YEMEN: COMPARATIVE INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

by

Ryan Johnson

March 2015

Thesis Advisor: Anne Marie Baylouny
Second Reader: Thomas H. Johnson

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Why have Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)? This paper finds that the military’s poor counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies, the international effort to combat AQAP, the Huthi’s ability to recruit and mobilize large numbers of followers, and the Huthi leadership’s pragmatic alliances gave the Huthis the advantage over AQAP and the Republic of Yemen.

Yemen faces multiple security problems. Foremost, the country faces threats from various groups including the Huthi Movement, AQAP, Hirak, and tribal elements with the Huthis recently capturing Sanaa. The country’s oil supply will soon to run out, which is the main source of government revenue. The country is still in the process of transition required by the Gulf Cooperation Council-negotiated agreement after the Arab Spring. These problems are exacerbated by corruption, social, and economic problems. Finally, state failure remains a real possibility, with the various groups battling for control. In this case, Yemen could become the next Somalia. The worse scenario for the U.S. would for Yemen to become a safe haven for a group intent on attacking U.S. citizens and interests.

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YEMEN: COMPARATIVE INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

Ryan Johnson
Civilian, Department of Defense
B.A., California State University, Northridge, 2004

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March 2015

Author: Ryan Johnson

Approved by: Anne Marie Baylouny
Thesis Advisor

Thomas H. Johnson
Second Reader

Mohammad Hafez
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs
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Why have Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)? This paper finds that the military’s poor counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies, the international effort to combat AQAP, the Huthi’s ability to recruit and mobilize large numbers of followers, and the Huthi leadership’s pragmatic alliances gave the Huthis the advantage over AQAP and the Republic of Yemen.

Yemen faces multiple security problems. Foremost, the country faces threats from various groups including the Huthi Movement, AQAP, Hirak, and tribal elements with the Huthis recently capturing Sanaa. The country’s oil supply will soon to run out, which is the main source of government revenue. The country is still in the process of transition required by the Gulf Cooperation Council-negotiated agreement after the Arab Spring. These problems are exacerbated by corruption, social, and economic problems. Finally, state failure remains a real possibility, with the various groups battling for control. In this case, Yemen could become the next Somalia. The worse scenario for the U.S. would for Yemen to become a safe haven for a group intent on attacking U.S. citizens and interests.
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<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>anti-aircraft artillery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAIA</td>
<td>Aden Abyan Islamic Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAY</td>
<td>Ansar Allah (Yemen), also known as the Huthis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APC</td>
<td>armored personnel carrier</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQ</td>
<td>Al Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQAP</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<td>AQAP-SA</td>
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<td>AQAP-SBY</td>
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<td>Al Qaeda in Iraq</td>
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<td>Al Qaeda in the Land of Yemen</td>
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<td>AQY</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in Yemen</td>
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<td>AQSAP</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in the Southern Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQC</td>
<td>Al Qaeda Core</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASY</td>
<td>Ansar al-Shariah (Yemen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BY</td>
<td>Believing Youth (Shabab al-Mumin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>Cable News Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>COIN</td>
<td>counterinsurgency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>(U.S.) Congressional Research Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSF</td>
<td>Central Security Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSF-CTU</td>
<td>Central Security Forcers-Counter Terrorism Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>counterterrorism</td>
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<td>CTC</td>
<td>Combating Terrorism Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council (colloquial), Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (official)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPC</td>
<td>General People’s Congress</td>
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<td>GWOT</td>
<td>global war on terror</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMMWV</td>
<td>high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>improvised explosive device</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFV</td>
<td>infantry fighting vehicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>IJY</td>
<td>Islamic Jihad in Yemen</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCET</td>
<td>joint combined exchanged training</td>
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<tr>
<td>KA-SOTC</td>
<td>King Abdullah II-Special Operations Training Center – Special Forces Training Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Military Intelligence (Yemeni organization)</td>
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<td>NDC</td>
<td>National Dialog Conference</td>
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<td>NSB</td>
<td>National Security Bureau</td>
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<td>PDRY</td>
<td>People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (former South Yemen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSO</td>
<td>Political Security Organization</td>
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<td>RG</td>
<td>Republican Guard</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROY</td>
<td>Republic of Yemen</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>rocket propelled grenade</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSAF</td>
<td>Royal Saudi Air Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSLF</td>
<td>Royal Saudi Land Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSNF</td>
<td>Royal Saudi Naval Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>social movement theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOF</td>
<td>special operation forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAV</td>
<td>unmanned aerial vehicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>YAR</td>
<td>Yemen Arab Republic (former North Yemen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>YPC</td>
<td>Yemen Polling Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>YSOF</td>
<td>Yemeni Special Operation Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>YSP</td>
<td>Yemeni Socialist Party</td>
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I. INTRODUCTION

“Ruling Yemen is like dancing on the heads of snakes.”

— (former) President Ali Abdullah Saleh

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The Republic of Yemen’s (ROY) national integrity and legitimacy are threatened by the loss of control of territory to armed insurgent groups. While multiple groups vie for control on the ground, the Huthi movement and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) are the most challenging groups for the government and have captured swathes of territory. The Huthi movement, having fought the government since 2004, has been more successful than AQAP in gaining land from government or tribal control. AQAP’s control ebbs and flows, whereas the Huthis have gained ground since fighting began. This recently ended with the Huthis signing a power sharing agreement with the government.

Why has Yemen’s counterinsurgency/counterterrorism (COIN/CT) polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to AQAP? The strengths and weakness of the Huthi movement, AQAP, and the Yemeni government must be examined, in addition to COIN/CT polices to answer the question. The nature of the Huthis and AQAP must also be considered. The Huthis are part of the domestic Yemeni community. Supporters believe in an “imagined community” of northern Yemenis with a thousand-year Zaydi and Yemeni history that practiced religious tolerance towards Shafi’i Sunnis in Yemen. AQAP on the other hand, believe in an international pan-

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Islamic Caliphate, want the removal of people it considers non-Muslims (including Shia) from the Arabian Peninsula, and want strict shariah law.\(^5\)

This thesis will use a comparative study of insurgency and COIN using mostly qualitative analysis of four variables. First, the background and development of the Huthis and AQAP will examined using social movement theory to understand why the Huthis have been more successful in recruiting and mobilizing members. Second, the use and effectiveness of COIN and CT\(^6\) policies by the ROY government will be examined. The third variable examined will be the effectiveness the Huthis’ and AQAP’s insurgencies to include factors such as military strategies and tactics, organization and resources, and recruitment. Finally, this paper examines the role of outside support for Huthi movement, AQAP and ROY, and how that support influences those groups.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH QUESTION

Yemen faces multiple security problems. Foremost, the country faces threats from various groups including the Huthi movement, AQAP, Hirak\(^7\) and tribal elements. The country’s oil supply will soon to run out, which is the main source of government revenue. The country is still in the process of transition required by the Gulf Cooperation Council-negotiated agreement after the Arab Spring. The Yemeni government faces other difficult “problems, a combination of economic and social factors exacerbated by perceptions of corruption.”\(^8\) Finally, state failure remains a real possibility, with the Huthis, AQAP, Hirak, and various tribes, clans and tribal confederations battling for control. In this case, with Yemen could become the next Somalia. The worse scenario for

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\(^6\) The Yemeni government calls both the Huthi and AQAP groups terrorists, although both groups use insurgent tactics. AQAP also engages in terrorism.

\(^7\) Hirak—also known as the Southern Movement, South Yemen Movement, or the Southern Secessionist Movement.

the U.S. would be a safe haven for a group intent on attacking U.S. citizens and interests.\(^9\) At the time of writing, the Huthis have signed a power sharing agreement with the government, but it has not been implemented yet.\(^{10}\)

A detailed study of Yemen’s two insurgencies would fill a gap in the comparative COIN literature. A majority of comparative studies of insurgency and counterinsurgency have been written on colonial insurgencies, national liberation wars, or war-time occupations of countries, rather than an underdeveloped country facing an internal struggle. Additionally, Yemen provides a unique opportunity to do a comparative study of a country facing two major, yet different insurgencies at the same time. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the ROY, the Huthis, and AQAP could provide insight into solving the conflicts and similar insurgencies waged in underdeveloped countries.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The comparative study of Yemen’s two insurgencies required for this thesis will cover a range of topics, so a broad range of literature was consulted for the literature review. The topics include the recent history of Yemen, studies of counterinsurgency, studies of insurgency, studies of counterterrorism, the Huthi movement, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and social movement theory.

A history of Yemen mainly dating back to the 1980s is needed to understand the current conflicts between the Yemeni government and the Huthis and al Qaeda. Victoria Clark’s *Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes* provides an overview of history from the late Ottoman period to pre-Arab Spring Yemen. Clark contends that the country is run by “dancing on the heads of snakes,” or working with various tribes, clans, confederations, and militias by “mediating, balancing, reconciling, co-opting, rewarding and forgiving.”\(^{11}\) This patronage network is dependent on dwindling oil revenue.\(^{12}\) The Congressional Research Service (CRS) provides further details of the current governing

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\(^9\) Ibid., 1–4.

\(^{10}\) AFP, “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government.”

\(^{11}\) Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 279.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 279.
environment with the rugged terrain, tribal society, slow socioeconomic development and corruption making it difficult to control territory.\textsuperscript{13} The roots of both the AQAP and Huthis were found in several sources. W. Andrew Terrill of Strategic Studies Institute wrote two small books on Yemen. Terrill notes that AQAP, like the original “al Qaeda central,” (AQC) had its roots in the returning Afghani-Arabs from the Afghan War against the USSR.\textsuperscript{14} In the 1990s, al Qaeda in Yemen was the same organization at the AQC.\textsuperscript{15} Lucas Winter, writing about the Huthi movement, also known as the Shabab al-Mumin, the Believing Youth (BY), or Ansar Allah, finds that the group originated as a Zaydi revivalist and Islamist\textsuperscript{16} group in the 1990s in northern Yemen.\textsuperscript{17} After increasing repression from the ROY the movement turned violent in 2004.\textsuperscript{18}

Knowledge of counterinsurgency (COIN) theory will help with the required qualitative analysis of the two ongoing COIN operations in Yemen. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian’s \textit{Counterinsurgency on Modern Warfare}, a comparative study of 14 wars, finds that the most conflicts are solved with political compromise rather than complete military victory. According to Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, “tactical brilliance at counterinsurgency translates into very little when political and social context is ignored or misinterpreted.”\textsuperscript{19} Brutal military tactics, and bad military leadership, are also cited as failures.\textsuperscript{20} On the other hand, Douglas Porch claims COIN operations are descended from colonial wars and violate the principles of Clausewitz. A conventional


\textsuperscript{14} W. Andrew Terrill, \textit{The Struggle for Yemen and the Challenge of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula} (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 2013) 21–24.


\textsuperscript{16} Islamism—a type of activism that uses Islam; can be political or apolitical, violent or nonviolent. International Crisis Group, “Understanding Islamism,” \textit{Middle East/North Africa Report} 37 (2005), i.

\textsuperscript{17} This report uses \textit{Huthi} for the militia and Believing Youth for the study group.

\textsuperscript{18} Lucas Winter, “Yemen’s Huthi Movement in the Wake of the Arab Spring,” \textit{Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel} 5, no. 8 (August 2012), 13–14.


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 16–17.
war against insurgencies should be waged. Samuel B. Griffith II boils down the “anti-guerilla” tactics to “location, isolation, and eradication.” Yemen struggles with all three. Max Boot’s historical comparative study of 5000 years of guerilla warfare finds guerillas usually lose. He also finds public opinion the most important development in guerilla warfare in the last 200 years, and conventional tactics do not work against unconventional warfare. Lastly, Jane Novak published a short comparative study of Yemen’s current conflicts including the Hirak movement, which is not violent. Novak concludes that the insurgencies are the result of the “criminalization of the state,” arguing that only democratization and rule of law will stop the Huthi, Hirak, and Arab Spring protestors.

Related to counterinsurgency is insurgency theory. Mao Tse-tung in his classic *On Guerrilla Warfare*, identifies several fundamental steps in achieving military and political victory: “(1) Arousing and organizing the people; (2) achieving internal unification politically; (3) establishing bases; (4) equipping forces; (5) recovering national strength; (6) destroying enemy’s national strength; [and] (7) regaining lost territories.” Both the Huthis and AQAP have made efforts in steps 1–4 and 7. Another classic study of insurgency strategy is Robert Taber’s *War of Flea*. In a comparative study of communist revolutions in China, Cuba, and Vietnam Taber finds popular support, protracted conflict, politics, and use of terrain, as the most important facets in successful insurgency.

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24 Jane Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency in Yemen,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 14, no. 3 (September 2010), 22.


The use of both COIN and CT, and the general overlap of strategies, by ROY give reason to also study CT strategy. Audrey Kurth Cronin’s *How Terrorism Ends* gauged the effectiveness of CT policies by statistical analysis of 457 terrorist organizations from 1968–2006. She finds six ways—usually in some sort of combination—that terrorism ends. Cronin states the methods are: “decapitation, catching or killing the leader; negotiations, transition toward a legitimate political process; success, achieving the objective; failure, imploding, provoking a backlash or becoming marginalized; repression, crushing terrorism with force; and reorientation, transitioning to another modus operandi.” She finds that no group was defeated solely through repression. Cronin also dedicates a chapter to al Qaeda where she prescribes negotiations with regional affiliates while exploiting its mistakes to weaken its support base. Daniel Byman’s *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight a Global Jihad*, identifies “five fronts” against jihadists. While U.S. centric, the fronts could be modified to a Yemeni perspective. Byman’s fronts are: the military to fight insurgent groups and training with allied governments; the war of ideas, using propaganda to “go negative” on insurgent groups; intelligence, working with locals; homeland defense (law enforcement); and finally democratic reform. Both Byman and Cronin suggest political routes will ultimately be more successful by stripping the base of supporters from the groups. A statistical study by Christopher Hewitt entitled *The Effectiveness of Anti-Terrorist Polices* is interesting, but due to the inconsistencies in body counts and incident reporting, the method would be impossible to use in Yemen.

The literature on the Huthi movement is characterized by the small number of high quality work. Foremost is the RAND’s *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon*, which could be described as a bible on the Huthis. The work covers nearly every aspect of the group and conflict, including the sociocultural ecology

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28 Ibid., vi–ix, 141,195.


of the conflict, weapons and tactics, organization, phases of the war, and government tactics.\textsuperscript{31} Lucas Winter wrote several of articles, detailing the Huthi-Government conflict that suggests that government policies more often than not escalate the situation.\textsuperscript{32}

The literature on AQAP is plentiful. While there is no definitive tome like the RAND study on the Huthis there are several good studies. First are W. Andrew Terrill’s aforementioned books for the Strategic Studies Institute. Importantly, Terrill tracks AQAP’s transition from terrorism to full blown insurgency in 2010.\textsuperscript{33} Gregory Johnsen’s \textit{The Last Refuge} tracts the historical rise of AQAP starting with the Yemenis who traveled to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets, to the first insurgents who ruled parts of southern Yemen.\textsuperscript{34} Former Ambassador Edmund J. Hull gives the inside story of American and Yemeni policies on AQAP in \textit{High-Valued Target: Countering Al Qaeda in Yemen}.\textsuperscript{35}

Chapter two will examines the groups using social movement theory (SMT) to reveal internal dynamics of AQAP and the Huthis and how the groups mobilize its support. A general understanding of SMT is required to analyze the three fundamental aspects of a social movement: political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures and cultural framing. The concepts are best explained in the excellent anthology by Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald.\textsuperscript{36} A comparative study of SMT, edited by Quintan Wiktorowicz, of Islamist groups reveals the unique cultural features of Islam such as Friday prayers, study circles, terrorist groups, and nongovernment organizations

\textsuperscript{31} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}.


\textsuperscript{33} Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 43–50; Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 35.


that makes “a strong claim that Islamic activism is one of the most common examples of activism in the world.”

D. THESIS

Why have Yemen’s COIN/CT polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to AQAP? This study finds the military’s poor counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies, the international effort to combat AQAP, the Huthis’ ability to recruit and mobilize large numbers of followers, and the Huthi leadership’s pragmatic alliances gave the Huthis the advantage over AQAP and the Republican of Yemen. Those are not the only factors, but they are the most important ones in explaining why the Huthis are more successful than the AQAP in capturing, controlling, and governing territory. With four variables there are many lesser reasons, which will be explained in detail in the following chapters.

At the commencement of this study, the superiority of Huthi insurgency was in question. At the time, the Huthis controlled Sadah governorate but at an extremely high cost. The poor, land locked governorate Sadah had tens of thousands killed, thousands of structures and farms destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people driven from their homes as internally displaced persons, and a decade of war. That changed in September and October when a blitzkrieg offense captured most of north-west Yemen. The changes meant additional research and re-writes for the author, but it also meant that the Huthis clearly had a more effective insurgency.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis will analyze the effectiveness Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (COIN/CT) policies by conducting a comparative study of ROY, the Huthis, and AQAP using a fusion of several common analytical methods. A comparative case study of two insurgencies fought in the same country with differing results will allow for an interesting and rigorous examination of Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies. While Yemen calls both groups “terrorists,” and uses both

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COIN/CT tactics against the Huthis and AQAP, both organizations operate as insurgencies groups and I will treat them as such. AQAP does have a record of striking U.S. interests aboard but I will not focus on international terrorism. In sum, I will examine Yemeni COIN/CT polices and Huthi and AQAP insurgency strategies and tactics.

Since the thesis is judging ROY’s policies based on the success the Huthis and AQAP, multiple variables must be considered. Since there is no agreed upon standard to measure effectiveness of policies, a Yemen specific model will be used that relies heavily on qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis of the thesis will examine both the governments and the groups. The basic measure of success in this study will be the control of territory for all three groups. The development of the Huthis and AQAP organizations themselves will be evaluated using the historical record and social movement theory. Additional factors considered for the insurgent groups include ideologies, insurgency strategies and tactics, recruitment and popular support. Aspects of Yemen’s COIN/CT policies analyzed include strategy, legislation, organizational features and resources, implementation of policies and public support.

This thesis will use principally secondary sources, books, and articles. Primary sources in the form of available data, legislation, government documents, published surveys and media reports will also be used. The information cutoff date is October 2014. The main analysis will run for roughly a decade starting in 2003.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is comprised of six chapters, including three that will focus on the four variables identified earlier. The first chapter is an introduction and updated version of the thesis proposal. The second chapter provides background information on the origins of the Huthis and AQAP, and uses SMT to understand why the Huthis have been more successful in recruiting and mobilizing members. The third chapter examines the effectiveness of Yemeni government’s COIN/CT policies by analyzing several factors: the strategy and legislation; the organization, resources and measures, and the public support for the government. The next chapter delves into the effectiveness of AQAP and
the Huthis’ insurgency strategies, a concise history of the development of the conflicts with the government, the organization and resources, public and outside support for the insurgent groups, and territorial gains and losses. Chapter V outlines Yemen’s international support for its COIN/CT policies. The final chapter will discuss and analyze the finding of the previous chapters and summarize the evidence backing the thesis.
II. BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSURGENTS IN YEMEN

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter uses social movement theory (SMT) to analyze the Huthis and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s (AQAP) ability to mobilize individuals to support its cause. SMT “focuses on groups as the proper unit of analysis in explaining collective action.” Three SMT concepts are used to analyze the Huthis and AQAP, political opportunity structure, mobilizing structure, and cultural framing. First, David S. Mayer and Debra C. Minkoff define political opportunity structure as, “exogenous factors [that] enhance or inhibit prospects for mobilization, for particular sorts of claims to be advanced rather than others, for particular strategies of influence to be exercised, and for movements to affect mainstream institutional politics and policy.” Related to opportunity is threat, which Paul D. Almeida “denotes [as] the probability that existing benefits will be taken away or new harms inflicted if challenging groups fail to act collectively.” Second, are mobilizing structures which according to Glenn E. Robinson, “vary from the formal to the informal to the illegal. It is through these structures that movements recruit like-minded individuals, socialize new participants, overcome the free rider problem, and mobilize contention.” For high-risk activism Doug McAdams found that “participants were distinguished…on the basis of their (a) greater number of organizational affiliations, (b) higher levels of prior…activity, and (c) stronger and more extensive ties to other participants.” Third, are cultural frames that Mayer N. Zald defines as an “attempt to define the issues, invent metaphors, attribute blame [and] define

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tactics.”43 A social movement needs political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and frames in order to recruit and mobilize followers. Frames are the final element of the social movement tripartite. In order to become involved in a social movement there must be a grievance, and the belief that the social movement can remedy the problem. Social movements convince people they are part of the solution, and can remedy the grievance through a framing process.44 They tell people how to look at a problem that their grievances are due to a particular issue, and who is responsible. High-risk activism that includes violence requires additional justification and inspiration.45

B. HUTHI MOVEMENT

“Allahu Akbar! Death to America! Death of Israel! Curse the Jews! Victory for Islam!”

—Huthi slogan.46

The Huthi movement, also known as the Shabab al-Mumin (Believing Youth) (BY), or Ansar Allah, originated as a Zaydi revivalist and Islamist47 group in the early 1990s in northern Yemen. After increasing repression from the Republic of Yemen (ROY) government the movement turned violent in 2004.48 Why did the Zaydi revivalist movement transition to a powerful insurgent group? To understand why, this section uses SMT to better understand the Huthi movement. First, I will explain how the BY/Huthis used political opportunity structures to change from a “community,” to a peaceful Islamist group, into a violent insurgency. Next, I will explain how the Huthis’ mobilizing

44 McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, “Introduction,” 5.
46 Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 15.
47 Shia Islamism is characterized strongly by communalism, defense of community from the state and non-state actors, and leadership by religious figures. International Crisis Group, “Understanding Islamism,” 18–21.
structures helped the movement gain a large following. Finally, I will examine some of
the cultural framing utilized by the Huthis.

1. Origins and Ideologies

The history of northern Yemen and Zaydi Islam provide the foundation of the
Huthi movement. Sadah is the religious center of the Zaydi Shia world. The Zaydi
Imamate was first established in the Sadah region in 893 by Imam Yahya bin al-Husayn,
a sayyid,\textsuperscript{49} and member of the Hashemite\textsuperscript{50} clan. The Zaydi Imamate lasted in one form
or another for over 1000 years until overthrown in 1962 by Republican forces. A civil
war ensued, with Royalist forces backed by Saudi Arabia fighting until defeated in 1970.
Starting soon thereafter, as the popularity of the hierarchical Zaydi Islam declined, the
popularity of the egalitarian Salafi Sunni sect grew.\textsuperscript{51}

Zaydism and the Yemeni Imamate practices contain unique tenets that influence
the BY and Huthi movement. First, the 1000-year Yemeni Imamate practiced religious
tolerance towards Sunnis in Yemen, which constitute a majority of the population
(practicing the Shafi‘i school of jurisprudence). This tolerance is rooted in the belief,
which contrasts with other Shia sects, that the first three Sunni Caliphs were wrong, but
not evil or sinful. Additionally, Zaydi worship is nearly identical to Sunni worship and
Zaydis are permitted to pray in Sunni mosques.\textsuperscript{52} Zaydis, despite siding with Ali and his
descendants, claim to be a Sunni school of jurisprudence, and not a Shia sect.\textsuperscript{53} Second,
Zaydis also believe that an Imam\textsuperscript{54} should lead of the state. The Imam can be any sayyid
who is a Zaydi scholar, a warrior, and a champion of justice. He must also publicly claim

\textsuperscript{49} Sayyid (sada \textit{pl.})—Honorable title for a descendant of Muhammad through Ali; member of Zaydi

\textsuperscript{50} Hashemite—member of the Banu Hashim, a subclan of the larger Quraysh tribe, the tribe of the

\textsuperscript{51} Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 105–6.

\textsuperscript{52} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 64–6.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 67.

\textsuperscript{54} Imam—(in Zaydism) legitimate heir of political rule. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, xx.
the role of Imam.\textsuperscript{55} Third, Zaydism teaches that is the duty of a Muslim to rebel against an unjust ruler. This contrasts with the official Saudi Salafist “political quietism” and loyalty under a corrupt and unjust ruler.\textsuperscript{56} It is easy to understand why a government would promote Saudi-style Salafism over Zaydism.

2. \textbf{Political Opportunity Structures}

The Huthis seized several political opportunities and responded to several threats that aided in its rise. The significant political opportunities and threats include the decline of Zaydi influence, political liberalization following the union of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), government overreaction to the movement, military success of the Huthis in the Sadah Wars, and finally the Arab Spring.

The roots of the Huthi movement date to the 1980s, when the “Zaydi community” formed under internal and external threats. In the 1970s and 1980s, the practice of Zaydism declined and was endangered by the expansion by Salafism.\textsuperscript{57} Zaydi studies had declined, with mostly older generations studying the traditional northern Yemeni form of Islam by the 1980s.\textsuperscript{58} At the same time, adherents viewed the sect in crisis with the rise of Salafist proselytizing from Saudi Arabia. The Salafists gained political power at the expense of the Zaydis and in some cases took over Zaydi mosques.\textsuperscript{59} Concurrently, tribalism declined in importance as regional trade and boarding schools helped foster an “imagined community” of northern Yemenis and Zaydis.\textsuperscript{60} By the end of the 1980s, the Zaydis felt their sect, with over 1000 years of practice, was under siege.


\textsuperscript{56} Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 105–6.

\textsuperscript{57} Yemen is about 65% Shafi’i (Sunni) and 35% Zaydi (Shia). U.S. Department of State, \textit{2012 Yemen International Religious Freedom Report} (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2012), 2.

\textsuperscript{58} Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.

\textsuperscript{59} Shelagh Weir, “A Clash of Fundamentalisms: Wahhabism in Yemen,” \textit{Middle East Report} no. 204 (Summer 1997), 22, \url{http://www.merip.org/mer/mer204/clash-fundamentalisms?ip_login_no_cache=7b1b39cbb2fd4e68d47f3b357a77aa2}.

\textsuperscript{60} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 5.
The first opportunity utilized by the Zaydi community came in 1990, with the union of the two Yemens and the political liberalization that followed it.\textsuperscript{61} This opportunity is also related to the emergence of the social movement’s mobilizing structures explained in greater detail in the next section. Political liberalization gave prominent Zaydis space to organize and mobilize. In 1990, a political party using the name Hizb al-Haqq was founded that espoused Zaydi Islamist views and desired to reassert northern Yemen’s Zaydi identity.\textsuperscript{62} A youth Zaydi revivalist network was started in 1991, called the Believing Youth Club. By the end of the 1990s, the club had 18,000 students in Sadah alone.\textsuperscript{63} The BY also administrated social welfare programs, which gave the BY leadership credibility in the Zaydi community.\textsuperscript{64}

The next exogenous factor that radically changed the movement was the threat from the government out of Sanaa. Angered by the Yemeni-American “global war on terror” alliance and the Iraq War, the BY engaged in anti-government protests and contentious collective action.\textsuperscript{65} During a 2003 anti-Iraq war protest outside the American Embassy, Huthi protestors started chanting the Huthi slogan with “Death to America!” Yemeni security then clashed with protestors.\textsuperscript{66} The Huthis handed out pamphlets calling President Saleh an American stooge. Supporters refused to pay taxes, cut the Sanaa-to-Sadah Highway, and seized government buildings in Sadah. The government sent Brigadier General Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar and his units into Sadah to restore order and arrest BY leader Husayn al-Huthi. Yemeni forces killed him in 2004 during an arrest attempt ending the first round of fighting.\textsuperscript{67}

Government repression went in full force in 2005. Security forces arrested hundreds of BY members, replaced Zaydi preachers with Salafists across Yemen, banned

\begin{itemize}
  \item Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14.
  \item Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.
  \item Clark, \textit{Dancing on the Heads}, 249.
  \item Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 6–7.
  \item Clark, \textit{Dancing on the Heads}, 249.
  \item Clark, \textit{Dancing on the Heads}, 159, 249.
\end{itemize}
the main Zaydi holiday al-Ghadir, and confiscated all Zaydi related texts found.68 Many of the Riyadh-funded Salafist preachers openly called Zaydis heretics and apostates in the former Zaydi mosques.69 Approximately 35 percent of Yemen’s population, or nine million citizens, found their religion essentially outlawed by the state.70 The Yemeni government eventually backtracked, and the religious practices were re-legalized in 2008.71 While the state may have thought these policies would crush the blossoming insurgency, it failed to take into account that one of the key tenants of Zaydism is according to Winter, is the “willingness to rise up against injustice and oppression.”72

Badr al-Din al-Huthi’s son, Adb al-Malik al-Huthi (who now leads), took the opportunity to rise up against the unjust Yemeni government, leading an armed faction of BY—the Huthis. He is said to command 7000 fighters.73 The Huthis and government continued to fight off and on from 2005 until 2008, with four rounds of fighting taking place during this time frame.74 The sixth and fiercest round started in November 2009. The Huthi fighters held off the combined might of the Yemeni military and Saudi Arabian forces that opened a second front in the north. The Huthis, who started as a grass roots Qur’anic study group, turned into a fighting force that is viewed as invincible on the Arabian Peninsula.75

The Arab Spring provided an opportunity that the Huthis could not pass up. After government snipers shot into crowds of unarmed protestors in the capital, the government went into chaos with numerous defections. With President Saleh’s attention in the capital, Huthi forces were able to seize full control over most of Sadah governorate and bordering areas. The Huthis also took the opportunity to increase its pan-Yemen legitimacy by creating a political alliance with the Revolutionary Youth (student protestors) and the

68 Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 15; Clark, Dancing on the Heads, 249.
69 Terrill, Conflict in Yemens, 17.
71 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 66.
Hirak. The Huthis also created a front political party, Hizab al-Umma. These moves during the Arab Spring gave the Huthis a shadow government in Sadah, a national pan-Yemeni informal opposition bloc, and a formal political party.\textsuperscript{76}

At the start of the Arab Spring the Huthis were forced to articulate a clear political platform.\textsuperscript{77} The Arab Spring saw the political goals of three groups overlap, the Huthis, the Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth.\textsuperscript{78} The Arab Spring recruits to the Huthi cause were young, urban, and educated. This urban Huthi base allied with the Hirak and Revolutionary Youth in opposition to the CCG transition plan.\textsuperscript{79} This new liberal base advocated “Huthi positions” at the UN-backed National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which also gave them a legitimate national and international voice.\textsuperscript{80} These Huthis wanted a federal democratic government with check and balances, political pluralism, and freedom of religion. Yemeni critics charge that the Huthis are repressive in areas under its control and do not live up to its so-called ideals.\textsuperscript{81}

The most recent opportunity arose in 2014. Clashes arose this time between the Huthis and AQAP and an anti-Huthi alliance comprised of allied bloc of Salafists, the Ahmar family,\textsuperscript{82} Islah,\textsuperscript{83} and Brig. General Ali Muhsin and his 301 Military Brigade. The Huthis found new allies with former President Saleh and his General People’s Congress (GPC). The Huthis and its allies defeated its enemies and gained popular support through implementing security, and law and order in areas under its control.\textsuperscript{84} As fighting raged to the north of the capital, the Huthis mobilized supports to protest the removal of fuel

\textsuperscript{76} Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14–6.
\textsuperscript{78} Winter. “Ansar of Yemen.”
\textsuperscript{79} Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 16.
\textsuperscript{80} The NDC is a representative committee, with multiple stakeholders, tasked with finding solutions to the government problems and writing a new constitution. \url{http://www.ndc.ye/default.aspx}; International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” 2.
\textsuperscript{81} International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” i.
\textsuperscript{82} The Amhars are Heads of the Hasid tribal confederation.
\textsuperscript{83} Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood.
subsidies and called for the government to resign. Brig. General Ali Muhsin’s soldiers and armed supporters of the Islah clashed with protestors. Huthi fighters responded to attack, defeating both parties after large numbers of security forces switched sides and fought with the Huthis against the Ali Muhsin-Islah alliance. The Huthis forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement to make the Huthis part of the government. The Huthis included the Hirak in the spoils, as it is also a signatory.

3. Mobilizing Structures

How did the BY and later the Huthi movement mobilize support for its cause? To help answer that question I will examine another SMT variable, mobilizing structures. The main BY mobilizing structures are religious education, youth study groups, and holiday gatherings.

The initial informal mobilizing structure was the increased teaching of Zaydi doctrine, which increased the Zaydi collective identity amongst the youth. The 1990s saw a broadening of the base of students. Previously dominated by Hashemites and other sada,87 teaching was opened to non-sada. Texts and pamphlets were also distributed to a newly literate youth along with audiocassettes for the masses. Zaydi primary schools and “scientific schools” were established by wealthy Zaydis and the al-Haqq party. Leaders of the movement established a new formal school for teaching the new ulama.88 Pro-Zaydi teachers used Zaydi materials in state schools. The increased focus on Zaydi

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88 *Ulama* (*'alim* sing.) – religious scholars. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, xxi
education helped foster a sense of Zaydi community and collective identity among the youth. 89

In addition to mass religious education efforts, a study group was founded by the al-Huthi family, the Believing Youth. Initially the apolitical group was more of an after school club, with studies, sports, and field trips. The BY innovated, departing radically from northern Yemeni (and Zaydi) tradition by practicing equality between Hashemites, sada, merchants, nontribal townsfolk, and tribal students. 90 This helped draw youth that would otherwise be attracted to the Salafists for their relatively egalitarian ideology. By the mid-1990s, the BY had established 50 clubs across Sadah and other governorates. 91 As the BY gained popularity, it started a summer camp, that at its height served 15,000 youth. Much like the after school club, the camp featured religious study with sports and drama classes. 92

The expanded Zaydi schools and BY after school clubs and camps were noted for the modern mode of association and activism. According to Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, the Huthis had helped shed the old hierarchical sociocultural structure by providing an “entirely new associational space for young Zaydis.” 93 The BY built a support base across social classes in Sadah that the government failed to do. 94 In the 1990s, the BY were able to create a large base of support among teenagers that would later be called upon to support collective action, including protests and calls to arms in the 2000s. During the protests against the War in Iraq and the Arab Spring, the movement attracted additional followers because it provided an outlet of expression against the regime. 95

89 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 96–7.
90 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 98–9, 101.
91 Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.
92 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 98–9.
93 Ibid., 100.
94 Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.
95 Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 16.
The Huthis used large Id al-Ghadir gatherings as rallies for Zaydi revivalism.\textsuperscript{96} Id al-Ghadir is the day that Muhammad appointed Ali as his successor according to Shia tradition. The holiday was celebrated in Huthi controlled territory after it was outlawed in early 2000s. The outlawing Id al-Ghadir backfired on the ROY, because when the holiday was re-legalized in 2008 large celebrations were held across Yemen where Shafi‘is, Isma’ilis, and Zaydis joined together in solitary against oppression. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells state that, “Husayn al-Huthi’s use of these holidays to decry [ROY] actions and mobilize supporters illustrates his calculations and highlights the local friction between Zaydis and Wahhabis [Salafists], as well as between Zaydis and the state.”\textsuperscript{97} Recent videos of the holiday show tens of thousands gathered to see current Huthi leader ‘Adb al-Malik al-Huthi indoctrinate and mobilize his supporters.\textsuperscript{98}

4. Cultural Framing

The BY, and later the Huthis, framed different situations as they arose. Some frames came and went—but that is expected from a group that started out playing soccer after school to fighting an armed conflict. The main Huthi frames are: appeal to Yemeni tradition, revival of Zaydism, freedom of religion, access to government funds for development, and most importantly the defense of the community. Mao argues that political goals are more important than military goals in a revolution.\textsuperscript{99} That is also true for a counter-revolution and the Yemeni government has actively engaged in framing contests with the Huthis. I will also include the government’s framing contests in this section.

Before I examine the main frames I want to address the Huthi slogan: “Allahu Akbar! Death to America! Death of Israel! Curse the Jews! Victory for Islam!”\textsuperscript{100} According to Winter, the slogan aligns with Husayn al-Huthi’s message of “sharp political criticism of both local and international actors, crafting a historically rooted

\textsuperscript{96} Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.
\textsuperscript{97} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 116.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., xxii, 66, 116, 218.
\textsuperscript{99} Mao, On Guerrilla Warfare, 43.
\textsuperscript{100} Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 15.
discourse of justice and empowerment.” 101 This “bumper sticker” version of the Huthi grievances is chanted in the mosques after Friday prayers and at various anti-government and anti-war protests. 102 Despite the rather clear attacks on America and Israel, the slogan is meant as a criticism of President Saleh and his “alliance” with America. The chant sums up the Huthi conspiracy theory of an “American-Jewish-Sunni” alliance against Zaydis. 103 Notwithstanding its overt slogans, the Huthis have not conducted a terrorist attack against U.S. or Israeli interests, or against the tiny Jewish population in Yemen. 104 The Huthi fight is against the Yemeni government and the Salafists.

The use of the incendiary slogan gave the ROY government an easy way to contest the frame by claiming the Huthis are violent, radical, terrorists. 105 By linking the group in 2003 to the global war on terror, the government also justifies its brutal counterinsurgency to the rest of the country and world. 106 The government’s framing is not overly convincing since the Huthi attacks have only targeted ROY and KSA military and government targets and rival militias. The international community, including the U.S., has pressured the Yemeni government to make peace with the Huthis and focus on real terrorists such as AQAP, suggesting that outsiders disagree with the “terrorist” label. 107

The encroachment of the Salafists in the Zaydi heartland has been met with two different, yet related frames by the BY and later Huthis. First, the Zaydis have framed the

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101 Ibid., 14.
105 Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 22.
“foreign” Saudi Salafists as attacking the traditional Zaydi religion.\textsuperscript{108} Second, the Zaydis framed the attack in secular terms, arguing that it is a form of Saudi imperialism.\textsuperscript{109} The revivalists are acting in a reactionary fashion by urging for the return to the historical practices of the 1000-year Zaydi regime. The frames resonated with the population since they were the driving factors in the creation of the Zaydi revivalist social movement, which was highly popular.\textsuperscript{110} The Huthis are proclaiming a return to the true northern Yemeni traditions in which Zaydis were in power, an appealing frame for currently powerless Zaydis.

The Yemeni government started a framing contest on political-religious grounds after the 2003 protests. The government claimed that the Huthi family, of the old royal Hashemite clan, wanted to reinstate the old Imamate and create a theocratic state.\textsuperscript{111} The Huthis have not made such proclamations and stated its allegiance to the Republican system, the laws of the country, and the constitution. Since Badr al-Din al-Huthi qualified as an Imam (all he had to do was proclaim it), it seems reasonable that he would have if he wanted proclaim a new imamate. The government has also accused the Huthis of being under “foreign” influence by allying with Iran, Hezbollah, Libya, Iraq, and Eritrea. With the exception of matériel from Iran, Yemen has provided no evidence of foreign assistance. The ROY government also accused the Huthis of converting to the “foreign” Twelver (Shia) Islam, and that Husayn al-Huthi claimed he was the \textit{Mahdi}.\textsuperscript{112} Husayn al-Huthi complained about Twelvers trying to convert Zaydis and Zaydis do not believe in the \textit{Mahdi} so these claims probably did little to drive Zaydis from the cause.\textsuperscript{113}

Similar to the demands of its current allies in the Hirak, the Huthis demand the end of corruption and government abuses, enfranchisement, equal access to government

\begin{thebibliography}{11}
\bibitem{weir2005}Weir, “Clash of Fundamentalisms,” 23.
\bibitem{salmoni2005}Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 95.
\bibitem{salmoni2005a}Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 96–98.
\bibitem{salmoni2005d}Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 112.
\end{thebibliography}
funds, freedom of religion, equality, and rule of law. ROY did not address or acknowledge the issues until the Arab Spring protests which the Huthis strongly supported. The Huthis, Revolutionary Youth and Hirak boycotted the one-man election and post-Saleh transition.

The most powerful frame uses the Zaydi cultural practice of the duty of a Muslim to rebel against an unjust ruler. The Huthis have portrayed the fight as a defense against the heavy-handed ROY military. The death and destruction wrought by the ROY military validates the Huthi’s claims. The fighting in Sadah displaced 300,000 residences, destroyed 9,000 structures, and killed 25,000. The ROY counter-framed the battle as fighting an outlaw group engaged in open rebellion, allied with foreign elements—Iran and Hezbollah—intent on creation of a new Zaydi state.

5. Conclusion

The BY/Huthi movement started as a community in the northern Yemen. Through the framing of grievances after the liberalization of the political system Zaydi elites were able to mobilize through educational, social, and religious networks. Through the creation of the political party and Believing Youth Club tens of thousands of Zaydis were able to express their discontent with the system through the political process, and more importantly through contentious collective action in the form of protests and disruptive activities. The ROY’s repression strengthened the movement with tens of thousands supporting the thousands of Huthi fighters defending its territory. During the Arab Spring, the Huthi movement created pan-Yemeni allies with groups holding similar grievances, including the Revolutionary Youth and the Hirak. The widespread displeasure with the Yemeni government even led to Shafi’is, Isma’ilis, and Zaydis to join together to celebrate a Shia holiday.

114 Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 14–5; Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 17.
116 Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 102, 106.
117 Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 16; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 2.
118 Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 102.
The Huthi militia was borne out of repression, and was thus a creation of ROY’s actions. It is too soon to tell if the Huthis will use the power sharing agreement to disarm and fully engage in the Yemeni political system or to continue as a militant group. Regardless, the Huthis experienced remarkable growth as a social movement deftly utilizing political opportunities as they arose; framing that resonates with the populace, and used a variety of mobilizing structures.

C. AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

“Since 1990 when the Americans occupied the land of revelation, the youth of the Peninsula of Islam are defending their religion, their holy places and their land, from which, their Messenger, peace be upon him, ordered [his followers] to expel the unbelievers. They have executed a few operations against the Americans in and out of the Arabian Peninsula. The most famous are the Ulaya, al-Khobar, East Riyadh, USS Cole, Limburg, and the assassination of U.S. soldiers in the island of Faylakah in Kuwait. The leaders of al-Qa’ida such as Shaykh al-Battar Yusuf al-`Uyairi, `Abdul `Aziz al-Miqrin, and Shaykh Abu `Ali al-Harithi and others led this war against the Americans in and outside of the Arabian Peninsula.”

— Nasir Al-Wuhayshi

This section explains the development of the Jihadi-Salafism in Yemen movement starting with the return of the Afghan-Arabs through the formation of the Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Arab Spring. The group known as AQAP originated in 2009 with the announcement of the merger of the Yemeni Al Qaeda in the Southern Arabian Peninsula (AQSAP) and the Saudi Arabian Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. AQAP soon after commenced a full-blown insurgency in southern Yemen. The Jihadi-Salafism movement in Yemen is not a simple linear development but ebbed and followed depending on political opportunities and threats.

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120 Afghan-Arabs—Arab volunteer veterans of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.
121 Popularly called Al Qaeda in Yemen.
1. Origins and Ideologies

Jihadi-Salafism is the ideology that spawned AQAP, so the religious ideology needs explanation. Jihadi-Salafism’s main goal is to rally Muslims to defend other Muslims around the world from perceived non-Muslim aggression. Jihadi-Salafism is a fusion of two ideologies the first being Salafism which Gilles Kepel describes as, “a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas. It advocated a return to the traditions of the devout ancestor (salaf in Arabic).” Kepel further notes that modern (neo-) Salafists believe that the Quran and Hadith were to be understood in the most traditional and literal interpretation. The Salafi-Jihadists add the requirement of absolute dedication to Jihad. Mohammed M. Hafez finds Jihadi-Salafism “characterized by five features.” First, they believe in the unity of God (tawhid) or monotheism. Second, Jihadi-Salafists accentuate Allah’s sovereignty (hakimiyyat Allah) over everything. Third, the Jihadi-Salafists denounce any innovations (bida) to Islam as violations to Allah’s unity or sovereignty. Fourth, Jihadi-Salafists may excommunicate (takfir) any Muslim they believe violated the faith by “the heart, tongue and action.” Someone who is thus judged to be kafir is an apostate or infidel. Finally, Jihadi-Salafism emphasizes the importance of a classic, early Islam definition of jihad to the faith. Muslims must wage jihad against infidel and apostate regimes.

The movement in Yemen has at times fused their Jihadi-Salafism with another ideology called revolutionary Islamism. Hafez defines revolutionary Islam as an ideology that seeks to transform the existing political order in any given state or national government through mass mobilization or violent activism. Revolutionary

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125 Mohammed M. Hafez, Suicide Bombers in Iraq (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 64–70.
Islamists target their own governments and societies in order to overthrow
the secular system and establish an Islamic order in its place.\textsuperscript{126}

Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula-Saudi Arabia (AQAP-SA), AQSA and the
combined AQAP drifted towards a hybrid Jihadi-Salafism/revolutionary Islamism
ideology that resulted in attacks on Muslims and non-Muslims.\textsuperscript{127} This hybridization was
met with some controversy as some Jihadists objected to targeting the Yemeni or Saudi
government while Americans were in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is a clear case for
defensive Jihad in those lands. Even ordinary Muslims could not understand the
reasoning. According to Gregory D. Johnsen, “if al Qaeda wanted to kill Americans, they
wondered, why didn’t they go to Iraq?”\textsuperscript{128} Al Qaeda lost popular support after attacking
Muslims inside Saudi Arabia and Yemen.\textsuperscript{129}

2. \textit{Political Opportunity Structures}

The Jihadi-Salafists seized several political opportunities and responded to several
threats that aided in mobilizing supporters in the past two-and-half decades. The
noteworthy political opportunities and threats include the Yemeni state sponsored
Afghan-Arab Islamic Jihad in Yemen (IJY); the 1994 Civil War that used IJY units in the
Aden campaign; the creation of the Aden Abyan Islamic Army in reaction to government
threats; the permissive atmosphere that allowed al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) to operate;
the Yemeni and American crackdown after the \textit{USS Cole} bombing and 9/11; the 2006
prison break that revived al Qaeda and the merger of the Yemeni and Saudi branches in
AQAP; and finally, the Arab Spring and AQAP’s emergence as an insurgent group.

The story of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula starts much in the same way as the
original bin Laden led al Qaeda, with the end of the Soviet War in Afghanistan. Starting
in the late 1980s, the returning Afghan-Arabs, who had converted to Jihadi-Salafism,

\textsuperscript{126} Hafez, “Illegitimate Governance,” 94.

\textsuperscript{127} Thomas Hegghammer, “The Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups,” \textit{Current Trends in
Islamist Ideology} 9 (2009), 33–5; Michael Page, Lara Challita and Alistair Harris, “Al Qaeda in the
Arabian Peninsula: Framing Narratives and Prescriptions,” \textit{Terrorism and Political Violence} 23 (March

\textsuperscript{128} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 143, 198, 210.

\textsuperscript{129} IHS Jane’s, “AQAP),” 6; Johnsen, \textit{Last Refugee}, 197, 225.
where repatriated by President Saleh in North Yemen (YAR). President Saleh used the
Afghan-Arabs to wage jihad against the “godless” Soviet-backed Marxist People’s
Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).\textsuperscript{130} Osama bin Laden reportedly diverted funds,
arms, and men to assist in the cause.\textsuperscript{131} Soon thereafter, the two Yemens united to form
the Republic of Yemen (ROY). Tariq al-Fadhli, a bin Laden associate, returned to his
home in Zinjibar where his grandfather was once Sultan. Encouraged by President Saleh
and Osama bin Laden, al-Fadhli and fighters loyal to bin Laden took advantage of the
political opportunity and formed the Islamic Jihad in Yemen (IJY).\textsuperscript{132} With presidential
backing, the IJY started assassinating former and current officials in the Yemeni Socialist
Party (YSP).\textsuperscript{133} IJY’s first attack against the “far” enemy\textsuperscript{134} occurred in 1992, with the
bombing of two hotels in Aden housing American troops transiting to Somalia. The
attacks resulted in the deaths of two Yemenis and one Australian and the arrest of al-
Fadhli.\textsuperscript{135} The ISY continued its attacks on socialists in the south, but would find greater
opportunity with the 1994 Civil War.

The 1994 Civil War broke out when southern YSP leaders, having “buyers
regret,” attempted to secede from the northern dominated ROY. During the 10 week civil
war the ROY forces crushed the rebels.\textsuperscript{136} To accomplish its victory, the ROY
government freed al-Fadhli and made him a colonel in charge of the thousands IJY
irregulars known as the Second Army Brigade. The bearded and undisciplined Afghan-
Arabs, tribesmen, and Islamists ransacked Aden, destroying western, socialist, and “un-
Islamic” buildings. Shariah law was implemented and floggings ensued. Forces looted

\textsuperscript{130} Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 1; Sheila Carapico, “Yemen and the
Aden Abyan Islamic Army,” Middle East Research and Information Project, October 18, 2000.
\textsuperscript{131} Peter Bergen, The Osama bin Laden I Know (New York: Free Press, 2006), 109.
\textsuperscript{132} Clark, Dancing on the Heads, 156–163; W. Andrew Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 22.
\textsuperscript{133} IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 30–31.
\textsuperscript{134} The “near enemy” is the local regime while the “far enemy” is Western, Saudi, and Israeli
regimes. Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 29–30.
\textsuperscript{135} Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 23; Hull, High-Value Target, xxviii.
\textsuperscript{136} Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 8; Clark, Dancing on the Heads, 163–164.
everything from garbage trucks to door knobs.\textsuperscript{137} Aden was soon brought under government control and the IJY was dissolved. Former IJY members returned home or were rewarded with jobs in the military, security forces, or civil government.\textsuperscript{138} The IJY involvement in the war had two lasting effects. First, many southerners still bear a grudge against bin Laden (and al Qaeda) because of his role as a financer of IJY ($20 million total.)\textsuperscript{139} Second, the “selling out” of most of the IJY members lead to the creation of the more radical Aden Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA).\textsuperscript{140}

Feeling betrayed and threatened by the YAR government, the AAIA was founded by another Afghan-Arab, Abu Hassan al-Mihdar, notorious London-based Finsbury Mosque Imam Abu Hamza al-Misri, and a small number of Jihadi-Salafists in 1994. With the threats from old socialists gone, the ROY government deported 14,000 Afghan-Arabs. Others departed on their own to fight in the Afghan Civil War, Bosnia, Somalia, Tajikistan or Chechnya. The early al Qaeda affiliate was mostly a failure. The group attacked mostly civilians, while avoiding Yemeni security and Western hard targets. The killing of nuns and tourists starting in 1998 led to a swift crackdown with most of the group killed or arrested by Yemeni forces by 1999.\textsuperscript{141} AAIA were blamed for the bombing of the \textit{USS Cole} in 2000, an act carried out by a far more dangerous group, al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY).\textsuperscript{142}

AQY started as more of an al Qaeda cell than an affiliate when it was founded in 1998. Osama bin Laden called Yemen the “near ideal jihadi sanctuary.”\textsuperscript{143} The cell, led by Qaid Sinan al-Harithi, provided support for bin Laden’s bombing of the U.S.

\textsuperscript{137} Clark, \textit{Dancing on the Heads}, 161, 164, 144.

\textsuperscript{138} Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 23; Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, ed., \textit{A False Foundation: AQAP, Tribes and Ungoverned Spaces in Yemen} (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2011), 23.

\textsuperscript{139} Clark, \textit{Heads of Snakes}, 162; Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 30.

\textsuperscript{140} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 23.

\textsuperscript{141} Clark, \textit{Heads of Snakes}, 166–9; Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 26–7, 30; Carapico, “Aden Abyan Islamic Army.”

\textsuperscript{142} Carapico, “Aden Abyan Islamic Army;” Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 2.

\textsuperscript{143} Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 22.
embassies in Tanzania and Kenya before carrying out its first (successful)\textsuperscript{144} attack with the infamous \textit{USS Cole} bombing.\textsuperscript{145} The bombing had immediate blowback when skyrocketing insurance rates kept many ships out of Aden.\textsuperscript{146} While the attack, coupled with 9/11, helped with recruitment it did not achieve mass popular support bin Laden craved.\textsuperscript{147} The final major attack by AQY was on the French oil tanker \textit{MV Limburg}, a maritime suicide operation that killed one.\textsuperscript{148} The maritime bombings and 9/11 soon ended the permissive environment enjoyed by AQY. Soon thereafter the ROY and the U.S. coordinated a quick decapitation campaign.

Less than a month after the October 2002 \textit{MV Limburg} bombing, an air strike killed AQY leader al-Harithi.\textsuperscript{149} The decapitation campaign involving the U.S., Yemen and, other Arab countries, succeed in arresting all of AQY’s leaders, and detained dozens of members by 2004.\textsuperscript{150} Foreign jihadists, 600 in total, were arrested and deported by the end of 2002.\textsuperscript{151} The campaign destroyed AQY, and al Qaeda was not heard from again until 2006.\textsuperscript{152} During the same period, the Brigadier General Ali Muhsin encouraged jihadists to fight in Iraq.\textsuperscript{153} While imprisoning radicals and sending fighters to Iraq created calm in Yemen, it proved to be the calm before the storm.

\textbf{Al Qaeda in the lands of Yemen (AQLY) was born in a Political Organization (PSO) prison.} The imprisoned members of AQY and other radicals started clandestine study circles. The group, led by Nasir al-Wuhayshi, studied the Quran and Jihadi-

\textsuperscript{144} A previous maritime suicide operation on the USS Sullivan failed when the boat carrying the bombs sank before reaching its target. IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 32.
\textsuperscript{145} Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 24; IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 2.
\textsuperscript{146} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 108.
\textsuperscript{147} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 107; Lawrence Wright, \textit{Looming Tower} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 331.
\textsuperscript{149} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 122–3; Hull, \textit{High-Value Target}, 61.
\textsuperscript{150} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 35; Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 25.
\textsuperscript{151} Clark, \textit{Heads of Snakes}, 223.
\textsuperscript{152} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 35; Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 25.
\textsuperscript{153} Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 25; Clark, \textit{Heads of Snakes}, 227.
Salafism doctrine, and recruited dozens of other prisoners.\textsuperscript{154} The setting was nearly perfect for radicalization and recruitment; prisoners were isolated from outside society, imprisoned without trial and had nothing better to do than talk. A. Dalgaard-Nielsen notes, “group bonding and peer pressure reinforce[s] the emerging commitment of the joiner,” and small groups create more radical views.\textsuperscript{155} In 2006, nearly two dozen men escaped the prison. Soon after, six were killed and 11 were captured, but the remaining six made up the new leadership of AQLY. Its ranks were swelled with returning Iraq veterans. A year later in 2007, members of AQAP-SA started fleeing from Saudi forces into Yemen.\textsuperscript{156} The rechristened al Qaeda in the South Arabian Peninsula (AQSAP) started targeting western and Yemeni targets.\textsuperscript{157} In 2009, the remaining Saudis merged its branch with the Yemeni one becoming AQAP. A series of failed terrorist operations followed.\textsuperscript{158}

The next political opportunity for AQAP came in early 2011, when the Arab Spring protests weakened and destabilized the ROY government.\textsuperscript{159} AQAP decided to upgrade from terrorist tactics to a full blown insurgency. It wanted to rule territory so in April 2011, it created a front organization (or possibly an insurgent wing) called Ansar al Shariah (ASY). AQAP religious chief Sheikh Abu Zubayr Adil bin Abdullah al-Abab explained the rebranding, “the name Ansar al Shariah is what we use to introduce

\begin{small}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{154} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 160–5.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know,” \textit{Studies in Conflict and Terrorism} 33, no. 9 (2010): 802–803. \url{http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2010.501423}.
  \item \textsuperscript{156} Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 25–6.
  \item \textsuperscript{157} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 36; Clark, \textit{Heads of Snakes}, 206.
  \item \textsuperscript{158} The failed terrorist attacks, while important for counterterrorism studies, are not really relevant for the SMT study. These attacks include the August 2009 Rectum-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack on Saudi Prince Nayef, the attempted Christmas 2009 Underwear-Borne IED bombing of a passenger plane, and the October 2010 attempted Fed-Ex Printer-Borne IED attack. A concise history can be found in: Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” \url{http://www.cfr.org/yemen/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap/p9369}.
  \item \textsuperscript{159} Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 4.
\end{itemize}
\end{small}
ourselves in areas where we work to tell people about our work and goals.” 160 The rebranding was required after AQAP’s seizure of the town Lawder in August 2010. During the short reign, locals reported heavy indoctrination and the enforcement of a brutal version of shariah that included, according to Terrill, “crucifixions, public beheadings, amputations, and floggings.” The indoctrination was not enough to convince the population to accept AQAP as its rulers, and the populace soon sided with the government forces. After the government drove AQAP out of Lawder, residents formed an armed militia called a Popular Committee that fought alongside the military during the Second Battle of Lawder. 161

After the second loss in Lawder, AQAP looked southward to Jaar and Zinjibar. “ASY” seized the towns from the government weakened by the Arab Spring in March and May 2011 respectively. The jihadists had mobilized hundreds of fighters after the two brief battles of Lawder. The closest reinforcements were loyal to Brig. General Ali Muhsin who had sided with the protestors against President Saleh and refused to help. In Jaar, away from the front lines in Zinjibar, AQAP won over support by constructing water lines and an electrical grid. Only after U.S. and Saudi support and pressure did Ali Muhsin’s men intervene. 162 In May 2012, ROY forces 20,000 strong and backed by Popular Committees started a counter-offensive and by June 2012 retook the towns. Before fleeing, ASY mined the perimeter of Jaar, which resulted in the deaths of 81 residents. A suicide bomber later killed 45 members of the Jaar Popular Committees. 163 What little good will AQAP/ASY earned in Jaar and Zinjibar was lost with attacks on the population.

160 Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 4; Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, x, 3. The use of “Y” in ASY is due to the fact that at least different six groups use the name. The last letter is the group’s geographic location, i.e. ASB is Ansar al Shariah in Benghazi, Libya. Aaron Y. Zelin, “Know your Ansar al-Sharia,” Foreign Policy (Blog), published September 12, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/know_your_ansar_al_sharia.

161 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 35–7; Casey L. Coombs, “Yemen’s Use of Militias to Maintain Stability in Abyan Province,” CTC Sentinel 6 no. 2 (February 2013): 5.

162 Johnsen, Last Refuge, 271–2, 276–82; Terrill Struggle for Yemen, 30.

163 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 46–51.
The Yemeni Jihadi-Salafists’ use of political opportunities and structures did little to gain mass support for the movement. The movement also made mistakes from the sacking of Aden to the reappraisals on the citizens of Jaar that hurt its standing in Yemen.

3. Mobilizing Structures

How did the Yemeni Jihadi-Salafists mobilize support its cause? After all, Jihad is a high risk form of activism. The main Yemeni Jihadi-Salafists’ mobilizing structures are the mosque, the tribe and social ties, later the Internet, and at one point the state. 164

Proselytization and preaching is a prerequisite to recruitment. A majority of Yemenis practice the Shafi’i (Sunni) school of jurisprudence while in northern highlands Zaydi (Shia) Islam makes up a significant minority.165 The large majority of non-Salafi Muslims presents a challenge in the realm of recruiting. The individual must convert to Salafism before they would consider joining the Jihadi-Salafists. Salafist proselytization started in the 1970s financed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Some Yemenis relate the spread of Salafism as a form of Saudi imperialism.166 Additionally, the spread of the new ideology has stoked sectarian tensions in Yemen since the Salafists oppose both the Zaydis and Shafi’is. Salafists established or took over schools, study groups, and mosques.167 Johnsen found that by the late nineties at least 600,000 Yemenis had graduated from private Salafist religious institutions.168 Salafists also gained key positions in state schools and were able teach its version of Islam.169 After conversion, the Jihadi-Salafists must also compete with Islah, the Islamist political party, for followers. The party allows for a legal outlet for opposition to the Yemen ruling coalition, the General People’s Congress (GPC).170 Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz find that “many studies have substantiated the claim that the more

164 Johnsen, Last Refuge, 7–8.
166 Clark, Heads of Snakes, 219–220.
168 Johnsen, Last Refuge, 56–7.
170 IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 16.
accessible the state, even an authoritarian state, the less likely the opposition will coalesce around a violent strategy,” further weakening recruiting efforts for the Jihadists.\textsuperscript{171} Proselytizing and conversions to the Salafism are not enough to mobilize people to join the Jihadi-Salafists, but the process can be viewed as a prerequisite to mobilization in Yemen. Jihadi-Salafists must also radicalize while recruiting and mobilizing followers.

The mosque and study groups are important sources of radicalization and recruitment. During the 1980s clerics across the country preached jihad against the Soviet Union, some telling stories of angels fighting alongside the \textit{mujahedeen}. Afghan-Arabs were important in creating IJY, AAIA, and AQY.\textsuperscript{172} Later Johnsen found that Jihadi-Salafists clerics would preach wherever they could, to include “unfinished mosques…and in tiny back rooms of sympathetic shopkeepers.”\textsuperscript{173} These mosques and study groups also created what McAdam calls “extensive ties to other participants” required for high-risk activism.\textsuperscript{174}

The second source of recruitment is Yemeni tribes. In the Soviet War in Afghanistan era, tribal sheikhs helped channel members to Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{175} During the 1994 Civil War southern tribesmen joined the IJY, although it appears the tribesmen motivation may have been out of greed or revenge against the YSP. Most quit IJY when the war was over.\textsuperscript{176} A 2011 Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) report argues that al Qaeda’s transnational pan-Islamic ideology is a weakness, since tribes are concerned with local issues and jihadist ideology alienates them from broad-based tribal support in Yemen.\textsuperscript{177} Additionally, one of AQC’s main goals according to Abu Bakr Naji’s \textit{The


\textsuperscript{172} Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”1.

\textsuperscript{173} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 5–8.

\textsuperscript{174} McAdam, “Recruitment to High-Risk Activism,” 64.

\textsuperscript{175} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 7–8.


\textsuperscript{177} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 9–12.
Management of Savagery, is the elimination of tribes. Unlike the Huthis who ally with tribes, AQAP rule would subordinate the tribal leadership, which goes against tribal interests and would likely lead to armed conflict between the tribes and AQAP. These two factors probably limit tribal recruitment which is reflected in a CTC study which finds most members of AQAP do not have links to tribes in AQAP’s area of operations.

Another channel of mobilizing fighters included, at various times, the Yemeni Government. During the war in Afghanistan, Brig. General Ali Muhsin recruited jihadists for Osama bin Laden. As previously stated, the government employed IYJ during the 1994 Civil War. Ali Muhsin also funneled an estimated 2000 jihadists into Iraq starting in 2003. Novak accuses Ali Muhsin of hiring “jihadi mercenaries during the Sadah War against the Huthi rebels,” but the current state of war with AQAP and change in ROY leadership has probably closed the door on government mobilization.

Other minor mobilizing structures included training camps and propaganda magazines. While camps can be used to further radicalize and indoctrinate recruits, the remote and clandestine nature of the camps suggests that recruits have already chosen the path to jihad before arrival. The camps primarily provide military and terrorist tactical training to recruits and due to air strikes are now small and temporary. Al Qaeda has produced multiple propaganda magazines and treatises on the Internet to mobilize supporters and more importantly frame issues.

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178 Ibid., 15–8.
181 Johnsen, Last Refuge, 7; Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 18–19.
182 Clark, Dancing on the Heads, 161, 164, 144.
183 Ibid., 227.
185 Johnsen, Last Refuge, 129, 264.
Alistair Harris could not determine the extent to which the Internet is successful at mobilizing supporters. Only 2.5 percent of Yemenis have access to the Internet and only 50 percent are literate. Pamphletting and reading jihadi literature out loud at qat chews are other reported methods of distribution.187

4. Cultural Framing

Jihadi-Salafists used several frames since the 1980s. Anti-communist frames were undoubtedly important early in the Jihadi-Salafism cause, but since communism is no longer an active cause I will focus on other frames. Additionally, IJY was noted for poor messaging.188 The main Jihadi-Salafism frames in Yemen are: the Crusader-Zionist Alliance, the apostate YAR and KSA Governments, suffering, “tribal honor and deeply-felt religious sentiment,”189 and jihad as the solution.

Alistair Harris’ analysis of al Qaeda’s publications,190 the main source of its propaganda, finds that al Qaeda “provide both diagnostic and prognostic frameworks to mobilize followers and potential recruits into collective action.”191 Together, the frames integrate popular local and global grievances into a “single narrative” that proscribes jihad (and later an Islamic State) as the solution to the problem.192 Of course boiling down all grievances into one solution is not without risk. Opponents and competitors such as Hirak, Islah, the Revolutionary Youth, and tribes compete with al Qaeda’s prognostic frames. Additionally, trying to fuse local grievances into al Qaeda’s pan-


189 Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 36.


191 Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 33.

Islamic agenda can lead to confusing messaging. Jihad against the government of Yemen will not as Harris explains, “improve governmental responsiveness, accountability, service provision, or development,” which are the public’s main concerns.

The Crusader-Zionist Alliance, the apostate YAR and KSA governments, and suffering are linked. The Jihadi-Salafists in Yemen argue that Israel and the West support un-Islamic governments, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The failure of these governments to help their people or implement shariah law causes all the problems in the Muslim world. The propagandists further argue everything wrong in the world is due to the lack of the Islamic State. Individual local issues of suffering are used as examples of the effects of the Crusader-Zionist Alliance and apostate regimes. Palestine serves as a cause célèbre for the Jihadists.

Al Qaeda appeals to tribal honor and religion when framing issues. Al Qaeda’s statements often praise, shame, or challenge tribes in order to rally them to the Jihadi-Salafist cause. The CTC found that the efforts to compel the tribes into action did little to win mass support of any tribe. As explained in the background, religion is the main justification for the Jihadi-Salafist cause, and it integrated into all other frames. According to Page, Challita, and Harris, al Qaeda uses (Jihadi-Salafist) Islamic doctrine to “justify and legitimize its acts of violence” and to add religious credibly to the group. Jihadi-Salafists appeal to fellow Muslims to fight for the cause.

Jihad is the solution. This “solution” to all the problems is further explained by al-wala wa al-barā (association and dissociation). According to Jihadi-Salafists, Muslims

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194 Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 40.
196 Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 36; Koehler-Derrick, False Foundation, 125–34.
197 Koehler-Derrick, False Foundation, 125–34.
200 Ibid., 37.
must support the jihadists by resisting secularization (dissociation) and advocating for shariah (association).\textsuperscript{201} Anyone, regardless of age, gender, or ability, is capable of support. In addition to fighters, according to AQAP founding member Qassem al-Raymi, the cause needs other professions including “educators, door-to-door salesmen, and farmers.”\textsuperscript{202} Muslims must all withdraw support for apostate regimes.\textsuperscript{203}

Page, Challita, and Harris argue that the grievances and diagnostic frameworks cited by Jihadi-Salafist groups often have a legitimate base, but the prognostic framework, jihad against the West and “apostate” regimes and establishment of a global Islamic state, is increasingly rejected by most Muslims.\textsuperscript{204} While Muslims have little love for the West, a large majority of Muslims dislike al Qaeda even more. The support of al Qaeda continues to fall, suggesting that the old cliché “actions speak louder than words” is true.\textsuperscript{205}

5. Conclusion

AQAP has shown the capacity to mobilize thousands of young men to wage jihad in Yemen but lasting support was difficult to maintain. AQAP’s ability govern captured territory has thus far been limited. As a high-risk movement, AQAP relies on hybrid of local and pan-Islamic frames to mobilize support. The frames question the legitimacy and competency of Yemeni rule while highlighting the suffering of ordinary Muslims under the apostate regime. Implementing a brutal form of governance while undermining tribal structures will likely to continue to create a backlash against AQAP that will cause AQAP to lose what little popular support it may have. Highlighting the suffering of those

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{201} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 42; Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 37.
\item \textsuperscript{202} Qassem al-Raymi quoted in Philips, “What Comes Next” 77.
\item \textsuperscript{203} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 42; Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 37.
\item \textsuperscript{204} Page, Challita and Harris, “AQAP: Framing Narratives,” 163, 169.
\end{itemize}
under AQAP dominance and AQC’s anti-trial propaganda may be successful counter frames against the group. The fusion of global and local frames can also lead to incoherent messaging. AQAP will probably find it difficult to find mass support due to the plethora of competing opposition groups, including the Islamist Islah political party.

D. CONCLUSION/ANALYSIS

The Huthi social movement has been more successful at recruiting and mobilizing supporters than AQAP. A comparison of the two movements reveals several key differences which may explain why the Huthis have achieved mass support in parts of northern Yemen and AQAP struggles in its area of operations. First, the Huthis created a large base of support before engaging in what can be labeled as self-defense. The BY graduated students for a decade prior to the War in Iraq protests launched a government crackdown. AQAP and the Jihadi-Salafism with its roots in Afghanistan tried to win support through violence. IJY recruited many fighters in the civil war but most quit after the war was over. AQAP’s southern campaign has recruited young men from across Yemen but repulsed locals with its bloodthirstiness. The greatest difference in reactions to political opportunities was during the Arab Spring. Both groups seized land, but the Huthis also worked to win over protestors and made alliances with other opposition groups. There are notable differences in framing also. The Huthis have emphasized local grievances and suggested local solutions. AQAP fuses local with pan-Islam in its frames and rely heavily on jihad as the solution. The Huthis also have the advantage of a more traditional ideology, whereas AQAP relies on a more recently created and transnational Jihadi-Salafism doctrine. Additionally, the stated Huthi demands are reactionary and anti-government, but to not advocate secession while AQAP is revolutionary, anti-government and anti-tribal.
III. COUNTERINSURGENCY/COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

“To have an impact, a strategy must be coherent, organized, and reflected in the state’s institutions... Like terrorist groups, moreover, a state’s strategy must be flexible and innovative... In addition to building institutional support, leaders must also help shape public opinion to ensure popular support for counterterrorism in general and the strategy in particular. Political leaders must also give counterterrorism appropriate priority, making concessions on other objectives as necessary.”

—Daniel Byman

A. INTRODUCTION

The chapter will examine three distinct factors affecting the Republic of Yemen’s (ROY) wars against the Huthis and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). First, the government’s strategy is analyzed using Audrey Kurth’s principles, and the legal framework used to fight terrorism will be explained. Second, the Yemeni government’s military and security organizations, resources, and measures will be considered. Finally, this chapter will outline public support for the Yemeni government. This chapter will also note any differences in strategy or prosecution of the two wars. The lack of reporting from Yemeni war zones, the lack unbiased reporting, and limited public polling makes analysis of Yemen counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies difficult.

B. STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

Yemen used a variety of strategies to combat the Huthis and al Qaeda. The strategies favor the military paradigm over the law enforcement paradigm. This is largely due the weak legal framework in Yemen for fighting an insurgency and terrorism. Yemen’s strategy uses decapitation (of leadership), negotiations, and repression.


207 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 181–6.
1. **Strategy**

Cronin’s *How Terrorism Ends* gauged the effectiveness of CT policies by statistical analysis of 457 terrorist organizations from 1968–2006. She finds six ways—usually in some sort of combination—which terrorism ends. According to Corin, the methods are: “decapitation, catching or killing the leader; negotiations, transition toward a legitimate political process; success, achieving the objective; failure, imploding, provoking a backlash or becoming marginalized; repression, crushing terrorism with force; and reorientation, transitioning to another modus operandi.” 208 She finds that no group was defeated solely through repression.209

While *How Terrorism Ends* uses the term “terrorism and counterterrorism,” many of the groups she analyzes operate as insurgent groups. For that reason I chose to analyze Yemen’s counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy using those six categories. While at the time of the writing the Huthis have signed a power sharing an agreement with the government, the Huthis are still fighting other non-state actors which is hardly a full success.210 Additionally, while AQAP has had setbacks, it unfortunately has not failed.

**a. Decapitation**

For this paper “decapitation” refers not to removing someone’s head, but to removing the top leaders of an organization through arrest or assassination.211 This does not include air strikes against mid-to-low level members of the Huthis or AQAP. Cronin finds that decapitation operations sometimes can spell the demise of a faltering group. Other times the action has little effect or strengthens the group. The results are inconsistent.212 The Republic of Yemen used decapitation as a strategy based on its historic actions but the results have been mixed.

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209 Ibid., 141.
210 *AFP* “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government.”
211 Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 16.
212 Ibid., 14.
The first incidence of the decapitation operation was in 2002 with the targeted assassination of al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) leader al-Harithi. This decapitation operation proved to be successful—in the short term. The decapitation operation hastened the collapse of AQY. While AQY ceased to exist as an organization in Yemen, the al Qaeda ideology was not defeated and AQAP remains in Yemen today.

The second occurrence of decapitation operation was the death of Husayn al-Huthi, first leader of the Huthi movement. Originally the mission was to arrest the Believing Youth leader. A Yemeni air strike hit the cave that the Husayn al-Huthi and his family were hiding in. Husayn al-Huthi sent his wives and children out of the cave who were soon spotted by Yemen infantrymen. After a brief period of negotiation, Husayn al-Huthi emerged from his hideout. He then allegedly reached into his jacket, possibly for a pistol he was carrying, and the soldiers opened fire and killed the Huthi leader. This decapitation operation managed to briefly pause fighting and create a Huthi martyr.

While the decapitation operations may have led to tactical advantages, or stopped specific terrorism operations, decapitation has done little strategically to end the conflicts in Yemen. Other targeted assassinations have killed top AQAP commanders such as Said al-Shihri, Anwar al-Awlaqi, and Fahd al-Quso. These deaths weakened AQAP momentarily, but have not defeated the organization. This is not entirely unexpected outcome. Cronin theorizes that decapitation operation strategy stems from mirror imaging. Government officials think eliminating the head of a hierarchical organization will weaken that organization. Additionally, officials find it nearly impossible to not attack the head of the group that threatens the public safety—people demand a response to violence.

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b. Negotiations

The government can use negotiations with insurgent groups in order to transition them into legitimate political process. Cronin finds that negotiating with mature groups\(^{218}\) does not lengthen or shorten a campaign on average, but can hasten a declining group. Talks are also used to manage violence.\(^{219}\) This section limits the scope to strategic negotiations, not tactical level negotiations such as a field swap of prisoners or negotiating the end of a siege. The Yemeni government has used the strategy of negotiation with the Huthis with limited results. The Yemeni government has also negotiated with al Qaeda, achieving détente at times.

The Huthis and the Republic of Yemen have a long and complicated negotiation history. The Huthis’ stated demands are more reasonable than al Qaeda’s goal of violently overthrowing the government and establishing an Islamic State.\(^{220}\) The Huthis demand the end of corruption and government abuses, enfranchisement, equal access to government funds, freedom of religion, equality, and rule of law.\(^{221}\) Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells assert that the negotiations hurt the prospects for peace during the six round Sadah War because the talks built up mutual mistrust due to frequent break downs.\(^{222}\)

During the Sadah War (2004–2010) the Huthi family and the Yemeni government negotiated multiple times. Early on, between 2004 and 2006, half a dozen attempts for mediation between sides occurred. At first, the Huthis felt it had the upper hand so in June 2004, and again in July 2004, talks fell apart. Later Brig. General Ali Muhsin, acting independently, disrupted negotiations by attacking the Huthis. In 2005, Sadah saw a short ceasefire. Later in 2007, Qatar intervened and the Doha agreement was signed in 2008 (see Chapter V Section D), but fighting continued despite this international mediation. Later in the conflict, President Saleh was more confident and often did not follow through on promises such as the release of prisoners. The lack of command and control

\(^{218}\) Groups over five years old.

\(^{219}\) Cronin, How Terrorism Ends, 35–6.

\(^{220}\) Hafez, “Illegitimate Governance,” 94.

\(^{221}\) Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency, “ 14–5; Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 17.

\(^{222}\) Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 182.
capabilities on the Huthi side is another reason the talks failed. The Huthis could not control its allies fighting in its name who would continue to fight during mediation.223

In early 2010 a unilateral ceasefire was declared by the Huthis after several months of Saudi armed intervention. The Huthis accepted the Yemeni government’s conditions, provided the Saudi’s would stop attacking them. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the ROY soon followed the Huthis in declaring ceasefires.224 Qatar intervened again in August 2010 and negotiated an “explanatory index” to the original Doha agreement.225 This ceasefire proved more durable since confidence measures were undertaken. Yemen released a large number of Huthi prisoners.226

After the Arab Spring, the Huthis were able to consolidate power in Sadah governorate while increasing its political power in the capital.227 The government included the Huthis in the UN-backed National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which gave them a legitimate national and international voice.228 In September 2014, after defeating its rivals and taking control of the capital the Huthis negotiated, from a position of strengthen, a power sharing agreement.229 It is too early to assess the power sharing agreement. The Doha agreements were not fully implemented but in this case the Huthis are more powerful than during the Sadah Wars, so the outcome may be different.

The Yemeni government negotiated off and on with AQAP and its predecessor organizations. Novak notes that the Yemeni government and jihadists have enjoyed détente since the 1990s.230 Negotiation with al Qaeda directly began in 2002 with the so-called “Dialog Program.” Jihadists that promised not to attack Yemeni targets would be

223 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 181–6.
224 Ibid., 187.
225 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 20–1.
226 Winter, Conflict in Yemen, 113.
228 Ibid., 2.
left alone by the government. The program let some al Qaeda members out of jail early so they could go and fight in Iraq or elsewhere. In 2005 and 2006, the head of the Political Security Organization (PSO) and former bin Laden associate Rashad Mohammed Saeed openly negotiated with al Qaeda promising money and cars for compliance with the “do not attack” agreement. Later Brig. General Ali Muhsin recruited jihadis to fight as mercenaries in the Sadah War. The détente broke down in 2007 when seven elderly Spanish tourists were massacred at the Queen of Sheba’s temple.

c. Success or Failure

Sometimes terrorist or insurgency campaigns end when groups achieve their objectives. Success is difficult to define since it is defined by the group itself. There are limited examples of this happening in Yemen; the closest example is the Islamic Jihad in Yemen (IJY). After the Yemeni government recruited IJY in the 1994 Civil War, the group dissolved and former members returned home or were rewarded with jobs in the military, security forces, or civil service. Success in this case assumes that its goal was jobs. The Huthis may be another example, if the power sharing agreement is implemented and the group lays down its arms.

Failure is when a terrorist group disintegrates due to its own tactics. This can be observed as a backlash, implosion, or marginalization. Unfortunately neither AQAP nor the Huthis are close to failure. The Aden Abyan Islamic Army in Yemen is a good example of failure. The backlash against group for murdering tourists combined with repression lead to its demise.


232 Novak, “Deals with al-Qaeda.”

233 Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 36; Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 206


This section will give a general overview of strategy and tactics used by the government to repress the Huthis and AQAP and their followers (and often others in the vicinity). Repression is the most instinctive reaction to violence from non-state organizations. Cronin defines repression as “the state’s use of overwhelming, indiscriminate, or disproportionate force...” 238 The Yemeni government used repression against both the Huthi and AQAP. The organization, resources, and implementation of the military will be covered in later in this chapter in Section C.

An ideal counterinsurgency strategy is clear-and-hold. Clear-and-hold requires foot-mobile “soft entry” into villages followed by intelligence driven police-like operations. The Yemeni military lacks the equipment and training for such operations. The military is also constrained by the rugged geography of Yemen. During the Sadah War, based off of limited reporting, the Yemeni military generally used a strategy of blockade-and-bombard. This involves creating a cordon around a village or hide out to prevent escape then indiscriminate bombarding of the target area with artillery and air strikes.239 The Yemeni militaries poor counterinsurgency doctrine has led to high levels of civilian casualties. The Huthis claim 25,000 civilian casualties, although other organizations put the number much lower.240 The bombardment tactics caused many neutral or pro-government Yemenis to side with the Huthis after they were trapped in the bombardment zone or their property was damaged.241

When fighting AQAP in the south the Yemeni military used similar blockade-and-bombard tactics. The government either learned its lesson from fighting the Huthis or employed more enlightened commanders because the military attempted to evacuate the towns prior to military action.242 A key difference in the Sadah War and the AQAP insurgency is that the locals sided with the government against AQAP and Ansar al

238 Cronin, How Terrorism Ends, 115.
239 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 164–5.
240 Ibid., 2.
242 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 62–4.
Locals formed “Popular Committees” (militias) that are dedicated to protecting their property and have extensive knowledge of the local terrain.244

The government engaged in other forms of repression. The government used mass arrests and detention of suspected Huthis or former Believing Youth members. The military have historically arrested AQAP and Huthi member’s non-combatant relatives, including the elderly and young, and seized their family’s property as a punishment.245

The ROY also briefly outlawed most aspects of the Zaydi sect. Between 2005 and 2008 the government replaced Zaydi preachers with Salafi preachers in mosques across the country, prohibited celebrating the main Zaydi holiday al-Ghadir, and confiscated all Zaydi related texts.246 In addition to restricting the freedom of religion, the government restricts NGO and press access to the war zone. The Yemen government reported in 2008 that it jailed 1200 political prisoners while the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated 3000 political prisoners.247

The government named the operation during the sixth round of the Sadah War “Operation Scorched Earth.”248 While it is not clear that the government actually engaged in actual scorched earth tactics, reports indicate that the government blockaded fuel and food shipments and cut communication lines into Sadah.249 Without fuel,

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http://yemenpolling.org/advocacy/publications

244 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 35–7; Combs, “Yemen’s Use of Militias,” 5.

245 Johnsen, Last Refuge, 150.

246 Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 15; Clark, Dancing on the Heads, 249; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 66.

247 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 245–52.

248 Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106; scorched earth—defined (and prohibited) by Article 54 of Protocol I of the 1977 Geneva Conventions.” It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.” Geneva Conventions, Protocol I of the 1977 Geneva Conventions, 267

farmers cannot run generators that power water pumps. Crops normally sold in the rest of Yemen or Saudi Arabia were reportedly left to rot waiting for delivery. At the end of the sixth round of conflict in Sadah 300,000 residents were displaced, 9,000 structures destroyed, and 25,000 dead.250 According to Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells official government figures (after the fifth round) add “900 farms, 90 mosques, 80 schools, five health care facilities” destroyed or damaged in Sadah governorate.251 As of September 2014 287,809 internally displaces persons (IDP) remained.252

**e. Reorientation**

Reorientation is simply defined by Cronin as “transitioning to another modus operandi.” Cronin explains this as turning to criminal behavior, such as organized crime, or to insurgency or civil war.253 I believe reorientation to a political party should be included here. That is often done through negotiations. The Huthi started out as a resistance movement254 and reoriented to insurgency,255 and AQAP started out as a terrorist group256 and reoriented towards insurgency. With the power sharing agreement signed between the Huthis and the government it is possible the Huthis will reorient to a political party.

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250 Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 16; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 2.
251 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 243–49.
253 Cronin, How Terrorism Ends, 146.
254 resistance movement—an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms, s.v. “resistance movement.”
255 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, xvi; insurgency—the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms, s.v. “Insurgency.”
256 terrorism—the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms, s.v. “Terrorism.”
2. Legislation

Yemen has a weak legal framework for fighting terrorism. Currently the legal system is a mix of shariah law, the Napoleonic code, English common law, and Yemeni customary law. As of 2014, the Republic of Yemen has no laws on the books to directly fight terrorism. An anti-terrorism law drafted in 2008 has not passed the Yemeni Parliament. In 2013, revisions were made to the 2008 draft law but the newer version has yet to be signed into law. If passed the law would help law enforcement detain suspects accused of terrorism and set a minimum mandatory sentencing for numerous terrorism-related crimes. Currently, much to the expressed frustration of the Yemeni Ministry of Legal Affairs, terrorism suspects are charged with “membership in an armed gang.” Suspects found guilty of the gang membership charge receive relatively light sentences. Suspects arrested for murder, destruction of property, or other crimes can be charged with those crimes.

Yemen participates in international anti-terrorism legal programs. ROY has the capability to screen people using biographic and biometric data through its participation in the U.S. State Department sponsored Terrorist Interdiction Program’s (TIP) Personal Identification Secure Comparison Evolution System (PISCES) at 26 points of entry. Widespread corruption undermines the efforts to stop terrorists from entering Yemen with TIP-PISCES. Yemen is also a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force regional body. The task force noted as of 2013 Yemen had “strategic deficiencies” and had yet to fully criminalize money laundering or financing terrorism.

260 U.S. Department of State, Reports on Terrorism 2013.
262 U.S. Department of State, Reports on Terrorism 2013.
The overall assessment of the law enforcement and judicial system in Yemen is that it is of limited use against terrorists. The U.S. State Department assesses that the Yemeni “law enforcement units demonstrated limited capacity to detect, deter, or respond to terrorist incidents.” There is little interagency coordination or information sharing and the lack of the terrorism laws discourage law enforcement officials. The Yemeni military has the primary counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capability.

C. COUNTERINSURGENCY/COUNTERTERRORISM ORGANIZATION, RESOURCES AND MEASURES IN YEMEN

Three aspects are examined in this section. The organizational framework of the Yemeni military and security services, focusing on units engaged in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. Next, the resources of those units will be examined. Finally, the implication of the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategy will be analyzed.

1. Organizational Framework

There are two phases to the organization framework of the military and security structure. The first phase dates to the start of the conflict, and can be described as a “coup-proof” military organization. The second phase started post-Arab Spring. The military and security services are currently being reorganized. President Hadi’s main goal of the reorganization is to consolidate power over the military and weaken former President Saleh loyalists—in other words he is creating a different “coup-proof” military structure. Neither structure is designed with Yemeni external security as the number one goal. The main purpose of the military is to defend the regime against internal threats.

The first phase of the military organizational framework was designed in what James T. Quinlivan calls “coup-proofing” which is characterized by “parallel military

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263 Ibid.
264 U.S. Department of State, Reports on Terrorism 2012.
266 Ibid., 4.
organizations and multiple internal security agencies” (see Figure 1). The “parallel” units (Republican Guard and later the Strategic Reserve Forces) receive the best training and equipment. However, the practice is known to undermine overall effectiveness to the state’s military because of the multiple chains of command.267 In this section, I will highlight the units that have COIN/CT duties.


Yemen has three intelligence agencies. The first intelligence agency is the Political Security Organization (PSO), which reports directly to the president and is tasked with counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and general intelligence gathering. The PSO has the authority to make arrests and runs its own prison system. The PSO reportedly worked with the CIA to combat al Qaeda.\textsuperscript{269} The organization is said to employ former jihadists, likely from the Islamic Jihad of Yemen (IJJ).\textsuperscript{270} The PSO also worked with the FBI on the \textit{USS Cole} bombing. The organization was led by Ghalib al-Qamish, one of the few top commanders not related to President Saleh.\textsuperscript{271} In order to replace the jihadi staffed and corrupt PSO, President Saleh created the independent National Security Bureau (NSB) in 2002. The NSB’s role is to coordinate intelligence across the government and security forces and liaison with foreign intelligence services. The NSB was run by Ali al-Ansi and Colonel Ammar Saleh, the president’s nephew.\textsuperscript{272} The final intelligence agency is the Ministry of Defense’s Military Intelligence (MI). MI is responsible for internal security and has the power to arrest and detain suspects.\textsuperscript{273}

The Republic of Yemen maintains two Special Forces units tasked with combating terrorists. First, in the Republican Guard was the Yemeni Special Operation Forces (YSOF) which reported directly to President Saleh. Previously lead by the president’s son Ahmad Saleh, the unit is tasked counterterrorism, hostage rescue, and anti-riot duties. The YSOF received training from U.S. Special Forces.\textsuperscript{274} Subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior was the Central Security Forces-Counter Terrorism Unit (CSF-CTU). Part of the larger gendarmerie Central Security Forces, the CSF-CTU, also

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{269} IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces,” \textit{Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment} last modified, February 12, 2014. \\

\textsuperscript{270} Johnsen, \textit{Last Refuge}, 182.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 75–80.

\textsuperscript{272} IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces.”

\textsuperscript{273} IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Special Forces (Government),” \textit{Jane’s Amphibious and Special Forces}, last modified, April 22, 2014. \\

\textsuperscript{274} IHS Jane’s, “World Armies: Yemen.”
\end{footnotesize}
received U.S. CT training. Formally lead by the president’s nephew Yahya Saleh, the CTU-CSF is tasked according to IHS Jane’s with “hostage rescue, close-quarters combat, forced entry and operations against high-value targets.”275 The Ministry of Defense did not have any specific counterterrorism units.

The military and security forces of the Ministry of the Defense and to a lesser extent the CSF and Republican Guard (RG) provided a majority of the forces for the counterinsurgency operations. The Ministry of Defense controlled “regular army” is charged with defending the country from outside invasion (although this is not likely with the improved relations with its neighbors) and counterinsurgency. The regular army has waged numerous campaigns against insurgents, jihadists, and tribal militias.276 The regular army was divided into five regional commands.277 The RG acted mainly as a praetorian guard with its members drawn from the president’s tribal confederation. The RG was commanded by the president’s son Ahmad Saleh.278 The final security force is the Ministry of the Interior’s Central Security Force (CSF). The CSF’s role is in internal order and security including running internal checkpoints and securing government buildings and essential infrastructure.279

The second phase of the organizational framework started with the accession of President Hadi to the Presidency in February 2012. President Hadi worked to unify the divided command structure of the military while weakening military commanders viewed as not loyal (see Figure 2). This period is also known for a marked increased ability of the armed forces to confront AQAP. President Hadi removed former President Saleh’s son Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh as head of the Republican Guard and Yemeni Special Operations forces, removed former President Saleh’s nephew Yahya Saleh as head of the

275 IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces.”


279 IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces.”
Central Security Forces and Brig. General Ali Muhsin as head of the First Armored Division. In December 2012, he issued a decree restructuring the armed forces into five branches and abolishing the Republican Guard and First Armor Division.²⁸⁰

Figure 2. Second Military Organizational Framework²⁸¹

While the organizational framework changed, and most of Saleh’s relatives were removed, the roles of the individual organizations did not change. The intelligence


agencies did not change in the organizational framework.\textsuperscript{282} The Special Forces changed significantly, with the CSF-CTU and the YSOF moved into the new Special Forces Command in the Strategic Reserve Forces. The army increased the number of regional commands from five to seven. Other significant changes include dissolving the Republican Guard and folding its units into the Ministry of Defense or the new Strategic Reserve Forces.\textsuperscript{283} The Strategic Reserve Forces appears to continue the “coup-proofing” military tradition.

2. COIN/CT Resources

Yemen must deal with limited resources when conducting its counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. The army has a large number of personnel, but soldiers are often poorly trained and equipped. The army had to shift focus from conventional warfare to counterinsurgency warfare in the past decade but the military commanders continue to focus on heavy weapons better suited for conventional warfare.

The Republic of Yemen has a relatively large standing military to deal with numerous internal threats. The army employs 60,000 active duty personal and 40,000 reservists. An additional 200,000 “inactive” troops (also called “ghost soldiers”) exist. The “inactive troops” collect a salary but do not perform any duties. Ghost troops are a clear waste of money and resources. The Yemeni military also has 5000 airmen, 1700 sailors, and 500 marines.\textsuperscript{284} The Yemeni military relies on conscription—but mainly as a way to counteract unemployment.\textsuperscript{285} The government, ranked eleven in the world in military spending of GDP, spends approximately 4 percent GDP on its military.\textsuperscript{286}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{282} IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces,” (2014).
\item \textsuperscript{283} IHS Jane’s, “Yemen’s president restructures military.”
\item \textsuperscript{284} IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Armed Forces,” (2014); IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Army,” (2014).
\item \textsuperscript{286} “Yemen,” The World Factbook.
\end{itemize}
The training and equipping of units is inconsistent. Front-line troops in the regular army are poorly trained and equipped.\textsuperscript{287} The elite units of the former RG, YSOF, and CSF-CTU received American training and equipment but are mainly used as a praetorian guard and are rarely used against the Huthis or Ansar al Shariah.\textsuperscript{288} The Americans have provided transport aircraft, four \textit{Huey} and 10 \textit{Hip} helicopters, 50 HMMWVs, radios, and night vision goggles. The equipment is designed to be used for counterterrorism raids by Special Forces.\textsuperscript{289} While there is known to be a ground forces training center, little information is available on military training outside the Special Forces.\textsuperscript{290}

Except for small numbers of advanced equipment reserved for counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda, the Yemeni military is equipped with a mix of aging Soviet, American, and French military equipment. The equipment is designed for conventional warfare. There are reportedly no plans to modernize current equipment, but the government is said to be interested procuring additional T-72 main battle tanks.\textsuperscript{291}

3. COIN/CT Implementation

The implementation of successful counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategy has been hindered by several factors. First, poor counterinsurgency doctrine causes destruction while doing little to win control over territory contested by the Huthis of AQAP. Second, the government can only achieve low levels of joint service interoperability. Finally, elite power struggles hampers the military’s full capabilities.

As noted earlier, the Yemeni military uses a poorly developed counterinsurgency doctrine. The strategy of blockade-and-bombard, which involves creating a cordon around a village to prevent escape then indiscriminate bombarding of the target, leads to high levels of civilian casualties.\textsuperscript{292} An outer cordon often included much of Sadah

\textsuperscript{287} U.S. Department of State, \textit{Country Reports on Terrorism 2013}
\textsuperscript{288} IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Army,” (2009).
\textsuperscript{289} Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 70–1.
\textsuperscript{292} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 164–5.
Governorate, with food and fuel shipments stopped from reaching the greater population. The strategy dates back to at least the 1994 civil war when it was used by the northern forces suggesting little has evolved in military thought and shows how the military is neither flexible nor innovative. The battles won against the Huthis and AQAP were due to the militants withdrawing rather than through infantry operations. The military during the Sadah Wars reportedly also used small unit engagements.

The Yemeni military has achieved low levels of joint interoperability. During the Sadah Wars the Yemeni Air Force conducted limited offensive air operations against Huthi positions, although strikes were not coordinated with the army. During the Abyan battle, the air force conducted similar air strikes and the navy reportedly conducted limited naval artillery operations on AQAP positions.

During the Huthi conflict, the Yemeni military deployed its conventional forces including infantry, armor, artillery, and support engineer units. The elite Republican Guard and Yemeni YSOF were reported engage in missions to capture or kill high value targets but were normally retained for purposes of regime security in Sanaa. The army was led by Brig. General Ali Muhsin and Yemeni’s often call the Sadah War “Ali Muhsin’s War.” The regular army was made up of mostly Sunni conscripts from the south and anti-Huthi officers from Sadah governorate. Ali Muhsin often relied on slow moving tanks and armored personnel carriers in the Sadah War which were vulnerable to RPGs and IEDs. Despite the use of heavy weapons and air power, the Yemen military were unable to defeat the lightly armed Huthis.

The government’s efforts to secure Sadah governorate were undermined by elite struggles within the regime. The dispute was between Brig. General Ali Muhsin, the main

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293 Boucek, “War in Saada,” 47.
298 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 159–60, 167.
The Yemeni commander during the Sadah wars, and Ahmed Ali Saleh, the commander of the Republican Guard and YSOF. The cause of the dispute was over the possible succession of Ahmed Ali to the office of President. During the Sadah War, Ali Muhsin requested the full backing of the RG and CSF but President Saleh reportedly refused. The dispute reached new heights when military planners in Sanaa working with the Saudi Air Force in 2009 gave a list of proposed air strike targets that included Ali Muhsin’s headquarters. President Saleh also reportedly withheld new equipment from the troops fighting in the Sadah, instead procuring new Russian equipment for the Republican Guard.

In the war against AQAP/ASY in Abyan, which occurred during the backdrop of the Arab Spring, the effort was stalled due to the political situation. After seizing the town of Jaar, hundreds al Qaeda militants attacked the Abyan governorate capital of Zinjibar. After overrunning the CSF garrison, AQAP tried to take the 25 Mechanized Brigade but were held off by the regular army troops and the CSF policemen that managed to regroup at the base. The base commander General Sumali called for backup. At this point in time, Ali Muhsin had defected and the military was split between pro-Saleh and pro-Muhsin factions. General Sumali took a neutral or “pro-Yemen” stance neither the Republican Guard nor the Muhsin-loyal 119 Brigade would assist him. It was only after the President Hadi took over that a coordinated counter-offense was able to drive AQAP from the battlefield.

The Yemeni government has also employed tribal militiamen in both conflicts. During the Huthi Wars the government employed thousands of Sunni tribesmen from outside Sadah to fight the Huthis. Brig. General Ali Muhsin is reported to have recruited Islah (Muslim Brotherhood) fighters and Salafi extremists from the south to battle the

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302 Hill, “Yemen Unrest.”


304 Johnsen, The Last Refuge, 276–8.

305 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 37–52.
Huthis. In the fight in the Abyan against AQAP, the government equipped and funded local “Popular Committees.” Unlike in the Sadah War most of these militias are defending their home towns from AQAP. The use of tribes has precedent with tribal militias fighting in the 1962 and 1994 civil wars. Working with of tribal militias has the added benefit for the government of dividing and weakening the tribes. A drawback to outsourcing the state security is that these Popular Committees could turn on the government or side with another militant group.

D. PUBLIC SUPPORT IN YEMEN

Analysis of public support for the Yemeni government reveals low levels of support. This was fairly evident by the Arab Spring. The political situation is chaotic with multiple factions fighting for control, which can undermine the public’s faith in the government. The economy and social situation is equally as bad with the middle class shrinking and poverty rising and rising levels of corruption. Limited public polling reveals significant levels of perceived insecurity across Yemen.

1. Political Situation in Yemen

The Political situation in Yemen is best described as unstable and chaotic. The central government has to compete with the tribes, political parties, independently minded regional military leaders, Islamists, the Huthis, and Hirak for the Weberian monopoly of violence. IHS Jane’s asserts that Yemen relies heavily on “patronage, coercion, and propaganda” to rule. In addition to the Huthi and AQAP insurgencies, the Arab Spring also changed the political situation in Yemen. The Arab Spring in Yemen started in early 2011 and ended with President Saleh resigning in return for immunity from prosecution. Saleh signed a CCG brokered deal on November 23rd. Soon thereafter, Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour al-Hadi was then “elected” in a one

306 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 162.
307 Coombs, “Yemen’s Use of Militias.”
308 Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 111.
309 Sharp, Yemen: Background (2010), 1–2.
candidate election. President Hadi purged the government of Saleh’s family after taking office.\footnote{Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background} (2012), 4–5.}

Following President Hadi’s election, the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was held to form a new government. The NDC brought together representatives from various political parties and groups, but is moving much slower than planned with only an agreement on federation signed. The NDC still needs to write a new constitution hold a referendum on the constitution, and hold presidential and parliamentary elections—all of which should have happened by February 2014.\footnote{Jeremy M. Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations} (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 1–3.}

The Huthis complicated matters when its forces and allies seized control of the capital and forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement in late 2014.\footnote{Ghobari, “Houthis Tighten Grip”; International Crisis Group, “Yemen, October 1, 2014”; “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government,” \textit{AFP}; “Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis,” \textit{al Jazeera} (In English).} It is too early to assess the results of the Huthi “victory” and power sharing. Emerging reports are linking the sudden victory to a secret alliance with former President Saleh. The Huthi ranks were reportedly swelled with laid off former Republican Guards.\footnote{IHS Jane’s, “Meteoric rise — Yemeni Houthis’ emergence as a national powerbroker,” \url{https://janes.jhs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=News&Itemld=++ +1728057&Pubabbrev=JIAA#Saleh support}.}

The constant political upheaval caused by the Sadah wars, the AQAP-led insurgencies, the Arab Spring, internal political power plays, the slowness of the NDC process and finally the Huthi takeover undoubtedly undermine public confidence in the government. While it appears the wars with the Huthis are over for now, fighting AQAP and Ansar al Shariah will probably have some support since these groups are viewed as less legitimate than the government.

\section*{2. Economic and Social Situation}

The economic and social situation of a country contributes to the general satisfaction of the people and affects their support for the government and its policies.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background} (2012), 4–5.}
\item \footnote{Jeremy M. Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations} (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 1–3.}
\item \footnote{Ghobari, “Houthis Tighten Grip”; International Crisis Group, “Yemen, October 1, 2014”; “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government,” \textit{AFP}; “Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis,” \textit{al Jazeera} (In English).}
\item \footnote{IHS Jane’s, “Meteoric rise — Yemeni Houthis’ emergence as a national powerbroker,” \url{https://janes.jhs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=News&ItemId=++ +1728057&Pubabbrev=JIAA#Saleh support}.}
\end{itemize}
The economic and social situation in Yemen is poor. IHS Jane’s assesses that the “combination of economic and social factors exacerbated by perceptions of corruption” is the main cause of Yemen’s problems.\footnote{IHS Jane’s “Executive Summary: Yemen,” (2014), 2.} This was evident during the Arab Spring protests. This section will provide a concise overview of economic and social situation in Yemen.

Yemen has two major industries, oil and qat—both are part of the same negative feedback loop. Oil makes up 60 percent of the state’s revenue but at the current level of production oil reserves will be exhausted in 10 to 15 years. Oil accounts for 87 percent of exports making it the main source of foreign currency.\footnote{Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background} (2010), 21–2; Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background} (2014), 6–7.} In 2006, the ROY started an economic program to diversify the economy.\footnote{“Yemen,” \textit{The World Factbook}.} The revenue generated by oil pays for fuel subsidies which accounts for around 11 percent of GDP. The low fuel prices in turn make the cost of pumping water artificially low and the cheap water is then used to grow qat. The mild narcotic qat is Yemen’s main cash crop. Cultivation of qat employs 12 percent of the Yemeni population and uses 40 percent of the countries water supply. Qat hurts productivity with workers spending upwards of one quarter of the work day on qat breaks. The average Yemeni spends between 10 percent and 30 percent of their annual income on the drug.\footnote{Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background} (2010), 21–2; Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background} (2014), 6–7.}

Yemen’s economic and resource long-term structural economic problems might eclipse its current problems with the Huthis and AQAP.\footnote{Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background} (2010), 21.} First, attacks on the oil infrastructure could lead to sudden drops in government revenue, a possible a balance-of-payment crisis and difficulties in paying government salaries on time. Second, long term declines on oil revenue would result in the same problems—and fixing a pipeline will not
be the quick fix.\textsuperscript{320} Without oil the already high unemployment will rise due to the layoffs from the large public sector.\textsuperscript{321}

The overall economic situation for the average Yemeni is also poor. The official unemployment rate is 33.7 percent and the GDP per capita (PPP) is estimated at $2,500. Over 45 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Inflation was close to 12 percent in 2013.\textsuperscript{322} The Yemeni middle class has shrunk since the early 2000s and hunger and malnutrition are on the rise.\textsuperscript{323} The population growth rate is very high at 2.72 percent (world rank 20th).\textsuperscript{324} The worsening economic situation undermines people confidence in the government.

Corruption is also a major problem in Yemen, with Terrill describing the system as a “kleptocracy.” The low pay of the large government and military workforce leads to civil servants, police, and soldiers to take small bribes from the populace to do their job. The system extends up the chain of command.\textsuperscript{325} In 2013, Yemen came in 167 out of 175 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index suggesting the population perceives widespread corruption across the government.\textsuperscript{326}

With the loss of oil revenue, shrinking middle class, and increasing unemployment and poverty it will be difficult for the Yemeni government to rally public support for (or even pay for) its COIN/CT policies. This is compounded with the perception of widespread corruption. Some of these issues were manifested in the Arab Spring and the Sadah War.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{320} IHS Jane’s, “Executive Summary: Yemen,” (2014), 3.
\bibitem{321} Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 11–2.
\bibitem{322} “Yemen,” \textit{The World Factbook}.
\bibitem{323} Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 11–2.
\bibitem{324} “Yemen,” \textit{The World Factbook}.
\bibitem{325} Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 13–4.
\bibitem{326} Transparency International, \textit{Corruption Perceptions Index 2013},
\url{http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results}.
\end{thebibliography}
3. Analysis of Public Opinion

Public Opinion data in Yemen is scarce. The Yemen Polling Center (YPC), a local institute that has partnered with Gallop, the United Nations, and the World Bank, released data in July 2014 detailing the popular perceptions of security and insecurity in Yemen. A significantly less detailed report was published in 2012 and 2013, making a trend analysis of the conflict time frame (2004–2014) impossible. Yet the 2013 and 2014 poll still provides insight in security and insecurity in Yemen. While not a measure of public support for COIN/CT policies per se, no governorate views the Yemeni government as the number one source of insecurity. The highest percentages of citizens viewing the government as the number one source of insecurity are in Sadah (20 percent), Hadramawt (15 percent) and Marib (11 percent). It is not clear whether the citizens are citing the government based on the government’s actions or inactions. Yemenis view other groups as more serious problems. AQAP/ASY and other “extremists” are viewed as the number one source of insecurity in al-Jawf (35 percent), Marib (25 percent), Shabwa (20 percent), al Baydha (25 percent), Abyan (52 percent), Lahj (33 percent), and Hadramawt (25 percent). Huthis are viewed as the main source of insecurity in Sadah (24 percent), Hajja (25 percent), and Sanaa (18 percent). Tribal conflicts are of the greatest concern in Rayma (16 percent) and Dhamar (15 percent). Finally crime is the number one source of insecurity in Amran (20 percent), Aden (34 percent), al Dhali (20 percent), Taiz (18 percent), Ibb (24 percent), and Sanaa City (36 percent). The data is not available for a conclusive assessment but logic dictates that higher levels of insecurity could translate into higher tolerance of government actions against AQAP/AY and the Huthis.

329 Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions.”
E. CONCLUSION/ANALYSIS

The Republic of Yemen executes its counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies within the military paradigm. This is due to the weak legal framework and limited policing ability. The main strategy used by the Yemeni government is repression with limited decapitation operations and negotiations. The Yemeni military is not capable on its own to use repression to end the two insurgencies. First, the military is designed in a “coup-proofing” structure, which limits the use of the best trained and best equipped units as a praetorian guard. Second, the military is still equipped to fight a conventional war and has yet to adapt to the realities of asymmetrical warfare. Third, the counterinsurgency strategy, block-and-bombard, hurts the government’s popular support. Finally, political elite infighting has undermined the military’s ability to effectively fight AQAP or the Huthis. The only bright side to the public support for counterinsurgency policies is the government’s use of Popular Committees against AQAP. This is a clear example of winning the popular support of the people against a common enemy, but at the same time it shows the weakness of the government. Unless the government makes serious changes it will still struggle to defeat the insurgencies with force.
IV. EFFECTIVENESS OF INSURGENCIES

“The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea...It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element cannot live.”

—Mao Tse-tung 330

A. INTRODUCTION

The Huthis have waged a more effective insurgency than al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al Shariah (AQAP/ASY) when measured by the standard of controlling territory. The Huthis control parts of northwest Yemen while AQAP’s control has been limited and sporadic. For the purposes for this chapter, I will limit the time frame of the study to the start of the respective insurgencies. The Huthis became an insurgent group in 2004 and AQAP/ASY became an insurgent group in 2010.331 In this chapter, I will compare five variables. First, the strategies and development of the Huthis and AQAP since the outbreak of their respected conflicts will be compared. The second variable is the organizational structure and resources of the groups. Third, the recruitment strategies and popular support of the organizations will be compared. International support for the Huthis and AQAP, an important factor in successful insurgencies, is the fourth variable.332 Finally, a survey of territorial gains and losses over time will be compared.

B. HUTHI MOVEMENT

The Huthi movement has several factors that differentiate them from al Qaeda. First, the Huthis have developed from a peaceful social movement, to a resistance group, to an insurgency over the course of two decades. Second, the organizational structure


331 While the Huthis seem to get a “head start” over AQAP, the origins of the Jihadist-Salafist movement date back prior to the founding of the Believing Youth movement. The previous Jihadist-Salafist groups collapsed for a variety of reasons where as the Huthi movement has been a continuous movement for over twenty years.

more closely resembles a Yemeni tribal confederation than an insurgent group. Third, the base of the Huthis is much larger and more diverse. Finally, the Huthis are more successful at capturing and administrating territory.

1. Strategies and Developments

The strategies and developments of the Huthi movement can be broken into five phases. The first phase was the Believing Youth era which was a religious revivalist social movement. During the second phase the Believing Youth became a political movement that protested Yemen’s participation in the GWOT. The first two phases were covered in Chapter II and will not be further covered here. The third phase saw the Huthi movement arise as militia whose professed goals were resistance against government repression and Salafist proselytizing. Phase four started during the Arab Spring. The Huthis formed a political wing and consolidated territorial gains in Sadah and its environs. The final phase, which recently began, saw the Huthis seize Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, and force President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement. This section will focus on strategies during the third and fourth phases of development. The fifth phase is ongoing and it too early to tell if these gains will last.

The third phase of development started when the first round of the Huthi war commenced. After anti-American and anti-government protests in Sanaa resulted in clashes with Yemeni security forces and the arrests of 600 members of the BY, the Huthis changed strategies and took up arms in defense. During the first round (June 2004–September 2004), the government tried to arrest the BY leader Husayn al-Huthi but he died in a gun fight. The Republic of Yemen (ROY) declared an end to the conflict that had killed 1,000 in Sadah shortly after Husayn’s death.333 Between September 2004 and March 2005, Badr al-din al-Huthi (Husayn’s father) tried to negotiate an end to the conflict but the government officials refused to meet with him.334 Fresh fighting kicked off the second round (March 2005–April 2005), which was more widespread with combat in Sadah city. The government once again declared a unilateral cease fire after it thought

333 Boucek, “War in Saada,” 50–1; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 134.
334 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 134.
it killed Abdullah al-Razzami, a Huthi commander.\textsuperscript{335} During the second interim, low levels of violence continued and government arrested suspected Huthi supporters. Conflicts between Huthis and non-allied tribes continued during this time.\textsuperscript{336} The third round (December 2005–February 2006), saw an increase in violence. The round started when Huthis attacked a government checkpoint after a marked increase of pro-Huthi and pro-government tribal fighting. As punishment, the government used artillery and air strikes against villages suspected of hiding Huthi fighters. The elderly Badr al-din al-Huthi died and was replaced by his son Abdul Malik al-Huthi as leader of the Huthis. Non-Huthi allied tribes started requesting government forces leave their land during this round. Fighting stopped for the 2006 presidential election.\textsuperscript{337} Negotiations between the Huthis and government started in February 2006, although low level tribal conflict continued.\textsuperscript{338}

The conflict significantly increased in intensity in the final three rounds. After a year-long lull, the fourth round began in February 2007. The government and a large number of pro-government tribal militias attacked Huthi positions in an unrestrained matter. The Huthis were on the defensive for most of the round, but managed to secure a base of operations in mountains and laid siege to a military unit trapped on a mountain. The Huthis were also able to secure more tribal allies alienated by ROY’s brutal COIN policies. Ultimately, the Huthis won the fourth round which ended in January 2008 with the Qatari mediated ceasefire.\textsuperscript{339} The ceasefire collapsed after a bomb detonated outside a mosque in Sadah city killed 17 and wounded 48 in May 2008. The mosque served both Zaydis and Sunnis\textsuperscript{340} so it is unclear who set off the bomb. During the fifth round, Huthi fighters pushed south to the outskirts of Sanaa city. The round ended in July 2008 after a

\textsuperscript{336} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 137–8.
\textsuperscript{338} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 141–3.
\textsuperscript{340} Due to the little differences between Zaydi and Shafi’i they often worship together.
unilateral ceasefire was declared by President Saleh.\textsuperscript{341} The final round dubbed *Operation Scorched Earth* (August 2009–February 2010), was the last major round of the conflict. President Saleh blamed the Huthis for a kidnapping and the killing of Europeans in July. The Huthis blamed pro-government tribes for the killings, and staged large protests condemning the kidnapping.\textsuperscript{342} This round saw the formalization of Popular Committees and vast destruction of villages across Sadah and northern Amran governorates due to government bombardment. The Huthis gained numerous new followers and allies due to indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas. The final round also drew Saudi Arabian involvement along the border after the Huthis seized and later abandoned portions of Saudi territory. Saudi artillery and airplanes struck numerous Huthi targets in Sadah. Shortly after the failed Christmas 2009 underwear bombing of an aircraft by AQAP, Adb al Malik al-Huthi announced a ceasefire, accepting the ROY’s and Saudi conditions. The final round ended with vast damage across Sadah governorate and the Huthis in control of several districts.\textsuperscript{343}

During the six rounds of conflict, the Huthis’ strategy was mostly defensive. The only show of initiative was the push towards the capital during the fifth round and the strategically ill-advised campaign into Saudi Arabia in the sixth round. The tactics included standard guerilla operations such as: harassing fire on camps, checkpoints, and convoys; skirmishes; primitive IED attacks against convoys; assassinating top government and pro-government tribal officials; establishing checkpoints; destroying local government building; closing or destroying roads; raiding outposts and convoys for weapons.\textsuperscript{344}

The next phase of development occurred during the Arab spring, starting in February 2012, when the Huthis implemented a dual strategy of participating in the anti-
government protests while securing control in Sadah governorate.\footnote{Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14–6.} On the military side the Huthis were able to consolidate control (with allied tribes) of most of Sadah after northwest regional commander Brig. General Ali Muhsin and 10,000 troops defected to the anti-President Saleh camp\footnote{“10,000 Yemeni Forces Defect from Government, Join Protesters: Official,” Xinhua net (In English), April 13, 2011, \url{http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011–04/13/c_13827610.htm}.} (see Figure 3). According to Terrill, the Huthis “ran checkpoints, secured roads, collected taxes oversaw local government administration and administered justice.”\footnote{International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” i–ii.}

At the start of the Arab Spring, the Huthis were forced to articulate a clear political platform.\textsuperscript{349} The Arab Spring saw the political goals of three groups overlap, the Huthis, the Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth.\textsuperscript{350} The Arab Spring recruits to the Huthi cause were young, urban, and educated. This urban Huthi base allied with the Hirak and Revolutionary Youth in opposition to the CCG transition plan.\textsuperscript{351} This new liberal base advocated “Huthi positions” at the UN-backed National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which also gave them a legitimate national and international voice.\textsuperscript{352} These Huthis advocated for federal democratic government with checks and balances, political pluralism, and freedom of religion. Yemeni critics charge that the Huthis are repressive in areas under its control and do not live up to its so-called ideals.\textsuperscript{353}

The final phase of development started in late 2014. With government presence in the north limited, the Huthis started clashing with anti-Huthi forces. The clashes started because the Huthis alleged that the al Qaeda-linked\textsuperscript{354} Salafist Dammaj Institute near Sadah was training foreign fighters. This led to a complex conflict with the Huthis and its tribal allies and newly allied members of former President Saleh’s General People’s Congress (GPC) against Salafist fighters and AQAP, and an allied bloc of Salafists, the Ahmar family, Islah, and Brig. General Ali Muhsin and his 301th Military Brigade. Fighting raged across Sadah and into Amran, Hajja and al Jawf governorates, and along the Saudi border. In July, the Yemeni Air Force started bombing Huthi positions.\textsuperscript{355} The Huthis and its allies won victory after victory, gaining popular support through implementing security and law and order in areas under its control. The anti-Huthi

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 2.
\item \textsuperscript{350} Winter, “Ansar of Yemen.”
\item \textsuperscript{351} Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 16.
\item \textsuperscript{352} International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” 2.
\item \textsuperscript{353} Ibid., i.
\item \textsuperscript{355} International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” 3–4.
\end{thebibliography}

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alliance lost the support of the Saudis due to links with the Muslim Brotherhood, which likely hastened their defeat.356

As of the time of the writing of this paper the Huthis appeared to have “won” (at least momentary). While fighting raged to the north of Sanaa, Huthi led protests were held in the capital to protest fuel subsidies being lifted and to call for the government to resign.357 Protests lasted from July until late September.358 Brig. General Ali Muhsin’s soldiers and armed supporters of the Islah political party eventually confronted the protestors. Huthi fighters responded to attack, defeated both groups, then captured Ali Muhsin’s 1st Armored Division headquarters and Islah leader Sheikh Abdel-Majeed al-Zindani’s359 al-Imam University. Large numbers of security forces switched sides and fought with the Huthis against the Ali Muhsin-Islah alliance. After crushing all its opponents the Huthis forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement to make the Huthis part of the government. The Huthis included the Hirak in the spoils, as it is also a signatory.360

2. Organization and Resources

Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells describe the Huthi organization as an “organism.”361 The group is organized as a network with different groups with relations to the center. It should be noted that information about the structure is scarce and dated. The highest command and control of the organization falls under the control of the al Huthi family (hence the “Huthi” name). IHS Jane’s describes the command and control as run along tribal and familial lines.362 The Huthi family is both a tribal and sada family which

356 Ibid., 8.
357 “Call for Houthi civil disobedience in Yemen,” al Jazeera.
358 “Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis,” al Jazeera (In English).
361 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 189.
increases the size of the organic network.\textsuperscript{363} In sum, the Huthis are organized into small local units across Yemen based on family, tribal, and, \textit{sada} relationships (see Figure 4).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.png}
\caption{Theoretical Huthi Organizational Structure}
\end{figure}

The Huthis did not have a paramilitary command, control, and communications structure in place prior to the initiation of the conflict. Since the conflict started, two levels of Huthi militia have developed. At the highest level the brothers of the Huthi family share various “headquarters” duties including head commander of Huthi forces. The Huthi family commands at least three small companies. The followers in these units are loyal to the Huthis due to familial or \textit{sada} prestige. These groups are known to move within small areas of operations.\textsuperscript{364} The second source of fighters operates in platoon sized groups under the command of a local field commander. These groups are tied to a

\textsuperscript{363} Salimi, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 102–3.

\textsuperscript{364} Ibid., 189–93.
local area, a town or district. Their mission is to primarily protect their homes from the military and pro-government militias. The semi-autonomous field commanders are local notables that are loyal to the Huthi family or Zaydi cause. Unlike AQAP’s leaders, the field commander’s authority over his followers is based on prestige rather than coercion. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells note the heterogeneous makeup of the field commanders and the Huthi organization resembles a tribal confederation network structure rather than a paramilitary structure.\textsuperscript{365} While the Huthi military structure violates the highly organized guerrilla army laid out by Mao,\textsuperscript{366} the social-based network has proven to be a successful in northern Yemen’s society.

The third source of armed supporters includes tribal militias allied with the Huthis, but not under direct Huthi control. In past rounds of fighting Huthi-allied tribes tried to settle old scores with pro-government tribes.\textsuperscript{367} The use of tribal allies has drawbacks (for both sides) as evident when the third round the conflict between the ROY and the Huthis started when Huthi-allied tribes and pro-government tribes started clashing.\textsuperscript{368}

In addition to the heterogeneous nature of the Huthis, the lack of effective communication or coordination also limited further centralization of the loosely formed Huthi organization. Several reports indicate the Huthi commanders and field commanders communicate via cell phones and satellite phones. Despite the communication capabilities the Huthis forces did not show the ability to coordinate attacks amongst the regional units.\textsuperscript{369}

The Huthis raise funds through two primary channels, taxation and smuggling. There is little proof to back ROY claims of international funding (see Section B.4).

\textsuperscript{365} Ibid., 189–97
\textsuperscript{368} Boucek, “War in Saada,” 51–52.
According to IHS Jane’s, most funds are probably raised from smuggling qat into Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{370} The Huthis also collect a \textit{zakat} in areas it controls.\textsuperscript{371}

Weapons are plentiful in northern Yemen and are part of an overall gun culture that emphasizes personal autonomy and manliness.\textsuperscript{372} The Yemeni government estimates two to three weapons per male aged 16–44. The Huthis also have access to the country’s largest arms market Suq al-Talh, where rifles, RPGs, and rockets are reportedly available.\textsuperscript{373} The Huthis also buy weapons from government conscripts who claim to have lost them during battles. Other sources included weapons donated to the cause and captured ROY weapons. Propaganda photographs show a captured T-55 tank, M113 armored personal carrier (APC), anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), trucks with mounted weapons (technicals), and a RATEL infantry fighting vehicle (IFV).\textsuperscript{374}

The organic command and control, coupled with local members dedicated to protecting their land and homes, and a large surplus of weapons have given the Huthis an edge in its contest with the government. The command and control would have to change if the Huthis are intent on expanding outside its traditional areas of operations and into Sunni populated areas, since the expansion would not be “defensive” and local recruits to the cause would be limited.

\textbf{3. Recruitment and Popular Support}

As stated earlier, the main recruiting efforts for the BY were religious education, youth study groups, and holiday gatherings (see Chapter II.3.B). After the conflict started, the efforts shifted from recruitment into a religious revival movement into a militia, which requires a significantly more dedicated member.\textsuperscript{375} There are three levels of supporters: fighters, direct supporters, and sympathizers (popular supporters). Due to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{370} IHS Jane’s, “Al-Shabab al-Muminin,” 8.
\item \textsuperscript{371} \textit{Zakat} —an Islamic charitable tax. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 196.
\item \textsuperscript{372} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 36–7.
\item \textsuperscript{373} Ibid., 37–40.
\item \textsuperscript{374} Ibid., 199–202.
\item \textsuperscript{375} McAdam, “Recruitment to High-Risk Activism,” 64.
\end{itemize}
the media blackout in the conflict zone and the lack of reliable information\textsuperscript{376} it is difficult to judge the exact number of the supporters but a general analysis of the available information reveals that the Huthis have a fairly high level of support in Sadah governorate, and more recently Amran and Sanaa governorates.

Membership surged to the militant wing of the Huthis after fighting commenced in 2004. The number of fighters is difficult to judge but IHS Jane’s estimates the size of the fighting force to be around 6,000. Many reportedly joined out of anger at government bombardment of civilian areas during battles and the looting of property by pro-government tribal militias during military operations.\textsuperscript{377} One Yemeni parliamentarian observed that the Huthis got stronger after each round as more people joined to defend their villages. A member of the ruling GPC party claimed that most Huthis joined for nonreligious reasons.\textsuperscript{378}

Both the Huthis and the ROY have tried to court tribal sheikhs. At the start of the conflict most supported the government but heavy-handed ROY military operations have driven some into the Huthi camp.\textsuperscript{379} The Huthis also act as neutral arbitrators in tribal and local disputes to win trust.\textsuperscript{380} But as Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells finds, “tribal alliances with the [government]—or Huthis—are short-lived, changing with circumstances or qabili [(tribal)] assessments of what benefits them at any given time.”\textsuperscript{381} The various tribal militias only cooperate when their interests overlap with the Huthis.\textsuperscript{382}

Popular support is difficult to measure without polling. The poor conduct of the Yemeni military in counterinsurgency operations, including indiscriminate bombardment

\textsuperscript{376} Boucek, “War in Saada,” 49–50.
\textsuperscript{377} IHS Jane’s, “Al-Shabab al-Muminin,” 7.
\textsuperscript{379} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 147.
\textsuperscript{380} Koehler-Derrick, False Foundation, 100.
\textsuperscript{381} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 162.
\textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 197.
of civilian areas, and the general socioeconomic marginalization of northwest Yemen has garnered some popular support for the group. At least 3,000 people in Yemen have been arrested for supporting the Huthis. Videotaped organized holiday events, where Huthi ideologues give speeches, reveal that thousands travel to remote areas to listen to Huthi speakers. The videos suggest a large support base in Sadah governorate. 

Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells assert that the Huthis attract three types of supporters. First, the religiously inclined are attracted to the pro-Zaydi message. The second group, with a more tribal outlook, is attracted to the group because they want to defend their homeland from the ROY military. Finally, a politically motivated group is drawn to the pro-republican nature of the Huthis. During the “Arab Spring” the Huthis were able to attract new supporters from the young, educated, urban class. The Huthis made up approximately ten percent of the protestors in Sanaa’s change square.

Polling data on Yemen is limited. The Yemen Polling Center (YPC), a local institute that has partnered with Gallop, the United Nations, and the World Bank, released data in July 2014 detailing the popular perceptions of security and insecurity in Yemen. A significantly less detailed report was published in 2012 and 2013, making a trend analysis of the conflict time frame (2004–2014) impossible. Yet the 2013 and 2014 poll still provides insight in popular support or lack thereof of the Huthis. First, while controlling the entire Sadah governorate since 2011, the Huthis are perceived as the top source of security problems by the populace in Sadah. Only 14 percent of the locals perceive Huthis as providing security as opposed to tribes (28 percent) or local notables or citizens (39 percent), suggesting the “control” of Sadah maybe not be as strong as

384 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 2.
385 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 218.
386 Ibid., 234.
389 Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions.”
previously believed. The government is cited by no citizens as a provider of security. It is also possible that the tribes and local notables are allied or are working with the Huthis. While popular support cannot be determined from the poll it can be inferred that the 28 percent of the population that named the Huthis as the primary source of insecurity are not loyal to the organization. Another 16 percent blame the government for Sadah’s insecurity but they could be loyal to anyone, including the government, which is not present in Sadah. Polling also shows that the Huthis provided some security in al-Jawf and Marib governorate.391

The tribal and sectarian nature of the Huthis limits mass popular support in Yemen.392 As the Huthis expand control out of traditional Zaydi areas, it will likely face resistance from the local tribal populations. There have been reported clashes between Huthis and tribes after the Huthis tried to operate in tribal areas not allied with the Huthis.393 Since the conflict with the government broke out 2004, the Huthi’s greatest limitation in drawing in mass support is its current lack of social welfare wing common in other insurgent groups. This deficiency is probably due to lack of funding.394

4. International Support

The Yemeni government alleges that a variety of outside actors support the Huthi rebels. The government has listed Iran, Hezbollah, (Gaddafi’s) Libya, Iraq, and Eritrea as sources of international support.395 The major source of international support is Iran. An unnamed U.S. official alleged that Quds Force operatives396 were smuggling small and medium sized arms and explosives into Yemen via small boats through the Red Sea coast. Shortly afterward the U.S.-trained Yemeni Coast Guard interdicted a boat smuggling arms including antiaircraft missiles.397 While the Huthis and Iran have always

391 Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions.”
393 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 138, 141.
394 Ibid., 238.
396 Quds Force—clandestine branch of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps.
denied any ties. Iran provides political, in addition to material support, to the Huthis. In 2009, Iranian’s foreign minister and speaker of the parliament both declared that Iran is activity involved in Yemen’s “internal security.” No evidence of any other type of support by any other country has been provided by the Yemeni government. Policy analysts believe that the claims of outside assistance are exaggerated, intended to increase aid from the Gulf States.

Overall, international support for the Huthis appears to be low. With the exception of probable regular weapons shipments from Iran the Huthis receive little else. Byman lists five sources of assistance that outside states can offer including, arms and money, a safe haven, diplomatic and political assistance, and direct military support. There are no reports of Iranian direct military support. The distance from Yemen to Iran limits the utility of a safe haven. Even if Huthis could travel to Iran for training, the Huthis have thousands of battle-hardened veterans—the group hardly need basic guerrilla training. It would be more helpful if Quds Force agents traveled to Yemen to provide specialized training. It is also clear that Iran does not provide much monetary assistance as evident by the Huthis lack of a strong social welfare wing. The diplomatic and political assistance are also limited, because Iran’s international relations with Europe, North Africa, and South-West Asia, and North America are strained. According to Clark, Iran did name a street “The Martyrs of Sadah Street,” but this does little to help the Huthi cause.

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399 Sharp, Yemen: Background (2010), 18.
400 Zuhair al Harithi, “Understanding Yemen’s Troubles: A Saudi Perspective,” Arab Insight 2 no. 7 (2010), 83.
403 Bymen et al., Outside Support for Insurgent, xvii–xix.
404 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 238.
406 Clark, Dancing on the Heads, 257.
Iran’s ties are also limited by the differences in Shia religious practices since the Huthis are wary of conversion efforts.407

5. Territorial Gains and Losses

The Huthis control large swaths of northwest and central Yemen as of October 2014. During the six rounds of the Huthi conflict, the Huthis did not secure control over territory (liberated zones) until the fourth round.408 By the end of the sixth round, the Huthis were in control of several districts in Sadah.409 The weakening of state during the Arab Spring allowed the Huthis to cement control over the rest of Sadah.410 The Huthis were able to reach an agreement with non-Huthi notables in Sadah who collectively choose the non-Huthi Faris Man’a as governor of Sadah. The governorate is reportedly the most stable it has been in a decade.411 In late 2014 the Huthis took advantage of a weak government and hostile (yet weak) opposition to take control of most of northwest Yemen.412 At the time of the writing the Huthis are still on the offensive. The Huthis claim these gains are locally driven, with locals allying themselves with the Huthis—but pushes into Sunni areas raise doubts on this narrative.413

C. AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

We bring to our nation the good news that the mujahedeen passed the stage of defense and repulsion of the aggression to the stage where they can take the initiative and attack.

—Hamil al-Misk in The Echo of Epic Battles414

Despite also operating in Yemen, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is quite different than the Huthis. First, the AQAP, descended from a line of Jihadi-Salafists

407 Johnsen, Last Refuge, 156; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 112.
411 Winter, “Ansar of Yemen.”
412 Al-Sakkaf, “Houthis Take Hodeia.”
dedicated to violence and terrorism. They only later developed from a terrorist group to an insurgent group—that engages in terrorism. Second, the organizational structure of AQAP is what the Council on Foreign Relations calls “heretical, compartmentalized, and decentralized.”415 Third, the base of the AQAP is much smaller, since Salafists make up only a small minority in Yemen. AQAP relies more heavily on foreign fighters because of this and there international agenda. Finally, al Qaeda is far less successful than the Huthis in controlling territory.

1. Strategies and Developments

The strategies and developments of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) can be broken into two phases. The first phase, which started with the creation of al Qaeda in the South Arabian Peninsula after the 2006 prison break, was characterized by terrorist attacks designed to undermine the legitimacy of the Yemeni government.416 This differs significantly from the Huthis’ defensive guerrilla warfare. The second phase started during the Arab Spring, when AQAP formed Ansar al-Shariah (ASY) and started an insurgency to capture towns in southern Yemen. Since the main focus of this study is insurgency, this section is about the second phase.

The second phase of development saw AQAP shift from being exclusively a clandestine organization conducting terrorist operations, to an insurgent group interested in capturing and administrating territory. This began in late 2010, just before the Arab Spring, but picked up the pace in the wake of the protests. While AQAP and ASY have effectively fought the military and captured towns in southern Yemen, success has been fleeting. Independent-minded tribes do not want to live under what a ASY leader proclaimed as the “Taliban way” version of Shariah law.417

The full insurgency started when al Qaeda militants seized a town in southern Yemen. Under the banner of AQAP, the town of Lawder (see Figure 5) was infiltrated then captured on 19 August 2010. The implementation of the brutal form of shariah law

416 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 26–8.
417 Ibid., 36.
was reported by fleeing townspeople, but rule only lasted a few days. The Yemeni military expelled the militants on 25 August. The citizens of Lawder then formed a Popular Committee militia to defend the town.418 The next month, AQAP captured Hawta, but this time it refused to let 12,000 residents leave in order to use them as human shields to prevent Yemen artillery operations. Nonetheless, the military recaptured Hawta a few days later.419

![Map of Yemen showing Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al Shariah Insurgency 2011–2012](image)

Figure 5. Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al Shariah Insurgency 2011–2012.420

After the start of the Arab Spring in Yemen, beginning in February 2011, AQAP announced the formation of Ansar al-Shariah (ASY). ASY massed its forces, 1000

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strong, and captured the southern towns of Jaar in March 2011, and Abyan provisional capital Zinjibar in May. Only the 25 Mechanized Brigade held out, under siege in its base, with supplies air dropped by the U.S. In January 2012, ASY captured the town of Rida and emptied the prison there before departing. In February, ASY launched a surprise attack killing 185, and capturing 70 soldiers outside Zinjibar. ASY attacked Lawder a second time, but the local Popular Committee and the Yemeni military held them off. AQAP/ASY military commander (and USS Cole conspirer) was shortly after killed in an air strike. President Hadi launched a major offensive in May 2012, with 20,000 troops, thousands of Saudi-funded Popular Committee militiamen, and joint Yemen Air Force and Yemeni Naval operations. The operation was successful, and by June the Yemeni military had liberated Zinjibar, Jaar, Shaqra and Azzan. After ASY’s defeat AQAP reverted to terrorist tactics. AQAP kept a low profile for most of 2013, and many members “slipped back into normal society,” according to Andrew Michaels and Sakhr Ayyash.

During the first and second phase, AQAP continued the “war” against America announced by bin Laden in 1996. These attacks include the Christmas Day underwear bomber and the parcel bomb plot. In August 2013 dozens of American Embassies across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia were closed due to an AQAP plot.

The tactics used by AQAP/ASY in the second phase include standard guerilla and terrorist operations such as: ambushes; published “death lists” of government officials, the use of human shields against Yemeni military forces, infiltrating a town before

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421 Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 37–52.
422 IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 8; Andrew Michaels and Sakhr Ayyash, “AQAP’s Resilience in Yemen,” *Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel* 6, no. 9 (September 2013), 12.
424 Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 53–54.
taking it over, suicide bombings, hit-and-run raids, assassinations of government and tribal officials, and murdering civilians.\textsuperscript{427}

2. Organization and Resources

AQAP “is heretical, compartmentalized, and decentralized” according to reporting form the Council on Foreign Relations.\textsuperscript{428} The organization is led by \textit{emir}\textsuperscript{429} Nasir al-Wuhayshi former aide-de-camp of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{430} Since taking command Wuhayshi strived to emulate his mentor bin Laden and designed a robust organization that could withstand the deaths of leaders, unlike the previous al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY). Wuhayshi also tried (but failed) to overcome mistakes made by previous jihadists and minimize civilian causalities and only attack legitimate targets.\textsuperscript{431} In addition to being the \textit{emir} of AQAP, he was also appointed the general manager of al Qaeda Core (AQC) by Ayman al-Zawahiri. His responsibility as general manager is to coordinate the operations of al Qaeda affiliates.\textsuperscript{432}

Ansar al-Shariah, the “rebranded” AQAP, acts as AQAP’s insurgent wing and when in control of village or town establishes shariah courts, administrates social services, and repairs broken infrastructure.\textsuperscript{433} Wuhayshi said that AQAP was “try[ing] to win [the populace] over through the conveniences of life...”\textsuperscript{434} The areas under ASY administration are part of the so-called “Islamic Emirate of Abyan.”\textsuperscript{435} ASY forces focus on local issues and the near enemy while AQAP still tries to attack the far enemy.

\textsuperscript{427}Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 35–52.
\textsuperscript{428}Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”3.
\textsuperscript{429}\textit{emir}—commander or prince; commander in al Qaeda.
\textsuperscript{430}Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”3.
\textsuperscript{432}Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”3.
\textsuperscript{433}Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 3; Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”4.
\textsuperscript{434}IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 3.
\textsuperscript{435}Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 3; Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”4.
AQAP models its hierarchical structure on AQC. The *emir* leads the organization with a secretary and *shura* council under him. The heads of the various departments sit on the *shura* council. AQAP differs from AQC in that it features regional emirs with a similar hierarchical under them. Figure 6 depicts this structure.436

![Theoretical al Qaeda Organizational Structure in the Arabian Peninsula](image)

**Figure 6.** Theoretical al Qaeda Organizational Structure in the Arabian Peninsula.437

AQAP receives funding from both Yemeni and external sources. In Yemen, AQAP raises funds for its operations through kidnapping ransoms, bank robberies, drug

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profits, and fraudulent charities.\textsuperscript{438} AQAP allegedly controls some drug smuggling routes through al-Jawf to Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{439} The major external source of money comes from rich Saudi donors.\textsuperscript{440}

AQAP and ASY are heavily armed and possess military grade weapons and vehicles much like the Huthis. Ansar al-Shariah forces captured a number of tanks, artillery pieces, and armored vehicles during battles in Abyan. The group distributed a video featuring a “military parade” in Jaar.\textsuperscript{441} Small arms are readily available in Yemen and AQAP likely buys what it need on the weapons market. AQAP also manufactures sophisticated improvised explosive devices.\textsuperscript{442}

3. Recruitment and Popular Support

The main recruiting efforts for AQAP are the mosque, the tribe and social ties, and later the Internet (see Chapter II.C.3). This section will focus mainly on the recruitment and makeup of the fighters. Information on direct supporters and sympathizers (popular supporters) was not available. Due to the clandestine and violent nature of al Qaeda, there are probably fewer direct supporters and sympathizers than fighters/operatives. This differs from the Huthis which have always actively recruited non-fighters.

At the time of the creation of AQAP, the State Department’s Bureau of Counterterrorism estimated that AQAP had several hundred members.\textsuperscript{443} As of 2014, the State Department estimated the strength had risen to 1000—far less than the number of Huthi fighters.\textsuperscript{444} The bulk of AQAP fighter comes from five sources. First are the leaders, made up of Yemenis that escaped prison and formed the new al Qaeda in South

\textsuperscript{438} Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 3–4; U.S. Department of State, \textit{Country Reports on Terrorism 2013}.

\textsuperscript{439} Koehler-Derrick, \textit{False Foundation}, 103.

\textsuperscript{440} Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 4.

\textsuperscript{441} Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 43–4.

\textsuperscript{442} IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 12–3.

\textsuperscript{443} U.S. Department of State, \textit{Country Reports on Terrorism 2010}.

\textsuperscript{444} U.S. Department of State, \textit{Country Reports on Terrorism 2013}.

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Arabian Peninsula in 2006. They are generally experienced, having fought in other Jihadi-Salafist groups. Second group is made up of Saudi al Qaeda members that escaped the kingdom and merged with AQSAP to form AQAP. The third wave of recruits came from jihadists returning from the Iraq War. The fourth group comes from locally recruited Yemenis, most joining the ASY militia starting in 2011. They join because they are disillusioned with the government or their tribal leadership. They are also relatively well paid by AQAP. In Ansar al Shariah’s “Islamic Emirate of Abyan” an estimated 70 percent of the fighters were Yemeni tribal in origin but from outside Abyan.445 Finally the last group loyal to al-Wuhayshi are other foreign fighters including a large detachment from the allied al Shabab, other Arabs, Pakistanis, and Afghani.446 As of 2010, the estimated breakdown of AQAP was 56 percent Yemeni, 37 percent Saudi, and 7 percent other foreigners.447

Another recruitment strategy of AQAP is to indoctrinate and radicalize “homegrown violent extremists” to attack in their countries of residence so AQAP does not have to spend resources on the difficult task of sending AQAP members to the west to carry out terrorist operations.448 Anwar al-Awlaki was the prime international recruiter for AQAP. He is linked to the underwear bomber and the Ft. Hood shooter. He was killed in September 2011.449 Inspiring attacks in foreign countries allows AQAP to extend its terrorist goals with little cost to group.

Yemen Polling Center found limited numbers of Yemenis answered that AQAP or ASY provides security in their area. Only a small number of people in Marib said that AQAP/ASY was the primary source of security. Throughout Yemen the jihadists are viewed one of the main sources of insecurity.450

446 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 28, 31; IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 5.
447 Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 33.
449 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 54–56.
450 Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions.”
Popular support has been rather elusive for AQAP. First, AQAP/ASY’s conduct has limited popular support. The brutal form of shariah law enacted by ASY includes punishments listed by Terrill as “crucifixions, public beheadings, amputations, and floggings” only manage to alienate the organization from the general population.\(^{451}\) Nasir al-Wuhayshi’s policy of trying to minimize civilian causalities and only target legitimate targets in order to gain popular support was put to test after AQAP members stormed a military hospital killing 45 Yemenis and seven foreigners. AQAP released a video of fighters killing unarmed doctors and nurses. The outrage against the perceived massacre caused al Qaeda to release an apology and the group offered to pay blood money to the victims’ families. AQAP blamed the attack on a rouge cell.\(^{452}\) This incident either shows a lack of centralized control of AQAP elements or a poorly planned attack that backfired for the group.

Popular support was a major concern for Usama bin Laden. Documents found during the raid on his compound in Pakistan showed that he was troubled that the al Qaeda brand had been harmed by the brutal actions of the al Qaeda affiliates. He was also upset that AQAP shifted focus to attacking the Yemeni government. Bin Laden was afraid that AQAP was repeating the same mistakes that al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) made. He did not think AQAP had enough popular support to take over territory. It is also clear from his notes that AQC has little control over AQAP.\(^{453}\) The extreme sectarian nature, brutal version of Shariah law implemented in the Islamic Emirate of Abyan, and violent nature of the group limits mass popular support in Yemen.

### 4. International Support

There are no credible reports of AQAP receiving official assistance from any country. The Yemeni government under President Saleh alleged that AQAP was a member of a quadripartite alliance with the Huthis, Iran, and Libya. No evidence was

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\(^{451}\) Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, x.


\(^{453}\) Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 30, 32–4.
provided and AQAP are at war with the Huthis\textsuperscript{454} making the claim doubtful. AQAP does have relationships with other terrorist organizations. The closest and relationship is with Somalia’s al Shabab. AQAP and al Shabab have an alliance and al Shabab openly declared it was reinforcing AQAP in southern Yemen. ROY security forces reportedly arrested 29 Somalis working with AQAP during a two month period in 2012. The Yemeni and Somali governments each estimate 300 al Shabab members are fighting in Yemen alongside AQAP.\textsuperscript{455}

5. **Territorial Gains and Losses**

Al Qaeda’s ability to capture, control, and administrate territory has thus far been limited. Currently AQAP/ASY can better be described as working in “areas of influence” rather than areas on under its control. This differs significantly from the Huthis. At its height in early 2012 though ASY controlled parts of Abyan and Shabwa governorates. AQAP only administered the so-called Islamic Emirate of Abyan from March 2011 to June 2012.\textsuperscript{456} Lucas Winter judges that AQAP/ASY does not have the capacity to control territory yet and are probably content with building grassroots support at this time.\textsuperscript{457}

D. **CONCLUSION**

In sum, there are some key differences between the Huthis and AQAP insurgencies that make the Huthi insurgency more effective than al Qaeda’s. First, while Jihadi-Salafism has a history in Yemen that dates back to the 1980s, the Believing Youth/Huthis have a longer continuous movement. Additionally, the Huthis’ development differed because the movement started as a peaceful social movement, evolved into to a resistance group, then into an insurgency over the course of two decades. AQAP in Yemen is known foremost for its violence and terrorism, only recently turning into an insurgent force. Second, the Huthis organizational structure favors their group over al Qaeda in Yemen. The “tribal confederation”-type structure brings allies

\textsuperscript{454} Winter, “Ansar of Yemen.”
\textsuperscript{455} IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 5.
\textsuperscript{456} Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35–52.
\textsuperscript{457} Winter, “Ansar of Yemen.”
together with common interests allowing for a broad base of support. The recent addition of President Saleh’s General People’s Congress (GPC) to the pro-Huthi camp is probably a marriage of convenience, but it highlights the pragmatic nature of the group. This pragmatism is also highlighted with the alliance with the Revolutionary Youth and Hirak. Ultimately, the sectarian nature of the Huthis will limit the Huthis’ growth and tribal allies might quit the alliance if the threat of Ali Muhsin is removed. AQAP on the other hand, is still organized in a classic “al Qaeda” hierarchical structure that follows normal insurgent theory. Al Qaeda often finds resistance to their rule by locals. This relates to point three, the Huthis rely mostly on locals to fight in their home areas while AQAP relies heavily on outsiders, either from foreign countries or other parts of Yemen to run and fight for the short-lived Islamic Emirate of Abyan. This gives the Huthis the advantage in knowledge of terrain and motivation to fight. This advantage disappears as the Huthis leave their traditional Zaydi base in the northern Yemen highlands. All these factors help explain the Huthis more successful territorial gains.
V. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR YEMEN COUNTERINSURGENCY/COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES

“As President, I have made it a priority to strengthen our partnership with the Yemeni government—training and equipping their security forces, sharing intelligence, and working with them to strike al-Qaeda terrorists.”

—President Barack Obama, January 2010.

A. INTRODUCTION

International support for Yemen’s counterinsurgency efforts will be essential for ending Yemen’s insurgencies. In Five Front War Daniel Byman argues that “critical alliance partners” are vital for both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts. Allies can “provide training for security services, money for reconstruction, expertise to rebuild an infrastructure, and help establish the rule of law.” International support is not without its drawbacks, as assistance from the U.S. or outside powers can undermine Yemen’s legitimacy and embolden opponents. This was demonstrated by the Huthis during the 2003 Iraq War protests. Instead of large numbers of foreign troops Byman suggests that the use of special operation forces (SOF) to train military, police, and intelligence services.

For this chapter, since my measure of “success” is the simple control of territory, I will consider actions by international supporters with this measure in mind. Did the supporters’ actions help Yemen regain control of territory, or at least deny territory from insurgents? There are four forms of aid related to international support for COIN/CT policies; monetary, political/diplomatic, intelligence sharing/covert activity and military support. Quantifying support is difficult. Money can of course be represented in raw numbers but it does not explain how it is used or if it used for the intended propose.

458 President Barak Obama, quoted in Terrill, Struggles for Yemen, 1.
459 Byman, Five Front War, 195.
462 Byman, Five Front War, 214–5.
Political/diplomatic aid can be analyzed by important acts. For example, naming a group a terrorist organization in a third country will hinder the groups support activities in that country. Intelligence sharing and covert activity is impossible to measure by its very nature and reporting relies on leaks. Finally, military support, especially direct military action, is the easiest to measure for this report.

The Republic of Yemen (ROY) receives assistance from the U.S. and various regional allies. The Huthi and al Qaeda conflicts in Yemen concern not only the Yemeni government but regional and world powers. The U.S., the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and to a lesser extent the state of Qatar and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have assisted Yemen’s efforts to bring stability and peace to its territory. In the battle against al Qaeda, ROY, the U.S., KSA, and Jordan share a common enemy.\(^{463}\) Yemen tried to link the Huthi war with the “global war on terror” (GWOT) and pressured the U.S. and EU to list the Huthis as a terrorist group.\(^{464}\) Under former President Saleh, Clark claims that “the U.S. and all the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] were at pains to reiterate their support for Yemen’s integrity under Saleh’s rule, and overlooked his highly dubious presentation of both the al-Huthi and [Hirak] as additional fronts in the old ‘War on Terror’.\(^{465}\) The United States does not consider the Huthis a terrorist organization which limits the type of support it provides (see Table 1). Saudi Arabia has designated the Huthis as a terrorist organization and fought a brief border skirmish against the group. The U.S. and KSA consider AQAP a terrorist organization (see Table 2).\(^{466}\) Qatar has acted as a neutral mediator in the Huthi wars.\(^{467}\)


\(^{465}\) Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 256.


\(^{467}\) Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 20–1.
Table 1. International Support for Yemen’s COIN/CT Policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monetary Aid</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Intelligence/Covert Activity</th>
<th>Military Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>AQAP only</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>AQAP only</td>
<td>Training and Direct action against AQAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Direct action against both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Supports Unity</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>Promised money for Sadah</td>
<td>Huthi Peace Process</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Designated Terrorist Organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yemen</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>UN</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huthis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQAP</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. SAUDI ARABIAN SUPPORT FOR YEMEN COIN/CT

Saudi Arabia provides support for ROY’s COIN/CT policies with monetary, political/diplomatic, intelligence sharing/covert activity, and military support. Sharing a 900-mile long border with Yemen, Saudi Arabia arguably has the strongest interest in stability in Yemen.\(^{472}\) Saudi Arabia has also recently developed a special relationship with Yemen after the 2000 Jeddah treaty demarcated their borders, and is Yemen’s largest provider in foreign aid.\(^{473}\) A sociocultural element linking the two countries are

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\(^{468}\)“Saudi Arabia Designates.”

\(^{469}\)Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*.


\(^{471}\)The EU automatically lists any organization listed by the UN.


tribes found in both countries that often view tribal loyalties above national loyalties. Both AQAP and the Huthis have attacked the Saudi Arabia in the past and are viewed as direct threats to the kingdom’s government. Saudi Arabia responded with direct military action against both the Huthi rebels and AQAP. The monarchy views the Huthi movement in the context of KSA-Iranian or Sunni-Shia cold war. KSA fear Iran is creating a “Shia crescent” to encroach and threaten Sunni Gulf countries. The Huthis are feared to become an Iranian pawn to destabilize the gulf countries. The cross-border smuggling of contraband, including explosives and heavy weapons, is also a concern to the Saudi government.

While al Qaeda’s presence in Saudi was first noted in 2000 with low level attacks on western expats, the major turning point in Saudi “relations” with al Qaeda was the 2003 assault on the al-Muhaya housing compound in Riyadh. A car bomb was detonated blocks from Prince Mohammed bin Naif’s palace killing 17 Arab Muslims including, 5 children. The attack enraged Saudi society, and for the first time clerics began reproving al Qaeda and its tactics. Families turned in their own relatives belonging to al Qaeda, and AQAP-SA went on the run and was largely destroyed by Saudi CT forces in 2006.

Saudi’s strong support of the Yemeni government against al Qaeda stems from AQAP’s origins with the merger of AQAP-SA and AQSAP and attacks on Saudi interests and officials. AQAP’s most spectacular attack in the kingdom was the 2009 attempted assassination of Prince Mohammed bin Naif, KSA’s current Minster of the

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474 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 266.
475 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 266; Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, x.
476 Boucek, “War in Saada,” 45; Johnsen, Last Refuge, 281.
479 IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 33.
480 Johnsen, Last Refugee, 197–203.
481 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, x.
In 2012, attempted assassinations of Saudi officials in Yemen failed. Saudi Arabia has provided military and intelligence support to Yemen to combat AQAP. KSA intelligence operatives have reportedly penetrated the organization.\(^\text{483}\) Jabir al Fayfi, an AQAP member warned Saudi intelligence of ongoing plots which helped avert the 2010 cargo plane bomb plot.\(^\text{484}\) Despite the ongoing unrest in Yemen and the outing of Fayfi as a source, covert Saudi operations against AQAP reportedly continue.\(^\text{485}\)

KSA’s direct military support during the Abyan Campaign against AQAP and Ansar al Shariah (ASY) proved to be the tipping point that allowed the ROY military and the Popular Committee militia allies to take back Abyan from the insurgents.\(^\text{486}\) During the battle, the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) airdropped supplies to the besieged 25 Mechanized Infantry Brigade. From July to August 2011, RSAF launched numerous air raids to relieve pressure on the unit.\(^\text{487}\) KSA also paid a significant portion of the operations costs of the cash-strapped ROY counter-offensive. The kingdom also funded the tribal-based Popular Committee militias.\(^\text{488}\)

Saudi Arabia has been actively involved in the Huthi conflict. Funding tribal proxies to fight the Huthis marked the kingdom’s entrance into the Huthi conflict. The Saudis allegedly started funding tribal militias and the ROY military shortly after the outbreak of violence in 2004.\(^\text{489}\) Saudi intelligence operators paid tribal sheiks for their loyalty to the Yemen regime. The Saudi agents also made payments to anti-ROY tribes lest they lose influence; a policy dubbed “ryialpolitik.”\(^\text{490}\) An estimated 6000 out of 9000


\(^{484}\) Johnsen, Last Refugee, 266–7.

\(^{485}\) IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 6.

\(^{486}\) Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, xi.

\(^{487}\) Johnsen, Last Refugee, 281–2.

\(^{488}\) Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, xi.

\(^{489}\) Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border.”

tribal leaders throughout Yemen receive payments from Saudi agents. The Saudi’s supposedly spent $100 million in payments in the sixth round of fighting alone. The Huthis allege that kingdom also provides matériel to the Yemeni government evident by “made in KSA” stamps on unexploded ordinance littering Sadah the country-side.

The Sadah War came to Saudi Arabian soil in November 2009. KSA allowed ROY forces to transit through Saudi territory to flank Huthi militiamen. In retaliation, Huthi insurgents crossed into Saudi Arabia and killed several border guards then seized two border villages and two mountains. Saudi clerics declared defensive jihad and the Saudi military quickly deployed to border to expel the Huthis. The events that followed can be described more as an internationalized intrastate conflict than support for COIN/CT policy. The terrain along the border was mountainous on the Yemeni side with foothills and plains on the KSA side. Saudi tactics involved heavy artillery and air bombardment of Huthi positions to kill and weaken as many fighters as possible followed by dismounted infantry engagements. The RSAF crossed the border to bomb Huthi rear positions. The Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) blockaded Yemen’s Red Sea coast to prevent arms smuggling. One hundred thirty-three Saudi soldiers died and an unknown number were injured and captured. The Huthis retreated from the KSA in early 2010. In February 2010, a positive development occurred in the Sadah War. Saudi mediators succeeded in negotiating a cease-fire between the ROY and Huthis, ending Saudi’s direct involvement and the sixth round of conflict. Qatar latter expanded on the

492 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 222.
493 Ibid., 224.
497 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 19–20.
498 Sharp, Yemen: Background (2010), 18–19.
ceasefire.\textsuperscript{499} The military efforts of the KSA have been viewed as encouraging the Huthis into finally accepting a lasting cease fire with ROY.\textsuperscript{500}

Saudi Arabia’s Wahhabi (the Saudi version of Salafism) proselytization in Yemen, including in the Zaydi heartland of Sadah, has been destabilizing and was a major factor in the Huthi rebellion.\textsuperscript{501} The Believing Youth may not have mobilized if Saudis were not trying to convert the Zaydi population.\textsuperscript{502} Zuhair al Harthi, a member of Saudi’s Shura Council publicly raised concerns that Salafists will extinguish the moderate (Sunni) Shafi’i school and destabilize Yemen.\textsuperscript{503} Salafists have reportedly taken over the control of mosques through arms since at least the early 1990s. Salafists have also tried to prevent Zaydis from celebrating the Shia holiday of Id al-Ghadir.\textsuperscript{504} Whether it was the intention or not, Saudi’s proselytization activities have been destabilizing in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia’s interests, which are arguably linked to a stable Yemen, have caused the KSA to militarily engage both AQAP, and aid Yemen with intelligence sharing and funding.\textsuperscript{505} Saudi’s military efforts helped end AQAP/ASY’s hold in Abyan and ended the fiercest fighting in the north.\textsuperscript{506} Saudi activities have also destabilized Yemen. Salafist proselytization activities were a factor in destabilizing the north and Saudi’s payments to tribes fund the war economy.\textsuperscript{507} Joost R. Hiltermann argues that the conflict will only be resolved by focusing diplomatically on ending the conflicts by

\textsuperscript{499} Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 19–20.
\textsuperscript{500} Winter, “Ansar of Yemen.”
\textsuperscript{501} Hull, \textit{High Value Target}, 112–3; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 89.
\textsuperscript{502} Weir, “Clash of Fundamentalisms,” 22.
\textsuperscript{503} al Harithi, “A Saudi Perspective,” 80.
\textsuperscript{504} Weir, “Clash of Fundamentalisms,” 22.
\textsuperscript{506} Winter. “Ansar of Yemen.”; Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, xi.
\textsuperscript{507} Hull, \textit{High-Value Target}, 112–3; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 89; Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border.”
helping Yemen address the “social, political, and religious grievances” that drive the conflicts.\textsuperscript{508} Such efforts could undermine popular support for the Huthis and al Qaeda.

C. U.S. SUPPORT FOR YEMEN COIN/CT

The main U.S. foreign policy goal for Yemen is the elimination of transnational terrorist threats originating in Yemen.\textsuperscript{509} Under Presidents Bush and Obama the main U.S. CT strategy for Yemen is to strengthen the capacity of the ROY government to defeat al Qaeda.\textsuperscript{510} Another long term CT policy for the U.S. is the economic and political development in Yemen.\textsuperscript{511} So far the U.S. maintains a “no boots on ground” policy reiterated by President Obama and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.\textsuperscript{512} President Obama created a threefold strategy, adding organizing international support for stabilization efforts, to Bush’s strategy.\textsuperscript{513} This includes working to bring about a peaceful reconciliation in the Huthi conflict. Diplomats have visited Sadah city and made public statements in support of peace.\textsuperscript{514}

Under President Saleh, the relationship with the U.S. was not always viewed by the U.S. as great, but has improved dramatically under Hadi.\textsuperscript{515} Under former President Saleh, some U.S. officials complained that cooperation is not always forthcoming from Yemeni officials. The U.S. officials cited “catch and release” sentences for terrorists, limited sharing of intelligence, and no extradition of suspects to the U.S. W. Andrew Terrill suggests that the regime’s hands are partially tied by the rampant anti-Americanism and a legal system that does not allow extradition. Too much cooperation with the U.S. generates government protests, such as the aforementioned Huthi anti-war

\textsuperscript{508} Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border.”
\textsuperscript{509} Sharp, \textit{Yemen: Background}, 5; Hull, \textit{High-Value Target}, xxiii.
\textsuperscript{510} Novak, \textit{Comparative Counterinsurgency}, 13.
\textsuperscript{511} IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 2; Novak, \textit{Comparative Counterinsurgency}, 13.
\textsuperscript{512} Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 58.
\textsuperscript{513} Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.”
\textsuperscript{514} Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 171.
\textsuperscript{515} Ibid., 126.
Some U.S. officials claimed that the 2006 prison break was an inside job since some Political Security Organization (PSO) employees are former members of the Islamic Jihad of Yemen (IJY). This contentious relationship changed after President Hadi’s election. According to former Coordinator for Counterterrorism for the U.S. State Department, Daniel Benjamin, “He [Hadi] is everything his predecessor wasn’t in terms of his determination, his understanding of the threat… [and] his determination to destroy Al Qaeda.” Since the transition in 2011 the U.S. has paid $600 million in aid to the regime.

The modern CT Yemeni relationship with the U.S. started shortly after 9/11 when then President Saleh meet with President George W. Bush. Saleh came out in support of U.S. GWOT policies, in return for economic and military aid and reduced pressure on certain issues such as democratization. Saleh also agreed to intelligence sharing, and purportedly allowed a small number of CIA agents to assist the ROY in identifying al Qaeda members hiding in Yemen, according to the Congressional Research Service. Shortly after an air strike killed AQY leader al-Harithi (see Chapter II). The air strike lead to a quick collapse of AQY. The air strike caused anti-American protests were so fierce that the U.S. embassy in was forced to evacuate.

Shortly after the campaign against AQY started in Yemen, ROY started receiving funding and military matériel including HMMWVs and armored personnel carriers (APCs). The U.S. also sent SOF trainers under Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) missions to train the Yemeni Republican Guard (RG), the Central Security Forces-Counterterrorism Unit (CSF-CTU) and the Yemeni Special Operation Forces

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519 IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 2.
520 The *USS Cole* investigation was a law enforcement affair, not a CT operation.
(YSOF). In addition, the U.S. sent Coast Guard trainers to help establish the Yemeni Coast Guard to thwart contraband smuggling.524

The Christmas 2009 attempted “underwear” bombing of an airline refocused America’s attention to Yemen. After the attack, the U.S. pressured the Yemeni government to target AQAP and not the Huthis, which despite the rhetoric posed little threat to the U.S.525 Shortly afterward, the February 2010 KSA-ROY-Huthi ceasefire went into place, ending the fiercest round of fighting.526 The U.S. increased financial aid from about $65 million in 2009 to $200 million in 2011.527 The U.S. also helped equip CT assets including transport aircraft, four HU-1 (HUEY) helicopters and upgrades to 10 M-17 (HIP) helicopters and additional HMMWVs.528 The U.S. openly admitted to sending additional intelligence assets to work with the ROY government.529

After the transition from President Saleh to President Hadi, military action against AQAP increased significantly. The use of UAVs in Yemen is no longer secret, although the missions are. In April 2012, the White House publicly stated that the U.S. targets terrorists in Yemen.530 In Yemen President Hadi went so far as to publicly welcome U.S. assistance as part of ROY’s CT strategy.531 Despite this support from President Saleh and President Hadi, America remains unpopular in Yemen.532 While acknowledging the deeply unpopular nature of America in Yemen, Terrill argues that air strikes, resupply airdrops, and U.S. military planners helped tip the balance back in favor of the ROY during the Abyan campaign against AQAP, an assertion echoed by AQAP themselves.533

524 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 125; Sharp, Yemen: Background (2010), 6, 10; Johnsen, Last Refuge, 179–180; Hull, High-Value Target, 38, 54, 91.
525 Terrill, Conflict in Yemen, iii. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 156.
526 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 19–20.
527 IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 2.
528 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 70–1.
529 Ibid., 71.
530 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 59–60.
531 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, 59–60. IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 2.
533 Terrill, Struggle for Yemen, xi–xii, 40–2, 46–7.
The Huthis are perceived by the U.S. government as a threat to U.S. interests only because the group is destabilizing Yemen, distracting Yemen from the fight against al Qaeda, and are damaging the economic, political, and social fabric in Yemen.534 The Huthis also pose a policy dilemma because CT resources earmarked for the fight against AQAP were being used to fight the Huthis.535 While the U.S. GWOT was designed to combat al Qaeda, Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells suggest that the additional firepower and backing of a powerful ally caused Saleh to overplay his hand with the Huthis. He sought to crush the movement instead of negotiating.536 Husayn al-Huthi used, and the Huthi movement continue to use, anti-American rhetoric to rally support for the Huthi cause. The Huthis leveraged this popular anti-Americanism into broad popular support.537 The Huthis first confronted the U.S. during a March 2003 anti-Iraq War march when 4,000 Huthi supporters marched toward the U.S. embassy chanting “Death to America!” The chaotic protests ended with clashes between protestors and Yemeni security forces leaving two dead and many injured.538

The U.S. has successfully helped Yemen defeat AQY and drive AQAP/ASY from its areas of control in Abyan because of the support provided. In addition to direct military action, the U.S. support of ROY includes intelligence, SOF training, and equipment. The tailored program were judged to be a good fit because small, fast units are good for CT operations but are of limited use against insurgents such as the Huthis.539

D. OTHER COUNTRIES—JORDAN AND QATAR

Jordan is Yemen’s strongest non-GCC Arab supporter. Jordan provided special operation training to the YSOF. According to Ambassador Edmund J. Hull (ret.) the Jordanian Special Forces trained the YSOF on the outskirts of Sanaa in a variety of tactics. The training was provided to combat AQY, since the Huthi insurgency had yet to

534 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 272–3.
535 Ibid., 274.
536 Ibid., 126.
537 Ibid., 7, 114–5, 120.
539 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 76.
manifest itself. After U.S. Special Forces took over training of the YSOF, the Jordanian
Special Forces remained acting as translators.\footnote{Hull, \textit{High-value Target}, 38.}
Jordan’s role in Yemen was confined to training. The Islamic Republic of Iran alleged that Jordan was co-belligerent in the war against the Huthis, a charge that Jordan denied.\footnote{“Jordanian commandos join war on Houthi fighters,” \textit{Press TV (In English)}, November 21, 2009, http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/111852.html. (Press TV is Iran’s state media company.); “Jordan denies partaking in Saudi operations in Yemen,” \textit{Ammon News (In English)}, November 11, 2009, http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=4696#.VAeNgFOM8eU.}

After the Arab Spring, the Yemeni military was restructured with the joint
assistance of Jordan and the U.S. Jordan provided the ROY government expertise, and
recommended “best practices” of restructuring. Additionally, Jordan sent a military
committee of security experts to advise the ROY’s Ministry of Defense and Ministry of
the Interior. Limited numbers of Yemeni personnel have trained at Jordan’s world class
King Abdullah II-Special Operations Training Center (KA-SOTC). The KA-SOTC,
which was designed with U.S. assistance, serves as a special operation forces training
center for Jordan and other Arab nations. Classes are thought in Arabic which makes
training easier than taking classes from English-speakers.\footnote{Terrill, \textit{Struggle for Yemen}, 74–6.}

Qatar acted as neutral mediator in Huthi War and labored for peace in northern
Yemen.\footnote{Terrill, \textit{Conflicts in Yemen}, 20–1. Hull, \textit{High Value Target}, 113.} Qatar began its role as mediator in the early summer of 2007. The nine point
“Doha agreement” was signed on February 1, 2008. The agreement called for a cession of
hostilities. The Huthis agreed to disarmament of medium and heavy weapons and
respecting the constitution and Sanaa’s right to govern. ROY government agreed to
political liberalization, reconstruction, and amnesty.\footnote{Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, \textit{Regime and Periphery}, 315.} Qatar promised $300–$500
million in reconstruction aid. The Doha agreement, signed by both parties, never went in
effect and fighting never stopped.\footnote{International Crisis Group, “Saada Time Bomb,” 21–2.} While Qatar’s efforts may be noble, there are signs
that they may be counterproductive. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells find in their study that
the peace process raised expectations, then failed and relapsed into conflict. This proved to be disappointing to parties involved and ordinary Yemenis.546

Qatar’s second chance for mediation came in August 2010, when building on the success of the February KSA-ROY-Huthi ceasefire Qatar negotiated an “explanatory index” to the original Doha agreement.547 The ceasefire proved more durable since confidence measures were undertaken. Yemen released a large number of Huthi prisoners.548

E. CONCLUSIONS

A survey of international support for Yemen’s COIN/CT efforts to include monetary, political/diplomatic, intelligence sharing/covert activity, and military support reveal a heavy focus on combating al Qaeda from all external parties except Qatar. This is not unexpected, since al Qaeda threatens regional and Western countries. Efforts against al Qaeda have led to uneven results. AQY was destroyed through the joint efforts of Yemen and its allies. AQAP has proven to be more resilient, “upgrading” from a terrorist group to an insurgent group, and challenging the government’s authority in Abyan after the near collapse of the government during the Arab Spring. This study has shown that Saudi and American support through financial aid, political pressure, intelligence sharing, and direct military support helped end the AQAP/ASY’s reign in southern Yemen—a feat ROY had been unable to accomplish on its own. The Sadah War in the north has proven to be more difficult for the ROY. The Yemenis receive far less support from the international community in combating the Huthi insurgents. The U.S. and Qatar have focused on trying to resolve the conflict peacefully except for the brief border war with Saudi Arabia after a cross border raid. Clearly those efforts have failed, since the Huthis later took control of parts of Northern Yemeni. The international support for Yemen’s counterinsurgency against the Huthis has not been successful in preventing the spread of Huthi rule in the north.

546 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 182.
547 Terrill, Conflicts in Yemen, 20–1.
548 Winter, Conflict in Yemen, 113.
The international activity in Yemen also negatively affected Yemen’s counterinsurgency. First, the Saudi government’s Wahhabi proselytization in Yemen destabilized Sadah and was a major factor in the Huthi rebellion.549 Second, the funding of tribal proxies to fight the Huthis, starting shortly after the outbreak of violence in 2004, likely lengthened and expanded the conflict.550 Additionally, Saudi’s payments to anti-government tribes solely for influence, undermines the Yemeni government and contributes to the war economy.551 Finally, in the case of the U.S., President Saleh may have over played his hand against the Huthis, thinking the American firepower designed to fight AQAP would help him crush the Zaydis.552 It appears that the Huthi conflict may have been prolonged due to international activity in Yemen. Instead of comprise and accommodation, Saleh choose confrontation.

550 Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border.”
VI. CONCLUSION

Returning to the original question: Why have Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (COIN/CT) polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)? This paper can now answer with confidence that the military’s poor counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies, the international effort to combat AQAP, the Huthis’ ability to recruit and mobilize large numbers of followers, and the Huthi leadership’s pragmatic alliances gave the Huthis the advantage over AQAP and the Republican of Yemen. Those are not the only factors but they are the most important ones. In this final chapter, the variables will be reexamined with the evidence presented in the earlier chapters.

A. RECRUITING AND MOBILIZING SUPPORTERS

The first variable was the background and development of the Huthis and AQAP (see Chapter II). The comparison of the two movements, using social movement theory, revealed several key differences that may explain why the Huthis have achieved mass support in parts of northern Yemen and AQAP struggles to recruit and mobilize members.

The origins and ideology of the groups are quite different. The Huthis originated as a local, youth Quran study group, the Believing Youth. The group was a reaction to Saudi Arabian proselytization and embraced northern Yemen’s “traditional” Zaydi past. The ideology is linked to Zaydi ethics of “justice,” and its stated goals are firmly linked to western liberal thought. AQAP on the other hand, originated in international jihadi groups and until recently, the Jihadi-Salafists have focused almost exclusively on attacking the far enemy. The Jihadi-Salafists want to: return to the traditions of the original Muslims (salaf); enforce a strict and brutal version or Shariah law; overthrow the Yemeni regime to establish a so-called Islamic State; kill other Muslims, including noncombatants, and establish an “Islamic State.” The Huthi Zaydi ideology attracts more followers than the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, although al Qaeda does have a small solid base of support in Yemen.
The Huthis have taken better advantage of political opportunities and threats as they arose. The Huthis created a large base of support before the start of the Sadah War, which many locals saw as self-defense. The BY graduated students for a decade prior to the anti-American and anti-government protests that resulted in a government crackdown. The government crackdown led to growth of the group. More success came during the Arab Spring, when the Huthis consolidated power in Sadah while establishing a vibrant political wing that established ties and supported the Revolutionary Youth and Hirak movement. Finally, the most successful reaction to a political opportunity came when Brig. General Ali Muhsin’s soldiers and armed supporters of the Islah clashed with protestors in 2014. Huthi fighters responded to the attack and defeated both parties after large numbers of security forces switched sides and fought with the Huthis. The Huthis then forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement to make the Huthis part of the government. AQAP on the hand used the Arab Spring to change from a clandestine terrorist organization to an insurgent group that also engaged in terrorist tactics. The move was met eventually with force from the Yemeni government, local Popular Committee militias, and international forces including Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

The assessment of the mobilizing structures of the two groups reveals similar structures. Both groups recruited and mobilized members through the mosque and study groups. The study groups allowed for indoctrination and the building of a community. The community for the Huthis was the northern Yemeni Zaydi community and for the Salafists the international *Umma.* The Huthis also mobilized supporters at holiday gatherings and the jihadists mobilized at the tribal and Yemeni government level. IJY recruited many fighters in the civil war but most quit after the war was over. AQAP’s southern campaign has recruited young men from across Yemen, but repulsed locals with its bloodthirstiness.

Finally, there are notable differences in framing. The Huthis emphasized local grievances and prescribed local solutions, a consistent message. AQAP conversely fused

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local grievances with the pan-Islamic frames, and relied heavily on jihad as the only solution. The mixing of local and pan-Islamic frames often creates a confusing message.

B. EFFECTIVENESS OF YEMENI GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The second variable was effectiveness of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies of the Republic of Yemen (see Chapter III). The counterinsurgency and counterterrorism polities fall within the military paradigm. This is due to both the weak legal framework and the limited policing ability of the Yemeni state. The main strategy used by the Yemeni government is repression with limited decapitation operations and negotiations. The Yemeni military was not capable of using repression to end the two insurgencies. Several factors limit the repressive abilities of the military. First, the military is designed in a “coup-proofing” structure that limits the use of the best trained and best equipped units to Sanaa as a praetorian guard. Second, the military is still equipped and designed to fight a conventional war with little movement to adapt to the realities of counterinsurgency warfare. Third, the COIN strategy of block-and-bombard hurts the government’s popular support by inflicting high levels of civilian casualties while destroying property and infrastructure. Finally, the political elite’s power struggles undermined the military’s ability to effectively fight AQAP or the Huthis. The counterinsurgency campaigns were waged slightly different. The government was more repressive with the Huthis and Zaydis in general. During the AQAP campaign the government made more of an effort to work with locals.

The only bright side to the public support for counterinsurgency policies is the government’s use of Popular Committees against AQAP. This policy is limited because the locals are siding with the government because AQAP happens to be worse than the government. It is a clear sign of the weakness of the government, which with all its armor and planes must rely on lightly armed and untrained tribal militias to act as its infantry.

C. EFFECTIVENESS OF HUTHI AND AL QAEDA INSURGENCIES

The third variable examined was the effectiveness the Huthis’ and AQAP’s military strategies and tactics, organization and resources, and recruitment (see Chapter IV). After the blitzkrieg offense that captured most of northwest Yemen by October 2014
(and possibly more by the time this paper is published) it became very clear that the Huthi’s insurgency was more effective than al Qaeda’s insurgency. What made the Huthis a spectacular success compared to AQAP and Ansar al-Shariah?

There are several key differences between the Huthi and AQAP insurgencies that make the Huthi insurgency more effective than al Qaeda’s. First, the Huthis developed over a longer period of time and differed significantly from AQAP. While al Qaeda’s Jihadi-Salafism ideology has a history that dates back to the 1980s in Yemen, the Believing Youth/Huthis have a longer continuous group. In addition, the nature of the Believing Youth/Huthis changed throughout time. The movement started as a peaceful social movement, evolved into a resistance group, then into an insurgency over the course of two decades. AQAP on the other hand, originated with violence and terrorism, only recently turning into an insurgent force. Second, the Huthi’s organizational structure gives it an advantage over al Qaeda. The “tribal confederation”-type structure brings allies together with common interests and allows for a broader base of support. The addition of President Saleh’s General People’s Congress (GPC) to the pro-Huthi camp is probably a marriage of convenience, but highlights the pragmatic nature of the Huthi leadership. This pragmatism is also highlighted with other alliances including, tribes, the Revolutionary Youth, and the Hirak. In due course, the sectarian nature of the Huthis will limit the Huthis’ growth and allies might quit the alliance if the common threat is gone. AQAP organizational structure differs because it is modeled after classic “al Qaeda” hierarchical structure. Finally, the Huthis use locals to fight in their home areas, while AQAP typically brings in outsiders, either from foreign countries or other parts of Yemen to administrate captured areas and fight for the short-lived Islamic Emirate of Abyan. Because of this, AQAP fought resistance to their rule by locals. This membership structure also favored the Huthis because fighters had knowledge of local terrain and motivation to fight. As the Huthis conquer Yemen though, this advantage will disappear. All these factors help explain the Huthis’s more successful territorial gains.
D. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT, THE HUTHIS AND AQAP

The final variable for this paper examines the role of outside support for Huthi movement, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Yemeni government. This variable was the only one covered in two chapters for the sake of flow (see Chapter IV.A.4 and IV.B.4, and Chapter V). First, there is limited support from outside countries for either the Huthis or AQAP. The Huthis receive limited weapon shipments from Iran and AQAP has no international support. Second, the international support for Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts focus almost exclusively on AQAP. The only notable exceptions were the Saudi Arabian border offensive in 2009, and the Qatari mediation efforts, which in retrospect did little to stop the Huthis.

The international activity in Yemen also negatively affected Yemen’s counterinsurgency. Saudi Arabia’s proselytization in Sadah destabilized Yemen, and was named as a major grievance of the Huthis. Payment to tribes to fight the Huthis once the conflict started probably expanded and lengthened the war by adding a tribal element. The Sadah wars had a tribal undertone and the post-Arab spring fighting was between Huthis and Salafist, and the latter for a time had Saudi backing. It is also possible that President Saleh thought that the U.S. provided “war of terror” equipment and training might give him the upper hand in the north, where he felt more threatened, causing him to fight instead of negotiate.

E. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

With dwindling oil, and thus money, continuing to attempt to repress the legitimate concerns of the Yemeni people—including the Huthis, Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth—is a losing prospect. Right now it appears no one faction is powerful enough to control all of Yemen. Yemeni government policy must change if it wants to remain in power. The Yemeni government needs to reorganize, retrain, and reequip the military to focus more on counterinsurgency, focus the fight on Ansar al-Shariah and AQAP, and improve the counterinsurgency strategy. The government should
adopt a strategy of clear-hold-build, followed by intelligence-driven police actively.\textsuperscript{554} The Yemeni government should also shift policy on groups with legitimate grievances like the Huthis, Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth. Negotiating with these groups and finishing the National Dialog Conference (NDC) would be the first step.

For actors in the international community, while the home country’s best interests should come first, greater consideration should be given to the overall situation in Yemen. After all, what good is a friendly partnership with Yemen if the government collapses? Outside countries should make a greater effort to offset unpopular activities in Yemen with actions that help raise the government of Yemen’s popular support such as infrastructure projects, healthcare, education, and good governance. Encouraging the completion of the NDC and encouraging the Huthis to lay down its arms and become a non-violent political party should also be top priorities.

Finally, this study can inspire other future studies. First, a deep dive into why President Saleh chose repression over negotiation with the Huthis is needed. I still do not fully understand why the government conducted a full-scale offense instead of paying off the Huthi family. Tribes make a nuisance of themselves all the time in Yemen and the government normally just pays them off. Second, a better account of the Huthis takeover is needed. Much of the initial reporting is rumors or contradicts other reports. Lastly, the format of this report could be used to examine similar multiple “counterinsurgencies” in places like Iraq or Syria.

\textsuperscript{554} Marston and Malkasian “Introduction” in \textit{Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare}, 14–5.
APPENDIX. MAP

Figure 7. Conflict Zone Map

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