supporting Yemeni forces.

## 6. Conclusion

On March 18, 2013, the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference began, with 565 Yemenis from each of the nation's various factions selected to participate in talks scheduled to continue for six months ("Yemen National"). However, the divisive factionalism present in Yemeni society persists in disrupting the dialogue. Many of the groups refuse to cooperate with anything resembling the former government. Furthermore, the importance of the representation of women and youth, brought on by the Arab Spring, brings a new layer of complication to the talks (Traboulsi). Many from these factions are either boycotting the conference altogether or attending in protest; not only because they feel that their factions are underrepresented, but also because they feel that they are being controlled by the old regime even as it claims to want to make peace ("Yemen National").

The backlash from these groups has been dramatic, but not as dramatic as the protest from the Southern Movement. Hard-line factions of the Southern Movement have boycotted the talks entirely, and most factions cooperated only after Hadi begged them for their participation and the UN threatened them with sanctions ("Yemen National"). On the day the conference began, a million protesters gathered in the city of Aden demanding that their cries for independence from the central government be heard (Traboulsi). Some carried banners reading, "[n]o dialogue under occupation. Independence is our choice" ("Yemen National"). With such a large percentage of the conference's intended participants boycotting for various reasons, there seems to be little likelihood that it will accomplish any meaningful or lasting change. If that is the case, there seems to be little hope for a future of Yemen that does not involve continued violence and unrest.

The area located within the current boundaries of Yemen has rarely been ruled by one central political entity. Saleh was able to exercise political control over unified Yemen since 1990 because of his ability to garner support from tribal elites, to control the military and upper level officials through strategic appointment of relatives and allies who received significant kickbacks from his oil kleptocracy, and to receive and maneuver international aid in ways that increased his own power. While it is possible that another strongman may be able to control Yemen for the next few decades in a similar manner, Hadi during his transitional period has not demonstrated the necessary skills, and no other leader with strong unifying potential has emerged. Hadi does not demonstrate the tribal connections that Saleh utilized and has experienced significant resistance in his attempts to restructure the military. In addition, his association with the former Saleh regime has diminished his public support, nullifying any gains he might have been able to achieve due to his southern heritage. The volatility of the populace following the Arab Spring overthrow of Saleh may prove incongruous with any attempts to continue administering the central government in a way similar to Saleh.

The National Dialogue Conference aims to produce a more sustainable and legitimate administration of Yemeni government. Yet this opening of the government formation to the will of many different factions seems unlikely to produce an outcome that will satisfy all. It remains doubtful that the Houthis, the Southern Movement, and AQAP will resolve their differences with the central government through peaceful democratic means and government power-sharing following the national dialogue conference. The Houthis have little political clout, diminished by the movement's involvement with Iran. The Southern Movement with its significant political history has the potential to increase its influence in the creation of a new government structure and achieve greater power and resource-sharing, yet the more radical factions of the Southern



Movement demand complete independence for the South and will reject any deals brokered with more moderate elements. Finally, the operations of AQAP agents necessarily restrict their ability to interact legitimately on the political scene. The recourses of these three groups, therefore, remain combative and violent in nature.

While it is possible that the groups could stand to gain from synchronized attacks on the central administration, there is little likelihood that the Houthis, the Southern Movement, and AQAP or some combination of these factions will seek to coordinate activities in opposition to the Yemeni government. AQAP has declared its direct opposition to the Houthis and launched attacks against Zaydis, and the Southern Movement has been quick to reject any ties to AQAP, aware that the southerners' potential to receive international support hinges on their rejection of the group. Though there have been some recent discussions amongst the Houthis and the Southern Movement leaders, the groups' current differing goals have not lent themselves to coordination of activities. If the Houthis were to agree to a separation of Yemen amongst north-south lines, which would grant the southerners the independent state they desire and could produce a northern state either dominated by Houthis or by a northern government that granted Houthis more autonomy within the new state, then the Houthis and Southern Movement could gain from increased cooperation. The Houthis, however, are constrained by their proximity to Saudi Arabia, limiting the possibility for an expansion of their goals. Saudi Arabia's current commitment to a unified Yemen dominated by a central government that suppresses the power of the Zaydi elements in northern Yemen serves to limit the abilities of the Houthis. In addition, Saudi Arabia has increased its interest in the Houthis' activities following the Arab Spring as the movement has militantly expanded its control over northern regions and seemingly received amplified support from Iran. Though Saudi Arabia's presence has not dampened the ideals and

rhetoric of the Houthis, this powerful neighbor has demonstrated its willingness and capability to restrict Houthi abilities through its 2009 crackdown.

Though these three groups' coordination is limited or nonexistent, the effects their actions have on each other remain significant, as illustrated by the consequences of AQAP operations on southerners. The Arab Spring protests allowed Ansar al Sharia to make significant gains in southern provinces. However, the group's quick removal by central government forces, backed by the United States, illustrates the weak ability of AQAP to maintain insurgency forces in Yemen and suggests that the group's focus will remain mainly on acts of terrorism. The Yemeni government in coordination with American support has had limited successes in the past in suppressing AQAP agents, and the United States and the Hadi administration have renewed their concentrated attacks on the group. However, the controversial drone strikes that have been the hallmark of U.S. counterterrorism policy in Yemen have served to foster resentment amongst Yemenis due to the destruction of local sites and the loss of civilian lives, particularly in southern Yemen. This resentment serves to advance the agendas and recruitment of both AQAP and the Southern Movement.

As Yemen moves forward the Southern Movement will likely emerge as the greatest threat to Yemeni unity and governance. The Houthis and AQAP are constrained by the opposition of dominant foreign actors, namely Saudi Arabia and Western powers. The Southern Movement, however, has a long history of political separation from a northern state, which serves to bolster the legitimacy of their calls for independence. As Saudi Arabia and the United States remain committed to Yemeni unification mainly due to their desire for a central Yemeni government strong enough to suppress the Houthis and AQAP, there is some opportunity for the Southern Movement to gain international support for separation by demonstrating an ability to

effectively suppress AQAP. More likely, however, the Southern Movement's continued violence against the Western and Saudi Arabian backed central regime will sour international opinion against their cause. Southern forces will likely continue a long insurgency against the government, potentially leading to a full-blown civil war. This constant state of turmoil will allow for the advancement of Houthi and AQAP elements as the central government devotes its resources to suppressing the South. While a civil war might lead to a hard-won southern victory, any attempts to demarcate the boundary of an independent southern state will likely cause more political fighting and military skirmishes. In addition, the strengthened positions of the Houthis and AQAP will continue to present huge challenges to a divided Yemen. More likely, a future civil war will result in another victory for the central government, though perhaps it will take longer than the regime's civil war suppression in 1994, as the government remains in a weakened and uncertain state. These constant cycles of violence enhanced by the presence of multiple security concerns seem likely to keep Yemen in its divided and weak state.

The central government will remain unable to administer its political will, the economic conditions will worsen, and the state will ultimately be forced to the brink of total collapse and dissolution. While it is possible that Saudi Arabia and the United States will still manage to prop up a central Yemeni regime, they have not demonstrated a strong commitment to Yemeni political overhaul and development and will be unlikely to devote their own national resources to saving the Yemeni government. This will ring especially true if Saudi Arabia and the United States prove able to suppress the Yemen factions that directly affect them without the help of a Yemeni government. While their actions have been coordinated in the past with the Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have demonstrated some ability to deal with Yemeni security concerns through more independent means, Saudi Arabia through border restrictions and

airstrikes on Houthis and the U.S. through drone strikes on AQAP agents. The inability of the Yemeni government to respond effectively to its security concerns and the unlikelihood that the National Dialogue Conference will produce meaningful changes that will be able to satisfy all of the Yemeni factions combine to suggest the utter failure of the Yemeni state. The conflicts in Yemen will continue to be drawn out, keeping the region both politically and economically marginalized.

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