

The Dynamic of Democratisation – Political Parties in Yemen

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The views expressed in the book “The Dynamic of Democratisation – Political Parties in Yemen” are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

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In Memoriam

*To the Spirit of Jarrallah Omar,
who will always be with me!*

Foreword

Along with millions of other Yemenis, I felt great pride when the flag of the united and democratic Republic of Yemen was raised by President Ali Abdullah Saleh on May 22nd, 1990.

It was a moment of glory to see signs of a growing democracy with a multi-party system consisting of political movements of various backgrounds and affiliations. It resembled a major change in our lives, a change that we had to go through for a brighter future for our next generations.

But I must admit that I had fears.

I feared that the democratic experience of Yemen may fail and may turn to become more of an artificial image rather than a reality that we can feel and live.

I knew that this democratic experience is new for Yemen. We were living in a one-party system in the north and another one in the south for decades. Change is always good, but it also requires caution.

I am glad that after almost thirteen years, I can confidently say that we have absorbed the shock of change and started coping with the new situation. It is a one-way irreversible path towards more democracy and there could be no other alternative. There could be no turning back to the dark ages of a single-party rule, and we should work together towards even more democracy. The presidential elections of 1999, the local authorities elections of 2001 and the forthcoming parliamentary elections are an ample proof of Yemen's commitment to democracy.

The booklet "Political Parties in Yemen 1990 - 2000" will inform its readers about the different experiences Yemen has undergone in its democratisation process. The efforts of the author, my friend Ahmed Al-Yemeni, should be appreciated, as they resemble the dedication of a Yemeni citizen to expose his country's experience -with all its negative

and positive aspects- to the world. Furthermore, I would like to emphasise that this book should encourage us to continue our struggle for a just and democratic Yemeni society.

Our democracy is still in its infancy, and year after year we face local and global difficulties that influence our cause and that sometimes may lead to our disappointment. Nevertheless, with the support of sincere countrymen, friends and allies in the world, we will be able to enhance our experiences further, strengthen civil society and overcome all obstacles.

With great pleasure I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung towards assisting us as Yemenis in achieving greater progress and success for a new and democratic Yemen.

Yemen's democracy has a future, and its future lies in our hands.

Let us make the best out of it.

Walid Al-Saqqaf
Editor-in-Chief
Yemen Times

Sana'a, January 2003

Preface and acknowledgements

The study “The Dynamics of Democratisation – Political Parties in Yemen” aims at exploring the structure and performance of the major political parties in Yemen since unification in 1990. The study is an attempt to analyse the different parties platforms and to examine their performance as well as points of strength and weakness. Moreover, the study looks into the needs, deficiencies, and obstacles faced by political parties in an emerging democracy in a poor country with a weak economy.

Yemenis democratic experience is quite unique for the Arab peninsula. Yet, there are very few academic resources that deal with this process in depth. Though political parties are one of the most important pillars in developing and protecting Yemen’s nascent political experience-within limited but promising margins provided for by the political system.

However, Yemen is suffering from several hardships due to poverty, socio-political conflicts, tribal interests, high illiteracy and a high degree of apathy towards sustainable development. While there are continuing challenges on the horizon, Yemen’s future holds considerable promise. It has a number of assets that can help the country reach higher levels of sustained economic growth. It is fortunate to possess oil and gas reserves, rich fishing grounds, and a number of ports with potential for attracting increased international shipping. Low labour costs can help attract private investment. With its rich cultural heritage and great natural beauty, Yemen also has tremendous potential for tourism development. Furthermore, it is widely expected that Yemen’s perspective for full membership in the Gulf Co-operation Council will further contribute to the countries regional integration as well as its economic development.

At the time, Yemeni citizens are increasingly active in civil society with community organisations flourishing and electoral and party politics progressing. The NGO sector is one that has grown dramatically since unification. Due to the relative ease of establishing a non-profit

organisation in Yemen, and the lack of subsequent monitoring, there is now a proliferation of local NGO's involved in a wide-range of activities, from agricultural co-operatives to human rights. While many of these organisations are relatively new, there is an increasing understanding among citizens that this is an effective way to help shape their society.

One salient aspect of the dynamics of democratisation, that Yemen has fully embraced, is electoral politics and the government's commitment to it. Observers of Yemen's 1993 and 1997 parliamentary elections declared them an overwhelming success, and the 2001 local authorities elections are anticipated to be lively and fair. The 1999 presidential election demonstrated progress in the mechanisms of democracy and voter registration for the parliamentary elections of April 2003 was completed without major difficulties in October 2002. One indicator of this steady improvement in the electoral process is the fact that women's participation has increased with each national election. At the same time, by the end of the nineties all political parties had realised the irreversibility of Yemen's democratisation process and developed into constructive players in this young emerging democracy.

Moreover, the preparations of the forthcoming parliamentary elections are accompanied by a tense security situation, where the government is bound to security cooperation with the US administration in the fight against international terrorism. In the past three months alone Yemen made the daily news headlines with the following incidents: the attack on the French super tanker Limburg off Mukallah; the hellfire rocket attack on the jeep of a suspected Al-Qaida terrorist near Marib; the exposure of the secret delivery of North Korean Scud Missiles in the Arabian sea; the tragic assassination of Jarrallah Omar, Deputy Secretary General of the Yemeni Socialist Party on December 28, and the killing of three American medical personnel at the Baptist Hospital in Jiblah on December 30, 2002. It remains to be seen if these incidents will trigger further arbitrariness by the authorities, which might hamper Yemen's democratisation process.

The assassination of Jarallah Omar and the three Americans by former members of the Islah Party, as well as the nationalisation of Islah affiliated religious schools and the search for Al Qaeda suspects within the conservative segments of Yemeni society may have their impact on the political culture of the country. An analysis of this complex events, however, would go beyond the scope of this study.

The study, “The Dynamics of Democratisation - Political Parties in Yemen” is based on my M.A. thesis “Political Parties in Yemen 1990-2000”, which I submitted to POLIS/Leeds University, United Kingdom, during the academic year 2000-2001 under the dedicated supervision of Professor David Beetham. The British Council sponsored my one-year study programme with a generous scholarship.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for publishing this study. Finally, I hope that my study on the political parties in Yemen will be perceived as an encouragement to my fellow countrymen to continue our struggle for a just and democratic Yemeni society.

Sana'a, January 2003

Ahmed Al-Yemeni

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1. Introduction

Yemen Country Profile

Yemen is an Arab and Islamic country. It is located in the south of the Arabian Peninsula between the latitudes of 12 ° and 20 ° north and longitudes of 41 ° and 54 ° east. The Republic of Yemen is 555,000 sq. km in area (excluding Rub Al Khali - The Empty Quarter). Saudi Arabia borders it on the north, with the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden on the south, the Sultanate of Oman in the east, and the Red Sea in the west. Sana'a is the capital of The Republic of Yemen. The population of Yemen reached 19.2 million in the year 2002.

The population grows annually at an average of 3.8%. The density of population is generally 33 persons per square kilometer. The size of an average Yemeni family is 6 to 7 members. The administrative division of Yemen consists of 19 governorates in addition to the Capital Secretariat.

Yemen's emerging democracy is a constitutional republic, where "*The people are the owner and the source of power*" (Article 4). The people of Yemen participate in the governing system through referendums and elections, and indirectly through the legislature, the executive, and the judicial power, and through the elected local authorities councils. The political system in the Republic of Yemen rests on political pluralism and a multiparty system. Political participation and rotation in power are conducted through public elections.

The President of the Republic is elected through direct competitive elections. It is stipulated that the President of the Republic should obtain the absolute majority of the elector's votes. The seven-year term of a presidency begins with the President's constitutional oath taking. According to the by laws, which were amended for the last time in 2001, a president might be re-elected only once.

Data of the 1994 census reveals that the rate of school attendance between the ages of six and fifteen years is 56%. The rate for males who

joined school represents 71% whereas the rate for females represents 37.5%. The illiteracy rate among people is with 55% (71% for women and 35% for men) very high. In coping with illiteracy the government attempts to increase the rate of expenditures on education and the expansion of educational establishments at all levels every year. The number of medical doctors in the Republic reaches to 3,788 doctors, with an average of one doctor for every 4,506 persons.

Yemen is classified as one of the 20 least developed countries. Nevertheless, Yemen has the potential to develop into a propitious country since it is rich in important economic resources. There is much wealth that has not been utilised economically till now, especially in the fields of oil, gas, fishing, and other mineral resources. Yemen's economy dived into their productive share in the gross domestic product (GDP) show the following:

Agriculture and fishing represent about between 15-20% of gross domestic product. The arable land consists only 3% of the whole area of the Republic. The actual cultivated area is 77% of the total cultivable area.

Mining, quarrying and manufacturing industries represent between 35% and 40% of the gross domestic product. Within this rate, extracting and refining of oil represents the largest portion. The contribution of the oil sector to the gross domestic production reaches the rate of about 20-30%, while it constitutes around 75% of state revenues. The average oil production in Yemen is with 485,000 barrel per day still relatively low.

Yemen's economy grows continually. Its annual average growth rate is between 13-15% in current prices, and if constant prices are considered it reached 3% in 2002 (2.8% in 2001). The average per capita gross domestic product reached in 2002 was US-\$ 456. Exports represent about 40-45% of gross domestic product, while imports represent about 30-35% of gross domestic product.

Therefore, the exposure ratio in Yemen's economy is about 70-75% of gross domestic production. The most important exports of Yemen are

concentrated in the field of intermediate goods that represent about 90-97% of total exports, while direct consumer goods represent about 3-10%. In contrast, the intermediate goods in imports represent about 50-58% of the total of imports, while direct consumer goods represent between 20-22%. The capital goods represent between 20-30%. Yemen's imports from Arab countries about 20-30% of its total imports, whereas its exports to Arab countries constitute about 3-5% of its total exports. The non-Arab Asian countries are considered to be the largest market for Yemen's exports, absorbing around 70-76% of its total exports.

2. The Dynamics of Democratisation in Yemen

Democracy demands a democratic culture, i.e. a society that not only accepts democratic procedures but that also values democratic institutions for their own sake. Yemen has rich traditions in popular participation in essential aspects of community life. Yemeni history has repeatedly demonstrated that the impulse towards autonomy and independence are dominant characteristics that have created a rich social and cultural tapestry. Traditions of tribalism and Islam embrace the principles of autonomy, consensus and consultation. Dialogue, debate and discussion are patterns of interaction that are strong and thriving in Yemen. Customs in arbitration, mediation and conflict resolution have a rich history, as well as contemporary meaning, in the lives of most Yemenis.

Democratisation and development are clearly related. Good governance and political stability are essential conditions for sustainable development to occur. There is a growing consensus that the likelihood of sustaining democratic tendencies is directly tied to progress in economic and human development. The last decade of Yemeni experience in democratisation and economic and human development presents an interesting case to study this dynamic and the role of the main political players.

The *Republic of Yemen* (ROY) was established on May 22, 1990 when the *Yemen Arab Republic* (YAR-North Yemen) merged with the *People's Democratic Republic of Yemen* (PDRY-South Yemen).

Both countries had centralised political systems, ruled and controlled by one party, the Peoples General Congress in the North and the Yemeni Socialist Party in the South. Since gaining independence in the sixties the political history of both countries was marked by internal struggles, destabilisation, conspiracy, bad human rights records, and weak economic performance, as well as deep ideological rift between the two states.

During the first years of its establishment the ROY was going through a real political struggle for survival. Despite the negative repercussions of the 1991 Gulf War on its economy, Yemen in 1992 and 1993 appeared to be demonstrating, that a country located on the edge of the Arabian Peninsula could experience a rapid and dramatic development from a medieval society into an emerging democracy. The united country with its new democratic political system, it seemed, would be able to master the difficulties of transition and provide with the basis upon which the new country could tackle pressing economic, social and other problems.

The performance of political parties and other civil society institutions was met with regional and international acclaim, as were the parliamentary elections of April 1993. At the time, discussions among international political analysts focused on the possibility that Yemen's tribal social traditions might serve as the base for a long-term transition into a full-fledged democracy. Some leftist intellectuals even debated "whether Russia's village based communities, might provide the basis for a leap from feudalism to socialism."

The euphoric mood of 1992 and 1993 was ended by the separatist's action of April 1994. By July, the „legitimate forces“ of the ROY had won the short civil war, which had cost around 12,000 lives. Parliament, which had been viewed as the institution of and the motor for Yemen's emerging democracy, was now seen by many as a "rubber stamp" for an executive branch dominated by a president supported by his war allies, whom he tried to convert into a political coalition.

Yet, this new pessimism was perhaps as excessive as the often-naive optimism that had prevailed in 1992 and 1993, when enthusiasm for Yemen's experiment had ignored underlying tensions and unresolved problems. The impact of the war of 1994 on democracy was in fact complex. Certainly, the hostilities were followed by a constriction of political freedoms and numerous attempts by the regime to intimidate its opponents. Nonetheless, the war also highlighted the resiliency of some democratic institutions, including the Parliament.

Developments since 1995 suggest that despite President Ali Abdullah Saleh's attempt to impose his views, the Yemeni political system remains pluralistic, i.e. it has several political parties, a relatively free press, vigorous debates on parliamentary, presidential and local authorities councils' elections, and wide spread political demonstrations. Parliament certainly has not been weakened to the extent suggested by many analysts. Its speaker, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmar, remains one of the key power holders in the country. His influence stems more from his tribal background, his socio-political history, and the support of the Islamist party that he chairs - than the legislative and democratic principles he represents. Furthermore, it seems that on some critical issues his views conflict sharply with those of President Saleh.

The debate about date and modalities for the 1997 parliamentary election gained significance as early as the beginning of 1996. If the legislature were not seen as an influential institution, capable of providing political actors with an opportunity to publicise their ideas and affect policy-making, the issue of when elections should take place and under what format would not have been as contested as it was. Moreover, when these elections were finally held on April 27, 1997, they were deemed by international observers to have been free and fair. Women participated, both as voters and as candidates.

Even though there were no women among the candidates presented by the other most influential parties, the General People's Congress (GPC) successfully brought in two women into the parliament. It is noteworthy, that also in 1997 all the Islamic parties were allowed to participate in the elections. At the times, countries such as Egypt or Tunisia banned political with religious platforms from the political process, despite their much longer history with constitutional government.

Allocation of Parliamentary seats in the 1993 and 1997 elections

Party	1993	1997	Change
General People's Congress	123	187	+64
Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah)	62	53	-9
Yemeni Socialist Party	56	0	-56
Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party	7	2	-5
Nasserite parties	3	3	0
Truth Party (Al-Haqq)	2	0	-2
Independents	48	56	+7
TOTAL	301	301	*

The 1997 legislative elections were the second such ballot since unification and the onset of Yemen's democratisation process. The mere fact, they took place on schedule and were democratic and generally peaceful (despite isolated incidents of violence) reveals the extent to which multiparty parliamentary elections are becoming an institutionalised means of regulating political competition. Yet, no doubt the Yemeni Socialist Party's decision to boycott the elections harmed the general overview of Yemen as an emerging democracy - quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition, the party's boycott caused quite some harm to the YSP itself.

The country's first direct presidential election in September 1999 confirmed President Ali Abdullah Saleh in his office. His candidacy was not met by serious competition.

Local Authority Councils were first elected in February 2001 and are to be viewed as a contribution to the democratisation and decentralisation processes. Though the implementation of the Local Authority Law of 2000 is somewhat hesitant, the elected council members demand to fulfil their constitutional role. With a lot of support from the civil society, they try to implement their mission against all odds and directives from the governorates. Local Authority Councils continue to battle for their place in Yemeni politics.

In preparation for the parliamentary elections on April 27, 2003 voter registration was completed without major difficulties in the last quarter of 2002. The Supreme Elections Committee confirmed that 8,1 million citizens had registered (42% females).

Summing up on Yemen's short experiment with democracy and parliamentary politics, the balance sheet, despite the civil war of 1994, continued domestic tensions, and the regime's heavy-handed tactics since 1995 – remains positive so far. Certainly there were and are many reasons to worry about the future of democracy in Yemen, such as the referendum of February 2001 or the actions of the government taken in the war against International Terrorism. These concerns, however, should not be allowed to obscure the real political achievements of the country, which become clearer when they are examined in a broad historical perspective.

3. Political Parties in Yemen

3.1. Objectives and Methodology

There are not many detailed and up-to-date studies or surveys on political parties in Yemen. Therefore the aim has come, after a decade of experience with the Yemen's emerging democracy, to create a base of information on the political parties of unified Yemen. This study will enable researchers, journalists, political activists, civil society organisations, international observers and others to further develop the stock of knowledge on Yemen. It will serve as a reference for constitutional, legal, and practical insights on the political parties in Yemen.

Political parties are among the most important core elements, if not the most important ones, for any democracy, especially if it is an emerging one. Yemen has a newly born emerging democratic experience in which the forms, contents, and performance of political parties are among the main factors for the consolidation of democracy. This study is an attempt to explore the structure of political parties, identifying all the indicators and obstacles in a prescriptive manner that is partly based on a descriptive critical approach and analysis. An attempt is made to understand the negative elements and positive values of the parties while searching for the causes behind the achievements or prospects, if any, for future progress in a poor, developing country like Yemen.

Thus, such a political study depends on documents and publications of different political parties, current electoral legislation's in Yemen, political observation, individual experience, surveys and questionnaires, and interviews. The present study is concentrated on the three major political parties, which constitute around $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Yemeni political scene: the General People's Congress (GPC), the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah), and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). It is a study of politics and of political parties in an emerging democracy, and of their possible impact on future democratic consolidation. Yet, we do not suggest that other smaller parties (in size, impact, and experience) are not of that importance, but for time and space, and above all because the three main parties do in some way or another reflect the other

political parties' varieties in form and contents; they share common history, principles, and even ideologies.

In addition, the study with its eight dimensions and their substructures or subsections, explores individually the three major parties' general context, history, guiding principles, party structure, party legislative and governance profile, party communication, election campaigns, current strategy, and finally party strengths and weaknesses as a conclusion. All have been presented as one simple clear harmonious structure.

In *General Context*, "Party History" the first section, explores when the GPC was founded/legalized and in what context, who were the original leaders/organizers, and what was their background. It also states the party's electoral history in terms of vote percentage and when the party, if ever, got hold of power. Section two, "Definition", deals with the party's purpose, current and future roles, and its key political issues. Section three, "Guiding Principles", clarifies what are the party's ideological position and its main policy positions. It points out clearly the policy tendencies or diversities existing in the party.

Next comes *Party Structure*. It deals with the Membership, the party's estimation and the religious, regional, gender and age composition. The party's growth and supporters' base is also discussed here. This subsection deals with the membership process and development as well. Moreover, the *Party Structure* talks about party Leadership, its evolving or stable racial, ethnic, religious and gender composition. It also talks about the formal or informal compositional commitments and any ideological tendencies or cliques that members of the leadership must fit into. Power sharing and the influence of each group within each party have been touched upon.

Party Structure, being the main core of the study, as it should be in any basic party's study, comes to talk about Organisational Structure and Process. The party's written constitution and/or code of conduct, the party's organisational structure at all levels, the day to day operations, research, policy making, and administrative units are all mentioned

here. Then it concludes by reviewing the party's infrastructure and internal process.

The section *Party Legislative and Governance Profile* deals with the representation of the party, fulfilment of duties, statistics, and party's relationship and accountability. *Party Communication and Election Campaigns* discusses press and media strategy, the form and the process of selecting candidates for elections as well as the organisational priorities of the party. The last section discusses the strength and weaknesses of the party, which is considered as the first conclusion on each party individually.

The study depends upon finding the most suitable questions related to the topic, considering the theoretical background of such issues. The study presented is the result of good reading (theory and practice: domestic and international) to develop a coherently argued piece of work. It is the outcome of a series of interviews, questionnaires, surveys, media analysis, professional engagement, field studies, political observations, and above all individual experiences and personal relations and insight. It is the result of the cumulative effort of an excellent MA program in Democratic Studies at POLIS/Leeds University, UK that started with theory, passed through consolidation of democracy and finished with an assessment of government.

The empirical analysis and the prescriptive discourse are merged together to serve the academic, argumentative, and descriptive needs and depths of the issues and their justification. Moreover, the method is basically built on questionnaires handed over to political parties to respond to, which later on were explored, studied, illustrated, evaluated, and argued. The method used here might look very simple, but the final mixture and product is really amazing.

The survey was in a "Question and Answer" format, which was very fruitful as evidenced by the large volume of information present in this work here. It is very concrete and specific. The issues are explored and stated clearly. It is very concentrated so that no contradictions or distractions may be presented. It is easy to read. It is also very simple and

takes great pains and avoids exaggeration or convoluted linguistic devices. The creativity and simplicity of the Q & A style allows the users to collectively reach their final goal of assessing an authority, a state or even a situation through the appropriate socio-political lenses. And most recently, it has been encouraged and further used by international political NGOs (NDI, IDEA, etc.), western embassies, government's auditing institution etc.

The study follows the basic constructive elements of any study: introduction, body and an end. The introduction provides a brief profile of Yemen and its contemporary political life, as it is needed to prepare the readers. The body explores each party structure individually, as it is very important to get some details and analytical arguments, and concludes with a sub-conclusion about each to deepen and clarify the argument. The end includes a general assessment and evaluation of all parties, as it is important to summarise while coming to the final conclusion and finding of the study.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the descriptive and prescriptive information and statistics are based on the best-known and available or published documents up to the end of the year 2000.

3.2. General People's Congress (GPC)

3.2.1. General Context

A. Party History

The General People's Congress (GPC) was founded in the northern Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) on August 24, 1982. During that time the country was passing through a period of national upheaval and rebellions. In the wake of rebellions in 1977 and 1979 Presidents Al-Hamdi and Al- Ghashmi were already been assassinated. After them, President Ali Abdullah Saleh came to power in July 1979. The same rebellion and violence continued during the first two years of President Saleh's regime. The National Front, an insurgency force, increased its pressure

in Ibb and Taiz (the midlands). Various other groups and secret organisations such as the Nasserites, the Ba'ath and the Muslim Brotherhood were rapidly gaining strength.

In an attempt to curb the rebellion and limit the influence of the Nasserites, the Ba'ath and the Muslim Brotherhood, President Saleh attempted to bring together the government and opposition groups in order to create a national political conference. He received much encouragement in this regard from a group of his advisors. There was a growing demand for such a conference at the regional, national and international levels. It was intended to provide an umbrella under which all groups could operate in the open, and they could cooperate with each other somehow in the northern national unified scene. It was hoped that the conference would serve to curb the secret organisations proliferating at the time in response to the ban on political organisations. It was expected to fulfil the political gaps that existed, and to confront the socialist political movement and influence coming from the South. It was in this political background that the GPC was founded in 1982.

Following the unification of Yemen in 1990, Article 5 of the ROY constitution endorsed multi-party politics in 1991. Many groups that had earlier existed under the GPC umbrella split from it, forming their own parties or joining other political parties and movements coming from the South. Therefore, it must be emphasized that the status of the GPC as a political party is a post-unification phenomenon. Unlike Yemen's other political parties/movements such as Islah, the Nasserites, or the Ba'ath party, the GPC did not begin as a pure social or ideological movement. It, instead, came about as an organization developed to rally support around President Saleh and to curb the secret societies and organisations proliferating at the time. Until unification, the GPC existed in little more than name, for all practical purposes.

From 1990 to 1997, GPC, though greatly strengthened following unification, still did not possess either the real needed active civil structural or ideological foundations of a democratic political party. This, however, has started to change since parliamentary elections in 1997. In the past three years, GPC has launched a serious project of developing

party ideology, democratising its leadership structures and reaching out to new members. It is still to observe how ideologically, and structure-wise the party will come to be or to develop into, especially with its new Secretary General Dr. Al-Eryani.

The original organisers of the party were all prominent social leaders and elite's: sheikhs, social and religious figures, business leaders, and intellectuals, most of them representing traditional and tribal balances. This group consisted of President Saleh and several of his close advisors including Abdulkarim Al-Eryani, the former Prime Minister, Yahya Mutawakkil, the present First Deputy General Secretary of the GPC; Abdulwahab Al-Ansi, a founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and current Deputy General Secretary of Islah; Abdulaziz Abdulghani the former Prime Minister and the current Chairman of the Consultative (Shura) Council; and members of Al-Hujariah merchant and social class in Taiz including Sultan Barakani, Hayel Saied, and Al-Asbahi.

Finally, the party's electoral history in terms of vote percentage is as follows. The Republic of Yemen (ROY) has had two parliamentary elections, the first in 1993 and the second in 1997. In 1993, the GPC won 122 out of 301 seats, and in 1997 it won 224 seats. Moreover, in the 1999 presidential elections, the party's President Saleh of Republic won the elections as the party's candidate. The GPC is presently the ruling party of the ROY, holding power on and at the national level.

B. Definition and Guiding Principles

The GPC describes and defines itself as "a political organisation of the people created to continue the march of the Yemeni national movements and unity". As the ruling party of Yemen since its inception in 1982, it has been looking for a role to play in politics. The party aims to continue in its leadership role both in the Parliament and the presidency. It is an important task that requires consulting, engaging, and sometimes uniting with other political and popular forces. The party leadership might also require marginalizing others, using all the state facilities and influences, if the inner, regional, and international circumstances allow to.

On the other hand, searching for a real future, reformists in the party leadership realise that although the GPC has been the ruling party since 1982, it has only recently begun to function as somehow real or semi-political party in a competitive multi-party system. One of the GPC's main goals since the 1997 parliamentary elections has been to transform the organisational and ideological foundations of the party in order to make it more democratic and participatory, and to increase the strength of the party at the local and governorate levels. Some of the objectives that it achieved up to certain levels are: the creation of a new young qualified leadership, limiting and decreasing the use of state authority, and attempting to depend on qualitative membership more than a quantitative one. Thus, in the next five years, the GPC aims to recreate itself as an organisation with the essentials to function as a democratic political party.

At the present time, the party has several key political priorities and issues:

- *Economic issues:* Since 1997, the government has been implementing the General Financial and Economic Reform Program proposed by the World Bank. Although the program has generated pockets of protest, particularly when subsidies have been lifted, the government's implementation of the program has generally been considered successful. The party is also currently completing reports on poverty and unemployment, and intends to focus heavily on these issues in the coming year.
- *Education:* A present priority of the President is to work with the Ministry of Education to improve both university and primary education and make them as an integrated program.
- Final resolution of the Yemeni-Saudi border dispute.

At present, the party is not a part of a bloc or a ruling coalition. As prescribed by the Unification Agreement of 1990, from unification until the 1993 parliamentary elections, the GPC participated in a ruling coalition with the YSP (Yemen Socialist Party/South). The YSP continued after the 1993 parliamentary elections until the separatists' action of the

1994, which decreased and terminated YSP influence and power gradually, and may be/certainly forever. However, despite its formal agreement with the YSP, as was mandated by the unification accords, the GPC entered into a secret indirect coalition with the Islah party from 1990-1994. Following the 1994 war, the YSP was dropped from the coalition and GPC participated in a power sharing arrangement with Islah. As a result of the YSP boycott of the 1997 Presidential Elections, the GPC gained overwhelming control of the Parliament and became the single ruling party.

From the broad ideological position, as it began as a party of national consensus, it is difficult to pin the GPC down on a specific ideological position. However, generally speaking, the party stands for adherence to the principles of democratic consent, maintenance of Islamic values, and promotion of the private sector.

As stated in GPC party publications, it is committed to the following policy positions:

- To Islam as a creed and Shari'ah;
- To adhere to the republican system and consolidate national unity;
- To respect the constitution and to implement the peaceful transfer of power;
- To adhere to democracy and political pluralism and to guarantee the right of expression in all forms, to respect national and responsible opposition, and to protect human rights;
- To consider the Judiciary as an independent authority and cornerstone in building a modern state;
- To treat the family as the basic unit in the social structure, and its values should be based on the Islamic religion and national ethics;

- Women constitute the other half of society and discrimination based on differences in sex are not justified. Nor can these differences justify the absence of women from active public life;
- Economic freedom is essential for harnessing the creative energies of the individual and for promoting rapid economic growth;
- To adopt local administration systems to expand public participation in public life, in co-operation with central authorities;
- To safeguard the citizen's national and private freedoms, to protect him/her against unfair aggression and not to allow house-breaking or putting him/her under surveillance, and to protect him/her against arbitrary arrest or detention beyond the judicial power of the court of law;
- To ensure public rights and to respect freedoms of the press and expression of opinion, and to guarantee the right of creating institutions of civil society (NGOs) such as societies and syndicates, according to the law;
- Social justice and equality are fundamental for achieving social solidarity and peace;
- To categorically prevent the exploitation of public services and funds for personal ends;
- To stress commitment to honest and constructive political competition;
- To keep the military and security institutions away from partisan conflict and to underscore their role as a symbol of national unity and the people's tool in defending constitutional legitimacy.

It can be concluded that it appears that the main policy in the party is not over specific issues or policy positions, but instead over power and influence both within the party and for one's region, tribe, or group. This tendency has been weakening the party since 1997. As we stated

and clarified before, one of the goals of the party to run itself as a positive democratic institution has yet to be proved.

3.2.2. Party Structure

A. Membership

Let us now discuss the religious, regional, gender and age composition of the party. The GPC encompasses a wide range of people, including members of all ages and from all tribes, religious sects, regions of the country, and including significant numbers of both men and women, as well as intellectuals. One of the growing and most recent features of the party is to hunt to recruit the best of the people in the scene. It has been quite successful up to now.

Considering the real influence, popular support (keeping ideology far away from statistics) it can be said that the GPC has a majority in almost every area of the country, it is stronger in some regions than in others. The GPC is relatively weaker in the Hadramaut Valley (south, east), Taiz governorate (north, midlands), Aden and its surrounding areas, and the far northern governorates (Marib and Al-Jouf). In Hadramaut, for example, one of the states of the former PDRY, the Islah Party managed to take advantage of the void left by the YSP's 1997 boycott of parliamentary elections, taking advantage of the conservative religious nature comprised of Shaif'i Muslims. Islah Party was more successful than the GPC in attracting YSP supporters in this region as well.

Likewise, in term of quality and quantity, the GPC does not have a strong foothold in the Taiz governorate¹. The Taiz region, and the Al-Hujariah group in particular, have long been known as the wellspring of Yemeni ideological thought and political movements. The Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood, the National Front, and the Yemeni wings of the Nasserite Unionist and the Ba'ath parties all emerged from Al-Hujariah. Following this tradition, the Islah Party and the other smaller

¹ Statistics is not available because the representatives are silent on this issue.

opposition parties all make strong showings in Taiz, and the GPC has not been able to win a comfortable majority of parliamentary seats there.

However, since the parliamentary elections of 1997, all of Yemen's major political parties, including the GPC have engaged in massive membership campaigns and are actively expanding their bases of support. In 1997, the GPC membership stood at around 1 million. However, following the 1997-1998 membership drive, the GPC now claims to have 2.15 million members. So, the party membership isn't shrinking but growing. It may be because the GPC is the ruling party and membership in the GPC can mean significant advantages to businessmen, military and security personnel², government workers and politicians. On the other hand there are many persons who supporters of the GPC without becoming a member.

B. Party Leadership

Let us now take up racial, ethnic, tribal, religious and gender composition of the party leadership. The GPC was conceived in 1982 as a national conference designed to end the fighting among competing political movements which had destabilised the YAR throughout the 1970s. As a result, the GPC has been, and still is, an umbrella organisation for various political ideologies, religious sects and tribal groups. The GPC leadership contains Muslims from the Zaydi and Shafa' communities, with representatives from all areas of the country and all tribes. This is partially a result of President Saleh's ruling style over the past twenty years in which he elevates natural leaders such as sheikhs and religious figures from all areas of the country, and uses these people to spread the GPC's influence in their regions when it is needed.

Although most of Yemen's regional, religious and tribal groups are represented in the leadership of GPC, the most powerful leaders are usually those who have personal, family or tribal ties with the President, or those who have a trusted family background.

² It is prohibited constitutionally and legally.

Moreover, while GPC leadership at the highest level often involves some sort of ties with the President, mid-level GPC leadership is slowly changing as the younger generation and newer members become more active. In the recent inter-party elections at the governorate level, 60-70% of those elected to leadership positions were new members and there was a 60% turnover in the elected membership of the Permanent Committee. Although these numbers seem to indicate a vast change in the GPC power structure, most of those who have been newly elected to leadership positions still have similar military, security, tribal or family backgrounds to those who they have replaced.

In general, there are definite informal commitments to the structure of leadership at the very highest levels of the party. Key leadership positions in the party almost without exception have a tribal, security or traditional family background. However, Reformists in the party, especially amongst the younger generation, have been somewhat successful at turning over leadership positions at lower levels. Further, the President has begun to support the advancement of a small number of these younger, well-educated activists. Some of the most recent appointments at some of the important key position within the GPC structure are good examples (Dr. Mohamed Qubati, Head of the Political Dept. and Dr. Hamied Al-Awadi, Head of Thought & Cultural Dept).

In addition, there are ideological tendencies or cliques that members of the leadership fit into. There are a number of leadership cliques because the GPC is a very large party encompassing so many groups. For the greater importance of such details that serve the main core of this study, I will explore them to closely observe the Yemeni political parties' real insights and of structure, goals and performance. Some of the dominant groups are as follows:

1. The E. Group (*the westerners*), as typified by a former Prime Minister:
This group consists of many business leaders, intellectuals and reformers. Leaders from this group often come from the judge class in Taiz, Ibb and Sana'a. This group has close ties amongst its members because of inter-marriages. It is a group that may look like it

shares the same background, principles, and objectives but its false togetherness and teamwork (except in corruption) is not that strong enough to create a new turning point or take an affirmative important decision with regard to any of the State affairs. Individuals who have their one to one relations with the President are becoming committed but surely not deeply loyal to him. The only courageous creative thing they might carry on, within the limited gaps and margins the President allows them, is the provision of giving advice and opinions. It is a group of a weak collective ideology that works for the interests of its own families and relatives.

2. The Sana'ani Group:

This group is comprised of a group of Sheikhs from tribal areas such as Hajjah, Mahweet, Amran, and Sana'a provinces who now mostly and permanently reside in Sana'a. Many of these groups are MPs, and most have gained their power as a result of President Saleh's aforementioned policy (temporary and selectively) of empowering sheikhs as his regional representatives. Although these sheikhs do not have a formal coalition amongst them (with few exceptions), they sympathize and support each other in the government, military and security institutions. In addition, this group typically deals with their social traditional counterparts leadership (with few exceptions) from Ibb, Taiz, Aden, and other provinces (especially intellectuals) with hostility and ignorance.

3. The Military-Security Group:

Along with the E. group, this is the most powerful leadership group within the ruling authority. One of the closest President's relatives, with a high ranking military post and arguably the most powerful person in the country besides the President, is the head of this group. Yet this group has begun to be weakened because of the emergence of another close relative of the new generation with another but more important military post.

4. The Family Group:

This is a group of prominent and powerful families from different Yemeni social classes, who have matrimonial ties with each other to

increase their political power and are, therefore, extremely loyal to one another. Some members of this group are also included in other groups, but the strong ties that have come from intermarriages are enough to classify this as a separate group.

5. The Southern Group:

They mainly come from *Bedouin* governorates with some Hashemite (Prophet Mohammed's Family) whose populations were on the losing end by the time of the 1986 civil conflict in South Yemen. All villages and military squads from such areas fled to North Yemen following the uprising. And now they share many common interests with President Saleh. Military squads from this group attained heroic status in the 1994 civil conflict as a result of their intimate knowledge of Southern terrain and military installations. A high-ranking official in the executive authority leads this group. Members of this group typically are not interested in positions in the political wings of the GPC such as the Permanent Committee or Political Bureau, but they are well trusted by President Saleh and are thus powerful in security organisations and the military, especially in the western and southern area. The President has rewarded them with high military positions such as heads of sensitive military squads and security units in the governorates. Members of this group typically receive one or two cabinet-level positions. The strength of this group lies in their loyalty to one another and to the relationship they maintain with President Saleh. Yet, most recently there were clear indications that even this group has been weakened. A careful slow process to marginalize and/or to decrease their influence already started for the same old regime's games and may be to give the floor for a new balance and national reconciliation with the socialist whose indicators are quite obvious and strong.

6. The Ibb group:

This group consists of young, educated party activists from Ibb and other northern areas who are eager to take on a greater role in the party. Their strength comes from their numbers, individual links, ambition, loyalty, dedication, and activism. As party structure be-

comes more democratic, they have been able to garner more mid-level positions of power in the party.

7. Conservative-Religious Group:

This group is led by one of the religious sheikhs, a former Yemeni fighter in the Afghanistan-Russian war. He now serves as the GPC's coordinator and trainer for mosques. This group represents the religious dimension of GPC that it is needed ideologically and traditionally to fill the gaps, to satisfy a great sector of society, and to confront the other similar forces when it is needed.

In short, the group that has the greatest influence over party policies and programs is the E. Group. Since the E. Group contains many of the party's intellectuals, Reformists and business leaders, this group has the greatest interest and ability to form national policy. Additionally, because members of the E. Group control many key ministries associated with policy making, they are further able to assert their influence. And even if the process to limit, if not to eradicate, their input is growing faster, yet their advice and opinion is most appreciated and explored.

It can be concluded that, several, if not all, of the most powerful groups within the GPC such as the Southern Group, the Sana'ani Group and the Military-Security Group are also more interested (like others) in preserving their own power, interests, gains, and the balance than in formulating national economic policy, foreign policy, development programs; unless it affects their particular region or group. There is a clear absence of beliefs, ideology, institutionalism, and nationalism, there obviously dominates the existence of primitive regionalism and corruption.

Moreover, at the highest levels, the GPC's leadership group is a de facto "closed society". However judging by the rising up strength of new comers such as the Ibb Group and the younger generation throughout the party at the lower levels, as well as the new *semi-presidential* well for reform, the leadership group may be slowly opening. However, as a result of the close association, if not a unity, of the GPC with the regime and personality of President Saleh, the leadership group is

unlikely to ever be truly open as long as moral and physical corruption remains stronger than ideologies, morals, principles, policies, and strategies.

To a great extent, the GPC has been and still remains a cohesive political force. The President has recently come to accept the idea of the need for opposition in a democracy (up to certain levels and within specific formats) and has begun to allow controlled official dissent within the ruling party. Several trusted and loyal GPC MPs and leaders have been encouraged to speak frankly and practice a certain degree of self-criticism of the party and government. The unofficial informal opposition within the GPC includes and is based on its MPs and some party's intellectuals and writers. The President generally encourages and supports their constructive criticisms, if any, of the GPC ministers, deputy ministers, and officials in the bureaucracy. Yet, in general most of the party leaders are committed to the party's principles and policies, especially when it is needed extremely at the national level.

C. Organisational Structure and Process

First of all, the party does have a written constitution and code of conduct. The GPC is well organised at the national, governorate and district levels and has recently completed a campaign of extending that organisational structure into the southern governorates. The offices of the General Authority carry out the daily operations of the party. The General Authority consists of the General Secretaries, six Assistant General Secretaries, and the Heads of Departments. Executive departments include: Organisational Affairs, Political and Foreign Relations, Finance and Administration, Popular Organisations, Ideology, Culture and Media, Economics and Services, Guidance and Orientation, Female Issues, and Youth and Students.

In addition, the GPC has research branches in each of the following departments: Political, Organisational, Cultural, Information, Economic, and Service. Al-Mithaq Institute is also a GPC-operated organization that serves as a school for party members to attend courses and seminars by various politicians and GPC-affiliated university profes-

sors. Moreover, the party has branches at all the universities of Yemen and serves to activate university professors to conduct research and lead seminars and courses. These university committees also serve as a link between GPC professors and the party leadership.

The General Conference whose senior leadership meets once every two years and evaluates, discusses, and develops broad policy goals develops policies. The Permanent Committee, which meets at least once every six months, is responsible for proposing, debating and approving policy initiatives. The Political Bureau [the Public/General Committee], which meets monthly, is responsible for following up decisions, plans, programs and policies approved by the General Conference and Permanent Committee. The ordinary member has access to these structures only through electing members to the General Conference, which in turn elects members to the Political Bureau, Consultative Council and executive organs.

On the other hand, elections for different party positions at the village, district, governorate and national level are held once in every four years. At each level, there must be a local conference, which in turn is responsible for electing representatives to the next higher level, ending in the national General Conference. The General Conference has two regular rounds with the first serving to elect representatives for positions in the Supreme Leadership, and the second for policy development and evaluations.

The General Conference consists of:

- All members of the Permanent Committee which includes all GPC MPs;
- The leader of the branches in the governorates;
- The chairmen of the executive committees and authorities in the governorates;
- Deputy general secretaries;
- Deputy ministers;

- The heads of all organisations affiliated to GPC;
- Chief editors of GPC newspapers; and
- Heads of departments in the administrative and financial sectors.

The General Conference then elects the members of the Political Bureau and the leaders of General Authority. The party bylaws list the requirements and restrictions for each position. Finally, policy documents are not widely distributed to ordinary members but only amongst the party leaders and decision-makers. An ordinary member knows about them only what is printed in the party newspapers

3.2.3. Party Legislative and Governance Profile

After being the sole permitted party of the YAR, the GPC had to learn to participate in a competitive multi-party system. In many ways, the GPC and the Yemeni government are making positive strides towards fulfilling this role. Yemeni opposition parties operate with unprecedented freedom for the Arab world. The ruling party generally permits freedom of the press to a certain degree and opposition newspapers are often able to harshly criticize both the President and ruling party. However, the GPC and especially President Saleh often fail to allow vibrant and competitive opposition through informal policy co-opting opposition leaders. Leaders of Islah often, but not always, side with the GPC because of their strong traditional and tribal ties with the GPC leadership. In addition, many leaders of opposition parties become the “official” or “government” opposition through their status of being on the payroll of the President’s office.

Representatives of the party hold regular meetings with the Deputy Chairman of the House who is responsible for co-ordinating the GPC caucus. The leader of the GPC caucus is also a member of the Political Bureau [the Public/General Committee] allowing him to contribute to the development of GPC policies. The GPC caucus is perhaps the most significant area where a controlled degree of inter-party opposition is

permitted. However, individuals in the GPC caucus who are allowed to serve as official opposition must be very careful and politically sensitive, and also must have the consent of the President to do this. It is said that opposition within the GPC caucus has been successful in effecting change in a few areas. For example, when the dissenters within the GPC caucus recently disagreed with Dr. Eryani (the former Prime Minister) over certain aspects of the Local Authority Law, they went to the President with their complaints and eventually the GPC caucus version of the law replaced the official GPC version.

Finally, the question is: can the GPC's representatives be held accountable to the party's principles and policies? The constitution contains an article stating that the Yemeni MP represents the whole nation, not a particular political party, so constitutionally the party cannot discipline its representatives for their votes in the Parliament. However, GPC MPs are fully aware that unless they have a specific understanding with the President to do so, they must not vote against the party line. Thus, members of the legislature are allowed to change party affiliation (cross the aisle) theoretically, but it hardly takes place in practice.

3.2.4. Party Communication and Election Campaigns

In terms of the party's press strategy, the GPC tends to be more aggressive than either the YSP or Islah in its newspapers and publications when it is required. When smaller opposition parties attack the GPC positions or officials, GPC often reacts and counterattacks rather than answering the allegations. The GPC likewise often indulges in personal attacks on opposition leaders.

The GPC makes it certain that its newspapers are available on a weekly basis at newsstands throughout the country. GPC newspapers and publications include among others: Al-Mithaq Journal; 22nd May newspaper; and July 7th newspaper, beside other independent newspapers and mouthpieces of other affiliated government opposition parties, as well as some of the regular daily (or weekly) official newspapers. The practice of using the official media for partisan purposes comes to light from time to time and regularly used in favour of the ruling party in its

political conflicts and struggles against opposition parties especially Islah and YSP.

Within the General Authority of the GPC, there is the Media Department, which is responsible for co-ordinating the GPC-related press. Although Yemeni television and radio stations are in theory and practice government controlled, each political party is entitled to equal access based on the Law of Media and Publications during the elections and at other party's political occasions.

On the other hand, the party's election campaigns start with the process of selecting a candidate. The GPC Political Bureau evaluates all of the party's current MPs for their effectiveness, activism, and appeal to voters. On the basis of this evaluation, members of the Political Bureau create a list of MPs who are encouraged to run for re-election. In the open constituencies, the Political Bureau will review a list of possible candidates submitted by GPC organisations at the local level. Although the party would like to choose the most active and effective and suitable candidate, party leaders are fully aware that if a sheikh or a prominent social figure wants the nomination, he will likely run as an independent if the GPC does not nominate him. For this reason, the GPC is forced to take into consideration the desires and ambitions of powerful community members.

Training for candidates and activists is one area in which GPC acknowledges particular weakness and has requested and explored the possibilities for assistance from several international political institutions. Yet, as the ruling party, the GPC has no shortage of means for contacting voters. The party has been able to accomplish this through GPC newspapers, local party organisations, constituency meetings, rallies, local leaders [such as Sheikhs], person-to-person contact and door-to-door campaign. The party also reaches voters indirectly through official newspapers, television and radio. Thus, partly as a result of the YSP boycott of the 1997 elections, and partially as a result of the GPC's campaign to consolidate its power in the southern and eastern parts of the country, the GPC gained considerable standing following the 1997 elections, obtaining an overwhelming majority.

3.2.5. Party Strengths and Weaknesses

The GPC's current organisational priorities are three-fold:

1. Expanding the party in the regions of former South Yemen;
2. Completing the transition from a loosely organised national conference to a true political party with the administrative essentials to function as such; and
3. Encouraging and organising an indirect, as well as direct, debate with opposition parties to maintain and activate the emerging democracy and limited freedoms, while and protecting its gains. This is part of the process to prepare the Yemeni scene for the ensuing Local Council Elections for 2001 and Parliamentary Elections of April 2003.

Although the GPC already has both the Presidency and a significant majority in Parliament, it is working to expand its political base in the areas of the former south Yemen, which were previously YSP strongholds. The party is also working to establish itself organisationally and ideologically as a real political party and to expand its membership base throughout the country. GPC has had to meet the challenge of operating in a multi-party system by democratising party structures and attracting membership.

Strengths

- As the ruling party, the GPC controls the Presidency and has an overwhelming majority in Parliament;
- The GPC has the support of military and security organisations as well as the bureaucracy and government institutions;
- Significantly it has greater financial resources than any other political party;
- Indirect access to all forms of media including radio and television;

- Experience in governing, gained from almost 20 years in power as a political party;
- Support from Yemen's business community and a large percentage of Yemen's traditional social and political leaders;
- Beliefs among Yemenis that despite its deficiencies, the GPC is still the closest party to the mentality and values of a majority of the population (in the North).
- The tangible developments and achievements that the public can easily come across, especially in the fields of transportation, health care, telecommunication, and education.
- The party and the president's limitless effort to keep the country physically united.

Weaknesses

- The GPC has not yet developed an adequate system of internal democracy and sophisticated internal administration and organization;
- Party is overtly reliant on the personality of President Saleh;
- Party is weak in its theoretical and ideological foundations;
- Promotion and advancement in the party depend on tribal and traditional ties and often bears little relation to individual initiative or activism.

However, the party may need assistance in these areas. It identifies its priorities as the following:

- Training in party organization and administration;
- Training of candidates and election campaign management;
- Helping the GPC to establish contacts with political parties from the experiences of the western developed countries, and similar developing nations;

- Helping in establishing an efficient network for inter-party communications.

3.3. The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah)

3.3.1. General Context

A. Party History

In 1990, the unification agreement of the new Republic of Yemen (ROY) lifted the official legal ban on opposition parties. Following this action, several groups, including Islah's leadership, split from the GPC and formed their own parties. Subsequently, the official foundation of the Islah Party took place in Sana'a on September 13, 1990, four months after the unification.

Islah Party's background starts from a religious movement known as Al-Ikhwan Muslimeen or the Muslim Brotherhood. Sheikh Yassin Abdulaziz, Sheikh Abdulmajied Al-Zandani, Abdulmalik Mansoor (at present in GPC) and others are considered the main founders of the spiritual core of Islah and Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1960s in Taiz.

By the late 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood started to organise itself socially and politically in response to the growing popularity of the Ba'ath and Socialist parties and movements (leftists). The Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood was distinct from the model found in other Arab and Muslim states, especially North Africa, as they ideologically and practically overcome any unexpected evolving extremism or violence, but rather an open and reform organisation. In their political campaigns, the Muslim Brotherhood concentrated on the traditional, tribal areas in the Yemeni highlands. The Brotherhood was careful to present itself to the world not as a pure Islamic institution, but as a reforming group and a modern political party.

The Islah Party, mainly, broke off from the GPC following unification in 1990, and was formed as a result of a coalition between various tribal leaders, religious scholars and former, but active, members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni Authority for various reasons, which include spreading the Sunni and Salafi sect of Islam against the Zaydi sect that has traditionally enjoyed prominence in Yemen, in addition, supported the founding of the Islah party. They were supported to stand against the challenge of the socialist expansion and increasing influence coming from the south.

Yassin Abdelaziz was the principal founder of the main faction of Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood in Taiz in the 1960s. Revered as a scholar and accomplished speaker, he is right now considered the spiritual father of the party and is still the unseen powerful master of the Taiz group. The first General Secretary of the Party was Abdelwahab Al-Ansi who occupied the post from September 1990 to 1994. Al-Ansi is a well-educated Islamic scholar and a moderate. After unification, he served as Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition government of the GPC and Islah. He still holds a leadership position in the party, being third in charge. He is still the primary mediator between Islah and the GPC, having his own channels and ties with the highest political leaders from all sides.

The current General Secretary, Mohammed Abdullah Al-Yadoumi was appointed in interim elections following the last Islah General Conference. Al-Yadoumi has been hailed as a very active General Secretary. He is known to hold very deep commitments to his beliefs as well as a respected intellectual.

Perhaps the most powerful leader of the party is Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahmar, the present President of the Supreme Committee of Islah and the Speaker of Yemeni Parliament. Being the Sheikh of Al-Sheikhs of Hashed, the largest tribal group in Yemen, Al-Ahmer is very influential in the Yemeni government. He is considered the primary representative of the tribal and traditional system in Yemen.

In the 1993 parliamentary elections, Islah came second in the elections, ahead of the YSP, winning 66 out of the 301 seats. In the 1997 elections, Islah won 54 seats, but the number rose to 64 as ten independents affiliated with the Islah Parliamentary Caucus. Thus, the party has never held elected national power. But during the period of upheaval in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood and their fighting units and groups temporarily controlled certain regions of what is popularly known as the Mid Lands - in an attempt to decrease the influence of the National Front; a northern Yemeni movement which was supported by the socialist regime of the south.

Despite international criticism the Islah Party is to be viewed as a religious social movement that does not support armed political struggle. The party platform does not allow for any militant components. Furthermore, the party's leadership rejects and denounces all acts of terrorism.

B. Definition and Guiding Principles

Islah states in its political program that its main purpose is to "work for social reform in all fields of life on the basis of Islam and (to) resort to all legitimate means to attain its goals." Islah is a socially conservative party that affirms the application of Islamic practices in reforming the Yemeni society.

Therefore, nowadays the party is striving to play the role of a credible opposition party in Yemen's politics. On the other hand, the relationship between Islah and the ruling party (GPC) is not an unfriendly or combative one. Islah, for various reasons, supported the GPC candidate, President Ali Abdullah Saleh in the two Presidential Elections. Furthermore, Islah did participate in a coalition government with the GPC from 1993 until 1997.

From 1994 to 1997, Islah participated in a power-sharing arrangement with the GPC in which it was the junior partner. However, as a result of the YSP boycott of the 1997 elections, allowing GPC to gain more influence and strength (a process that started with the defeat of the 1994

civil war), the GPC did gain an overwhelming majority in the parliament and was not in need of coalition partners any more.

Yet, although the lower and mid-level leadership of Islah would like the party to take on its role as an opposition party, certain figures in the party leadership have extremely close ties with their counterparts in GPC. It is this situation that impedes Islah's effectiveness as an opposition party. Yet, since the first Yemeni Local Council elections of February 2001, Islah is back, fully and comprehensively engaged in Yemen politics as an opposition party – activating, encouraging, and strengthening the Yemeni emerging democracy – even declaring and coordinating formal and informal coalitions and tactics with other Yemeni opposition parties.

Islah does not expect to win a majority in the 2003 parliamentary elections. They believe that as yet they do not have the necessary political and financial resources to mount such a campaign. Their goal, however, as stated and announced, is to win and have control of Parliament in the 2009 parliamentary elections.

The party, however, does support the country's current constitutional framework for governance. The Islah party states its key issues in the form of the following doctrines:

- Islam as creed and Shari'ah that organises all forms of life;
- The Holy Quran and Sunna of the Prophet Mohammed are the origin of all legal rulings;
- Democracy, bound by Islamic teachings, is a method of rule and all other forms of tyranny or dictatorship are rejected;
- Freedom in its Islamic conception, is an unwavering right to all humans as granted by God;
- Justice is a must and Allah has committed Muslims to live under its banner in their private and public lives;
- Yemen, land and people, is a united Arab Islamic country;

- The Arab and Islamic countries are but one nation to be unified. It is an Islamic legislative duty to act in the interest of the community of all Muslims (umma).

Last but not least, as for the broad ideological position of the party, Islah is a socially conservative reformist party based on adherence to traditional, Islamic social principles and commitment to democratic governance bound by Islamic laws. Thus, despite its earlier call for a rejection of the unification, its boycott of the referendum on the constitution and its demand for unreserved implementation of Shari'ah, Islah does identify itself as a modern political party that recognises and follows the constitution of the Republic of Yemen and its laws. Islah sees itself as the representative of the moderate part of the Yemeni religious civil society rather than an Islamic movement that aims at implementing its conservative theological doctrine.

The Islah Political Action Program articulates the party's position on a number of issues including the individual, family, society, politics, education and culture, and economics. Key among these positions is the following:

- Improving the moral condition of the individual, family and society through Islam and spiritually based principles;
- Protection of the traditional family structure as a means of moral development and social cohesion;
- Ensuring that the Islamic Sharia'a is the basis of the law, and that all legislation is drafted in accordance with Sharia'a principles (The Holy Quran and the Sunna of Prophet Muhammad);
- Establishing the independence of the judiciary;
- Consolidation of the system of political pluralism with competitive views based on Islamic Shura (consensus);
- Guaranteeing equal opportunity of political work, neutrality of the military and the peaceful transfer of power;

- Freedom of economic activity, respect for private ownership, and reduction of the role of the state in economic endeavours;
- Re-enforcing the economic independence of Yemen and liberating economic activity from the political process;
- Orienting foreign policy towards the issues of Arab and Islamic nations, and improving relations with these countries.

3.3.2. Party Structure

A. Membership

The party has a moral and ethical code, contained in the bylaws of its Political Program, which lists the conditions for membership and the duties and responsibilities of members. However, in terms of the racial, ethnic, religious, regional, gender and age composition of the party, Islah generally appeals to both males and females, typically to younger people, and especially those who are conservative who have very strong Islamic beliefs, or a strong tribal background. Therefore, general membership is young.

The leadership typically consists of the older generations that have cut their teeth with the Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood). Islah has a definite regional bent drawing heavily from the Hadramaut coast, the city of Taiz, and the tribes of the Yemeni highlands whose membership generally follow their sheikhs into political parties.

So, the party primarily appeals to religious conservatives, but some of its strongest opposition comes from competing groups of religious conservatives. Being almost a primarily Shafa'i (Sunni Muslim) group, Islah has yet to gain a foothold among the Zaydi (Shi'i) Muslims of Sana'a and Hodeidah and Sada'ah.

In addition, the Salafi movement (which is an extremely conservative fundamentalist Islamic movement that emerged from the Sada'ah area and is quickly gaining followers throughout the country) draws many potential Shafa'i members away from Islah. The Salafis generally en-

courage their followers to eschew politics and political parties. For that, Islah, proportionally, has yet to gain more significant foothold in specific governorates

However, the membership base is growing faster than that of any other party. It is quantitatively and qualitatively considered the best in Yemen. The party estimates 800,000 members. So, based on membership lists, which are growing, election returns, responsibilities, effectiveness, and performance, the Islah party is growing rapidly and becoming better known and influential, increasingly gaining respect throughout the Yemeni socio-political scene.

Islah has a system of formal membership with dues. Monthly dues are calculated on a sliding scale based on incomes. Dues can be anywhere from 20 Riyals to 500 Riyals per month. Local party organisations are allowed to keep the majority of the membership dues for their activities at the district level. Because dues are relatively low (20 Riyals = \$ 0.12), economic limitations do not tend to play a role in differentiating between members and supporters. Likewise, there are no gender limitations on membership and age limitations correspond with the voting age.

Supporters of Islah, who are not members, are often formal members of the GPC. They retain their membership in the GPC because they hold government posts and feel that GPC membership is necessary for either retaining their jobs, or advancing in their career. Islah supporters include as well, for its traditional conservatives perspectives and excellent organisational togetherness, a wide range of tribes' men, sheikhs, and above all a lot of ordinary Yemenis.

The party has a women's section, active both at the national and governorate levels and youth chapters on every college campus. Additionally there is a separate section for students inside the General Secretariat. All Yemeni males and females of good moral standing who are convinced of the goals and principles of Islah have the right to join. Six months out of the year, Islah has a campaign to recruit new members. For the remaining six months, Islah tends to close the door to new

members, and concentrates on developing activists among its current membership.

B. Party Leadership

The Islah party has three main factions: the intellectual-reformist wing with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood movement of the 1960s, the tribal group, and the conservative (radical) group.

Diversity in the Islah party tends to follow these fault lines. The group of intellectual founding members tends to be more progressive, while the conservative group tends towards policies in common with other radical regional Islamic groups. The tribal group is the faction most in line with the President's wing of the GPC and least contentious as an opposition party. The conservative group is more confrontational, and therefore more likely to push Islah in its role as an opposition party.

So, talking about the racial, ethnic, religious and gender composition of leadership, although most rank and file members of the Islah party are ideologically similar to the intellectual-reformist wing (the Muslim Brotherhood), the Sana'ani group and tribal groups tend to wield disproportionate power. This is a result of the continued importance tribalism and northernism in determining politics, authority, and power in Yemen.

Thus, since membership and leadership of the Islah party consists overwhelmingly of Muslims from the Shafa'i (Sunni and Salafi) sect, this reflects itself on the nature of leadership, though northernism, which is presented in Islah by the Tribal Group, is traditionally associated with the Zaydi sect. The party, as a result, does not have a strong appeal for Yemen's Zaydi Muslims (especially the Hashemite families, an important social/religious class). It explains the party's weak electoral performance in certain areas whose population is predominantly Zaydi.

Like all parties in Yemen, the senior leadership of Islah is almost entirely male. Of course, there are a number of very active female mem-

bers in Islah's Women's Committee, which has been created with the intention to expand their presence. Islah's women committee is considered to be the best, most qualified, and the most active and effective, compared to its counterparts in other political parties. So, in the areas of gender, tribal affiliation, and religious sects, the composition of the leadership is relatively stable.

Therefore, there are informal commitments to the continued dominance of the tribal leaders and Sana'ani/tribal group in the Islah leadership's top positions, while the reformist group controls the key effective practical and executive positions. It is said that the leadership is careful to include members of the reformist group, knowing that people who join the party often do so because of ideology, which is developed and supported by the Taiz group, the party's principal intellectual backbone.

The reformist group exerts the primary influence on the party's policies, as it is the group that has been responsible for the party's ideological development since the days of the Muslim Brotherhood. Additionally, members of the reformist group are typically the editors and journalists for the party's official newspaper, which leaves them considerable influence over the opinions and beliefs of the rank and file membership in regard to policy development. On the other hand, the conservative group, mostly because of its ties with Islamic movements in other Muslim countries, has a strong influence over the party's international policies, especially issues related to the Islamic world and more well-known cases and struggles.

The tribal group is less interested in crafting party policy and programs, and is often used by the intellectual wing of the party for its close ties with security organisations, certain factions of the GPC, and most important by the President. The tribal leaders, however, frequently influence official Islah policy, especially the main issues. Yet, the final decision is a must on all; mostly justified and agreed upon. A good example is the recent presidential elections, in which the Islah Party supported Ali Abdullah Saleh's campaign for re-election. Ideologies and conservativeness in the party opposed such a decision, but it was

ultimately carried out through by the smart socio-political minds of togetherness.

Moreover, it has to be pointed out that there is a radical fundamental fraction within the Islah Party which is represented and led by Sheikh Abdulmajed Al-Zandani, Chairman of Islah Shura Council and president of Al-Eman University, and his group. The fractions ideology is based on the Salafi (or Najdi or Wahabi) interpretation of Islam. Compared with the moderate and tribal fractions of the party the influence of this radical group is rather rudimentary.

In short, in theory, there is a great deal of cohesiveness in the Islah Party. Islah party has several well-known and powerful leaders; the party is not centred around one man or one group. It is an excellent example of teamwork and reaching common stands and the over all future interests.

C. Organisational Structure and Process

First of all, the party does have a written constitution and code of conduct. The party is one of the best organised, if not the most, at the national, provincial and district levels. Despite its status as an opposition party that has never enjoyed fully the blessings of being a ruling party, Islah has perhaps the most sophisticated organisational structure at the governorate and district levels compared to the other political parties in Yemen.

The General Authority and branches of its counterpart at both the national and local levels undertake the day-to-day operations of the party. There are nine departments in the General Authority, all of which are administratively under the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary. The Executive Departments are divided as follows: Political; Organization and Rehabilitation; Media and Culture; Education; Economic; Social Affairs; Syndicates, Organisations and Unions; Administration and Finance; and Outreach.

The party has a Planning Division for policy development. It also has a Policy Research Unit. The party officials admit that at present it is only a theoretical structure, it does not play an active part in practice. The party's administrative units are better developed. The party, as well, has offices at the national, governorate, and district levels. In addition, the Political Bureau of the party holds annual planning sessions and four-year plans are developed, discussed and approved at the General Conference.

The ordinary member has access only through electing members to the General Conference, which in turn elects members to the Political Bureau, Consultative Council and executive organs. The leadership of the Islah party at all levels is elected every four years through the General Conference and Local Conferences. Sixty days before the end of the term, the Consultative Council must hold a meeting to determine the bylaws of the forthcoming election as well as the percentage and number of representatives to be elected to the forthcoming conference using the latest membership lists. The distribution of seats is based on the number of registered Islah members in each district. The Consultative Council at the provincial level is responsible for distributing seats to be elected amongst the districts.

On the day of the election, members must come to the Islah district headquarters to elect their representatives. If less than 50% of the members participate, the results are rendered null and a new election date is fixed. The members elected at the district level comprise the Local Conference and the General Conference. When the General Conference meets in Sana'a, the members elect the members of the Consultative Council. The Consultative Council then elects the President, General Secretary, Deputy Presidents, and Deputy General Secretaries for the party. It also elects the Head of the Consultative Council, the members of the Supreme Committee, and the Judiciary Committee.

Once elected by the Consultative Council, the Supreme Committee is responsible for appointing the chairmen of the Executive Departments based on suggestions by the General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary. Elections for party offices at the provincial level follow the

same pattern as the national level elections and are monitored by the local executive branch.

Moreover, regarding the implementation of disciplinary mechanisms, the party has an internal judicial authority headed by the Secretary for Punishments and Discipline, whose duty is to deal with ethical breaches and complaints against party leadership, and to implement disciplinary procedures whenever necessary. The harshest punishment is expulsion from the party. The party has judicial departments at the governorate level, and cases are decided first locally and then can be appealed at the national level committee.

The party bylaws list requirements and restrictions for each position. For example, members of the Consultative Council must have been Islah party members for at least three years. Members of the Supreme Committee must have a specific religious or cultural background. The members of the Judicial Sectors must have a background in law. Individuals can only hold a specific party position for three four-year terms.

It can be concluded that the Consultative Council (Political Bureau) determines official policies. Although policy documents are routinely distributed amongst party leaders, the only means for widely disseminating Islah policy documents to general members is through the official Islah newspaper, which is distributed throughout the country.

3.3.3. Party Legislative and Governance Profile

Islah party, for so many quantitative and qualitative factors, is currently the largest and most powerful of all Yemen's opposition parties; and may be also in contrast to the ruling party GPC. Further, because of the YSP's boycott of the 1997 parliamentary elections, Islah is the only viable opposition in the Parliament (if it can be truly considered a real and a full opposition party). However, in many cases, the party did not adequately fulfil its role as the opposition, often failing to contest GPC policies. Many members of the Islah's leadership group have extremely close personal, tribal and family ties with the most important leadership of GPC, which often serves to lessen political confrontation and debate.

But most recently Islah political position has been really changing. This process of change must be observed closely to assess the final turning point for Islah, especially during the first Yemeni Local Council Election of 2001, and in the long run by the coming parliamentary election of 2003.

Moreover, party representatives from the political bureau hold regular meetings with the Islah parliamentary caucus in order to discuss parliamentary goals and initiatives. Yet, the Yemeni Constitution contains an article stating that the Yemeni MP represents the whole nation, not a particular political party. So, constitutionally the party cannot discipline its representatives for their votes in the parliament. However, the Islah party is active in contacting its representatives and encouraging them to vote with the party. Further, there is a high degree of loyalty among Islah MPs because of their strong ideological and organisational commitments, and they rarely stray from the party line once the party's position on an issue has been decided.

3.3.4. Party Communication and Election Campaigns

As for the party's press strategy, the party has a weekly newspaper. As the government controls the Yemeni radio and television stations, it serves as its primary media tool. In its official newspaper, Islah usually, but not always, maintains a strategy of peaceful, quiet and intellectual opposition on local issues, preventing their editors and journalists from combativeness or vociferous criticism against specific members of the ruling party and government or others political and social activists. However, this policy of quiet opposition does not always apply to international issues. The party's press often hotly contests the Yemeni government's positions on issues important to Muslims and Arabs if it (the government) differs from the party's socio-political line.

The party has a weekly newspaper, *Al-Sahwah* (The Awakening), which has been in circulation since the party's inception in 1990. It has a circulation of 20,000, which is quite large for an opposition paper in Yemen. The party also sponsors several magazines and journals includ-

ing *Al-Noor* Magazine, published by the Yemeni Center for Strategic Studies; and other related studies and researches.

As was stated before, although (constitutionally and legislatively) the government controls the Yemeni television and radio stations, according to the Law of Media and Publications each political party (also constitutionally and legislatively) is entitled to equal access during the election periods, and to cover its regular annual central committee meetings. While this is hardly the reality, large party events like the Islah General Conference are covered on television.

The party holds annual and regular conferences, conventions, anniversaries, and commemorations. Sessions of the General Conference are held every two years, with the first round serving to elect party leadership and the second round for evaluation and policy development. Annual conventions are also held at the district and governorate levels. Semi-annual meetings are held for party technocrats, the central leadership, and leaders of the executive branches. Party activists at the local level contact voters from door-to-door or through public meetings and qat chews, as well as through the party media and publications.

The party's candidates for parliamentary elections are selected in the following way. The party has two main standards for choosing candidates: (a) how active and efficient the persons will be in fulfilling their role in Parliament, and (b) whether the persons are prospective candidates to win elections. The process begins with each local party organization nominating three people and submitting their lists to the executive office in each governorate. The executive officials at the governorate level meet with district level officials to discuss the lists before sending recommendations to the General Secretariat. The Supreme Council is ultimately responsible for approving or disapproving the candidates.

Although the party usually chooses capable individuals who would be active in the Parliament, considerations of the person's ability to be elected are also explored. Some sheikhs and prominent social figures (because they are generally well supported in their electorates) might be

selected to represent the party, regardless sometimes of their organisational skills and party's activism and affiliation. It is usually carried out in an Islah's ideological and loyalty balance. Moreover, members of the legislature are allowed to change party affiliation (cross the aisle).

3.3.5. Party Strengths and Weaknesses

The current strategy for Islah depends on its extensive run to obtain the highest number of opposition seats by winning the support of the public, and confidence of its members. The party as well is doing its best to protect and keep its achievements and gains for the last 25 years of struggle from the inner and outer threats. It feels the needs of Islah and appreciates its growing influence. Thus, the political Islamic groups are fighting back to strengthen and expand their organisations and membership (quality comes first), which was and will be reflected in the electoral process and the representative system if it is fair and honest enough.

Strengths

- Party's conservative ideology appeals more to the conservative (religious) Yemeni voters;
- Party is well organised and ideologically cohesive;
- Party is strong at the national, governorate, and local levels;
- In comparison to the other parties Islah has a very dedicated and well trained working staff and teams;
- Islah has a very active and productive women's group.

Weaknesses

- Party leadership often does not act as an opposition party, but in consultation with the government;
- Islah does not have financial resources to compete with the ruling party;

- Islah has yet to garner a foothold in regions of the country with significant Zaydi majorities, such as Hadramount, Hodeidah and Sada'ah;
- Thus many ties and contacts need to be developed, deepened, and expanded in terms of the party's international public relations;
- Islah's main faction, affiliated with the moderate Muslim Brotherhood, is not in full control over the militant Najdi (Salafi) strong voices.

However, the party may need to develop itself in certain areas. It identifies its priorities as the following:

- Training candidates and supporters for the 2003 parliamentary elections;
- Strategic planning and identifying priorities;
- Increasing the ability and efficiency of Islah MPs, especially in terms of their oversight and monitoring of the government;
- Developing and improving internal communication within the party;
- Helping to identify and make use of the views, ideas, and suggestions of Islah members;
- Developing means of evaluating members;
- Developing financial resources.

3.4. Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP)

3.4.1. General Context

A. Party History

The YSP was established on October 11, 1978 in the former PDRY (South Yemen) as a union of a number of parties, organisations and national fronts operating in both the PDRY and the YAR (North Yemen). These groups included the Ba'ath movement (a Pan-Arab Nationalist Movement) and the Marxist Party, each of them operated in both the North and South, and six other parties that were active only in the South.

Following independence from Britain in 1967, the PDRY became a socialist state and served as a critical Soviet satellite in the Middle East. The PDRY was ruled until 1979 by a nationalist front that included leftist parties such as the Yemeni Revolutionary Democratic Party, the Popular Pioneering Party, and the Labour Party. In the mid-seventies, these southern Marxist parties began negotiations with their counterparts in North Yemen and formed the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). YSP became the sole political party of South Yemen and its counterpart (the People's Unity Party), of course, was not equivalent to YSP in form and performance, was established in the North. The two parties officially merged together following the 1990 unification of Yemen. The people of the South mostly dominated it because they were in the party for a long time.

However, Abdul-Fatah Ismail is considered to be the founding father of the YSP. He served as General Secretary from 1978 to 1981. During that period he left for Russia in order to facilitate a peaceful exchange of power and to avert a conflict within the party. He is widely considered to be the principal ideologist behind the party and is still revered today. He was assassinated during the civil conflict of 1986, but his ideology, image, and charisma remain within YSP. A faction of the YSP has been named after him.

Ali Nasser Mohammed, a founding member of the YSP, took over control of the YSP from 1981 until he was ousted in the civil uprising of 1986. When Ali Nasser's group finally lost the uprising, they had so much blood on their hands that many people of his region (Shabwah and Abyan) were afraid of reprisals if they stayed in South Yemen. Immediately following the uprising, between 30,000 and 50,000 people, including whole villages and army units, fled to North Yemen. Ali Nasser's group from Abyan and Shabwah are now members of the GPC. They are well trusted somehow by President Saleh and occupy few secondary strategic positions in the Yemeni military and security services.

Ali Nasser Mohammed was well known as a reformer who wanted to move the PDRY closer to the West, and the GPC camp. He developed good relations with North Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Syria. However, he was unable to overcome the tribal and regional cleavages, which constantly divided South Yemen. Ali Nasser was ousted in 1986 and fled to the North where he remained until unification. In accordance with the demands of the South, he left for Syria prior to unification where he still remains in self-imposed exile, despite efforts by President Saleh to convince him to return.

Ali Salim Al-Beidh, a *Hadhrami* (from Hadramout Area in Yemen), came to power following the 1986 uprising. He was one of the few survivors of the uprising. He became the leader of South Yemen and the General Secretary of YSP up to the time of unification in 1990. From 1990 until 1994, he remained the General Secretary of the YSP, but he was driven into exile in Oman for his role in the secessionist movement of 1994. Al-Beidh is revered for his political and military role against the British in the National Front, and for his service as the first Minister of Defence in the first government of South Yemen.

Another original leading figure in the YSP is Jarallah Omar. He achieved his power as one of the leaders of the northern National Front, an insurrectionist movement that erupted in the 1970s and continued to fight President Saleh's government until the mid-1980s. Jarallah Omar is currently the head of the northern group of the YSP. He is widely

respected within the party as well as through out the opposition. He is considered the godfather of the Yemeni opposition since 1994 civil war.

The YSP was the ruling party of the PDRY (South Yemen) from the party's inception in 1978 until unification in 1990. From 1990 up to the 1993 parliamentary elections, the YSP ruled in coalition with the GPC. Following the 1993 elections, YSP participated in a tripartite coalition with GPC and Islah, which ended with the civil uprising in 1994. In the 1993 elections, YSP was the leading party in almost every constituency of the former South Yemen, winning 56 seats. YSP still came in third place in election behind GPC by 122 seats, and Islah by 64. However, YSP boycotted the last parliamentary elections of 1997.

B. Definition and Guiding Principles

In its Political Program, YSP identifies itself as “a social democratic party that struggles for building a modern democratic state, whose powers rest upon the fundamentals of the Constitution, and in which the role of the institutions is reinforced, a democratic local Government is founded, the law prevails, citizens are equal in rights and duties, human rights are maintained, and civil society institutions prosper.”

Most recently looking for a new role to play in Yemen politics, one of YSP's most intractable problems is deciding how to realistically answer the following question. As the ruling party of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), YSP was supposed to participate with GPC, as a relatively equal partner, in the post-1990 unified Yemen. In reality, the YSP was the junior partner in the coalition government from 1990 to 1994. YSP has been further weakened as a result of a civil conflict in 1994 in part, and by a secessionist movement sponsored by powerful leaders inside the YSP and supported by some of Yemen's neighbouring countries and rich Gulf States as well as some Western Capitals. So, YSP's biggest concern has been how to deal with its new surroundings.

Although not all of the YSP leaders and members supported secession, YSP was widely blamed for the conflict and devastation throughout the country. YSP headquarters in all governorates were confiscated or destroyed, and many of its senior and junior leaders fled away from the country. With much of its leadership in exile or out of work, YSP became a fractured and disoriented political force. For a number of reasons related to the post-1994 weakening of the party, the YSP chose to boycott the 1997 parliamentary elections. The party also boycotted the 1999 presidential elections following the failure of their candidate to gain the support of 10% of parliament seats necessary for nomination.

Currently, the YSP faces many challenges in its attempts to become a significant player in Yemeni politics once again, especially in the opposition. The party must reorganize and rebuild its base of support from the grass-root level. Although the party is still smarting from its relegation to a role as the second largest opposition party, the party is learning and adapting to participate in a bigger opposition role. However, YSP did participate in the first Yemeni Local Council Elections of February 2001, creating the right step forward to bring the party officially and politically back to the Yemeni socio-political scene, reawakening and activating the party structure and membership after the outcome of the 1994 civil war.

Although when interviewed, a party representative maintained that the party wanted to be in power in five years, but this is an unreasonable assumption. Realistically, it must work to regain its membership strength and party infrastructure, participate in the 2003 parliamentary elections and all other political events and actions after, and then may be it has to work to influence policy through its role as an opposition party. As it has been revealed, the party does support the country's current governmental/constitutional framework for governance.

Therefore, the key political issues and priorities for the party (current and future) would be:

- Reorganisation and reformation of the party from a socialist party to a social democratic party to be able to compete in a multi-party system;
- Recovering YSP funds and property confiscated in the aftermath of the 1994 civil conflict;
- Ensuring public freedoms and human rights as the basis of a multi-party system;
- Enabling peaceful exchange of power through elections;
- Support for civil society institutions such as labour unions, syndicates, and the mass media.

Finally, the YSP is the leading party in the Supreme Co-ordination Council for Opposition Parties (SCC), a bloc containing the Nasserite Unionist Party, the Ba'ath, Al-Haq, and the Federation of Popular Forces.

In terms of the broad ideological position of the party, the YSP is currently Yemen's only major party of the left and has served as the national representative of the people of the South. During its conception as a nationalist and socialist party it was influenced by Marxist ideology; the party is currently trying to transform itself into a Social Democratic party.

The main policy positions of the party are: (YSP Political Program, 1998)

- Perpetuation of political pluralism and the freedom to found open political parties and organisations;
- Full respect for human, political, economic, social, cultural, and civil rights and respect for international treaties and conventions regulating such rights;
- Guarantee the right of citizens to education, health services, work, social welfare in the case of unemployment, sickness, disability or the loss of the main earning member of the family;

- Amendment of the electoral system to be compatible with the concept of political pluralism, whereby the voter votes for the electoral program, and whereby the party or coalition which is successful in the elections can apply its electoral program by assigning executive authority to the government, with the President of the Republic remaining the symbol of the country and the guarantor of the institutions undertaking their function; and each of the three authorities (Legislature, Executive and Judiciary) exercising their power without intervention;
- Provision of political and legal guarantees for free and honest elections in order to avert the shortcomings of the electoral process that have taken place in the past;
- Increasing the power of the legislature vis-à-vis the executive, including granting parliament the right to remove ministers, and revoking the right of the President to promulgate Presidential Decrees;
- The founding of Local Government Councils in each of the administrative divisions on the basis of election by free, direct, equal balloting by citizens;
- Realisation of the autonomy of the Judiciary by abolishing the Supreme Judicial Commission, separating the judicial authority's budget from the budget of the executive authority, and removal of the overlapping between the responsibilities of the courts and the Ministry of Justice;
- Purging the judicial system of corrupt judges, increasing the pay of judges, and selecting judges from competent males and females alike;
- Guarantee the national nature of the armed forces at all levels whereby they become a model of national unity. Determine their position on the basis of qualifications and experience, without resorting to political, regional or tribal discrimination;
- Rationalisation of government expenditure, and constriction of expenditure for military, security and political purposes;

- Affecting a comprehensive administrative and financial reform that uproots corruption, addresses the ill distribution of manpower, establishes labour and civil service organisations, and adopts scientific criteria for appointment, promotion and retirement;
- Protection of the private sector through respect for property rights and from the misuse of authority by state employees;
- Change the traditional perception of women, considering them to be equal with men in ensuring the family economy.

In terms of policy tendencies or diversity existing in the party, a cleavage currently exists between the party's remaining old guards who were part of the leadership structure of the former South Yemen, and the liberal-democratic reformers who want to modernise the YSP into a social democratic party, and to maintain its unity.

3.4.2. Party Structure

A. Membership

The party claims that it has 300,000 members, out whom 20-25% are females, and 60-65% are under the age of 30. As the ruling party of the former PDRY (South Yemen), the YSP still attracts the majority of its members, percentage wise, from the Southern governorates. In the 1993 parliamentary elections, YSP was successful in every single governorate of the former PDRY. Although the YSP boycotted the 1997 parliamentary elections, voting returns in the southern governorates demonstrated YSP's continued strength in those areas. A 12% decline in the number of votes cast in the South in 1997 compared to 1993 suggests that the party retains measurable popularity, especially when taking into consideration that the number of votes cast in the North rose 34% during the same period. This fact was confirmed with the first announcement of the election results of the Yemeni First Local Council Election of February 2001.

As party registers demonstrate, the YSP is gaining appeal amongst young people. This may be due to the fact that the older leadership has been purged through successive conflicts that opened the door to the younger generation. Additionally, as YSP attempts to spread from its traditional stronghold in the Southern governorates, its liberal programs have been attracting the attention of some young generation in the North, especially among the educated and the intellectual class.

Following the 1994 civil uprising, the YSP was decimated both financially and politically at almost every level. Many of its leaders fled away from the country, and its offices and properties were either looted or confiscated. The YSP was, thus, forced to begin a process of reorganisation and rebuilding. However, since the end of 1994 war, the party has been slowly rebuilding its membership rolls. In addition, the supporters' base is arguably much higher than the membership-base. Therefore it can be concluded that YSP is still treated with suspicion within the ruling establishment, and party leaders still consistently complain of harassment by the government. For this reason, many supporters of the YSP choose not to become full-fledged members. Continued support for the YSP is still evidenced in the South, where significant numbers of Southerners have adhered to the YSP's boycott of both parliamentary and presidential elections.

Moreover, the YSP has four requirements for membership:

1. Commitment to the YSP's political programs;
2. Regular payment of subscriptions;
3. To become a member of one of the YSP's organisations; and
4. Commitment to follow the YSP's orders and restrictions

Finally, YSP is currently accepting new members round the year in order to expand its base numerically. The existing members are given the target of bringing in 2 to 5 new members each year. As usual, the party is targeting certain social classes such as intellectuals, scientists, academics, educated women, and high school students.

B. Party Leadership

Let us now consider the racial, ethnic, and religious and Gender composition of leadership. Because of YSP's history as the ruling party of the former South Yemen, the leadership of the YSP is still overwhelmingly Southern. YSP does have a few powerful and influential northern members in its leadership group who tend to have a history with the YSP-affiliated organisations such as the National Front. Like all political parties in Yemen, the composition of the leadership is overwhelmingly male.

The composition of the leadership has been evolving quite rapidly in the past five years. It is because a large number of the top leaders were driven into exile following the 1994 action, there was an immediate need to look for new leaders. The more radical old guard leaders from the former PDRY are being replaced with second and third-tier leaders who are willing to work and deal within the current system of government. They also want to transform the party into a modern social democratic organisation.

For the ideological tendencies or cliques that members of the leadership fit into, YSP leadership can be divided into several main groups (all of which have been weakened since 1994):

1. *Southern Military Tribal Group*: This group contains traditional and strongly tribal elements from the former Southern governorates of Lahej, Al-Dhala'a, and Yafa'a. Members of this group occupied key positions in Southern military and are still strong in YSP;
2. *Northern Military Non-Tribal Group*: Former members of the National Front represent this group. Members of the northern faction are mostly from the Ibb and Taiz governorates;
3. *Hadramaut Group*: Ali Salim Al-Beidh, the former President of South Yemen who presided over unification, leads this group. This group contains many of the party's intellectuals, but this group has a weaker tribal connections and military power.

The key rivalry within the leadership group of the party currently puts reformers against the party's old guards. The old guards include conservatives from Shabwah, Hadramaut and Abyan who advocate for (a) boycott of elections, (b) no negotiation with the government, and (c) resistance to changing party ideology. The General Secretary, Ali Saleh Obad Moqbil, Mr. Masdous, and Hassan Ba-O'am who organised the 1997 YSP demonstrations in Mukallah characterise the old guard.

The reformers within the leadership group include Jarallah Omar and Dr. Saif Sayel. This group advocates actively including young people and women in the leadership group, easing out the old guard, promoting a peaceful discourse with the government in order to regain the YSP's lost status and properties, modernising the party's ideology, and joining the Socialist International.

As seen in the YSP's Fourth General Conference (held in November 1998 and August 2000), the reformers appeared to be gaining the upper hand by achieving the passage of a new political party program and new internal system documents. In addition, a major leadership shift in favour of the liberal, democratic reformers was already expected at the Second Round of the General Conference in August 2000, and it did happen declaring what might be defined as a new era for the socialists.

Before internal democratic reforms were pushed through the party following unification, policy was dictated by the General Secretary's group and imposed on party members from above. However, now both reformers and hard-liners within the party tend to exert their influence through personal allies and connections within the party. Both sides also attempt to influence members of the Central Committee, which is responsible for voting on important policy and party decisions. YSP leadership has traditionally been a tightly closed group, limited to Southerners and a select few Northerners who are former members of the National Front. However, in the last YSP General Conference the swing was widely in favour of the reformers.

Morover, there are several major cleavages within the leadership group on such basic issues as whether to work with the government, or to try

to exert influence from outside; and over the transition from a socialist party in a single-party system to a modern social democratic party. Yet, most of the party leaders are committed to the party's principles and policies. There is not any single person or group that personifies the party. Because of the 1994 conflict, most of YSP's top leaders fled away from the country, leaving mostly mid-level leaders to fill their posts. As yet, no "big man" has emerged but surely there is an "A-Team" following the party's ethical guidelines listed in the party's internal system program.

C. Organisational Structure and Process

YSP has a written constitution and code of conduct, although the party still suffers greatly from the confiscation of its properties during and after the 1994 uprising. Most of these properties, including offices, computers, fax machines, printing presses, financial assets and files have not yet been returned. Prior to 1994, YSP had office buildings in every governorate and district. However, a very slow and careful process has been started through a long political process, initiatives, and negotiations to recover few of the assets. Yet, YSP is still present in most districts some how.

Unlike Islah or the GPC in which there is a system of executive departments and offices at the national and local levels, the day-to-day affairs of YSP are generally run personally by the General Secretary, Saleh Obad Moqbil, or by one of his two assistants. Such situation, in particular, is strong evidence of the budgetary constraints of the YSP and its institutional weakness since 1994. Of course, it is getting better with time.

Before the 1994 war, YSP used to have research and policy making units. The individuals are still present, but there aren't enough financial and organisational means to keep it running as it used to be. Therefore, the institutions have been dismantled. Since 1994, no one has received an official YSP salary, although there are 25 individuals who work at the central headquarters and do receive YSP-paid allowances. In addition, each governorate office has 3 to 5 employees who receive allow-

ances, but not full salaries; and there are typically two such employees at the district level. Because of its inability to pay full-time staff, YSP is heavily dependent on volunteers. YSP claims to have about 50,000 very active members who regularly perform volunteer work for the party. It is a source of weakness, a reality of disappointment, and a factor of discouragement. If the party is well run, directed, kept, and protected properly it may turn in favour of YSP performance in terms of and based on qualitative membership.

A formal structure is used for policy development. The first round of an YSP General Conference is reserved for developing, discussing, and approving policy. Delegates are placed on a volunteer basis and according to their expertise on specific research and policy development in order to formulate YSP policy. The ordinary member, thus, has access only through electing members to the General Conference, which in turn elects members to the Central Committee that elects the Political Bureau. Moreover, members of YSP General Conference serve four-year terms, with delegates attending two rounds, held biennially. The first round of the General Conference serves to develop, discuss, and approve YSP policy, while the second session is generally reserved for inter-party elections. The General Conference in the past has been open only to delegates who have been elected by party members through successive rounds at the village, district and governorate levels. However, YSP has recently begun a policy of opening up all sessions to the general public.

Before each round of elections, which are held every four years, the Central Committee meets to decide on the number and the shape of the leadership committees at different levels based on membership numbers in each district. The election rounds start from the basic organisations at the village level proceeding through the district level and governorates on up to the General Conference. Delegates chosen from each level, elect their delegates from amongst themselves to the next level.

For the implementation of disciplinary measures, YSP used to have very strict disciplinary mechanisms. But they are now much more

flexible, partly because the party is no longer a ruling authoritarian party and partly due to the need to attract members in order to compete in a multi-party system. Disciplinary proceedings are initiated at the district level and can proceed through the governorate on up to the level of the Central Committee. Expulsion from the party is the highest level of punishment and must be approved by the Central Committee.

In addition, YSP used to have strict formal and informal regulations and requirements for being elected to leadership positions, but it has dropped almost all of these requirements in order to attract new and younger members to the party and to encourage junior leadership within. Although policy documents are routinely distributed among party leaders, the only means for widely disseminating these documents to rank and file members is through the party's official newspaper *Al-Thawra* that is distributed throughout the country.

3.4.3. Party Legislative and Governance Profile

Although the YSP boycotted the 1997 parliamentary elections, Yahya Abu Usba'a, member of YSP Political Bureau, contested the election as an independent, informally affiliated with YSP shortly after the election. YSP's only MP, Sheikh Yahya Abu Usba'a is a prominent leader within YSP. He is in continuous contact with the YSP leadership and consistently follows the YSP line in Parliament. However, for all practical purposes, the YSP does not have representation in Parliament commensurate with its strength as a party. Now YSP is not a governing party or part of a governing coalition.

Part of the reason why YSP has not been always as effective as an opposition force could be because of its inability to decide exactly what role it should play. The old guards in YSP would prefer that the party should play the role of extra-parliamentary opposition, agitating and criticising from outside the system. The reformers would prefer that the party should take on the role of official opposition, participating in elections, and engaging in dialogue with the government.

3.4.4. Party Communication

YSP weekly newspaper *Al-Thawra* (The Revolutionary) started in 1968 with a circulation of between 10,000 and 13,000. The party used to have several newspapers, magazines and journals, but these were all halted in the wake of the 1994 war, as their facilities and equipment were confiscated. The editorial offices of *Al-Thawra* serve as the party's press offices.

As for the YSP's press strategy, its newspaper *Al-Thawra* follows a strategy of indirect, sharp and constructive criticism of the government and the ruling party and its affiliated forces, highlighting problems and abuses of power that contradicts with emerging democratic principles. However, because of YSP's tenuous position vis-à-vis the government, YSP publications usually refrain from mentioning government officials by name.

In addition, the government legislatively and constitutionally controls Yemeni Government official media, television channels and radio stations. Yet, each political party is legally entitled to have equal access based on the Law of Media and Publications. While this is hardly the reality, large party events like the General Conference might/should be covered or not by the state media depends on the political mood of the ruling party.

3.4.5. Party Strengths and Weaknesses

YSP's current policy and strategy is running in accordance with its need to search for a domestic or international coalition that may support it. The party as well is doing its best, based on the facilities and means provided for voluntary work, to reactivate its structure and membership, its political life and activities. The party is in a continuous struggle to keep its unity and internal democracy together. It has been demanding at its highest level for its confiscated assets to be released or returned.

Strengths

- Over twenty years of experience as the ruling party of South Yemen;
- YSP is Yemen's only party of the left and its liberal ideology still has appeal among certain intellectuals, party cadres, and women;
- YSP still remains the national party of the south of Yemen and continues to have strong support in these regions;
- New Political Program and YSP documents which were ratified at the 1998 General Conference and serve to make YSP a more liberal and democratic party;
- A promising reformist element within the party appears to be gaining strength.

Weaknesses

- Severe financial crisis;
- Leadership vacuum as many key party leaders fled away from Yemen during and after the 1994 war;
- Destabilising rift in the party between the hard-line old guards and liberal, democratic reformers;
- A legacy of distrust between the YSP and the government which results in intense pressure from the government;
- Party has never been able to affect a peaceful change in its leadership;
- Since 1994, the YSP has not been able to practice openly its activities without fear of harassment or obstacles from the government.

However, the party may need assistance in these areas. It identifies its priorities, which are as follows:

- Continued assistance in the transition from a communist party to a democratic, liberal party;
- Training for members and supporters at the governorate level;
- The YSP has been consistently building pressure on the government to return their property and assets confiscated after the 1994 conflict. YSP leaders believe that if there is any kind of international pressure the government will comply.

4. General Assessment and Evaluation

Yemen has been chosen here for its unique position and experiences as an emerging democracy in extremely distinctive inner and regional surroundings. It holds up a torch that the new royal republican values, individualism, and economic suffer; all threaten to extinguish.

The Yemeni Constitution, the Political Parties and Organisations Law, the General Law of Elections, and the other related and concerned laws and legislation, theoretically and legally, guarantee that the people of Yemen are the only source of change through competitive elections, the right measures for voting and registration, independence of the electoral process and its running concerned committees, equal accessibility throughout the process, a multiparty political system that allows different programs to be presented, and even more. Thus, there is no problem, at all, with the constitutional legal construction and format in regard of having and running a free and fair election and having an accepted political parties interaction. The Yemeni laws state explicitly that election must give the people control over governments and their policies.

In the unified Yemen (May 1990), the political system and change is built on a regular four-year term of direct parliamentary elections (now six years based on the last approved constitutional amendments of February, 2001). It is very simple; the party that gets the majority forms the government. Yet, the President of the Republic of Yemen, the former President of North Yemen before the 1990 unification, has been ruling since 1978 and for more than 22 years, based on direct election (used to be the nomination from the Consultative Council) and continuous constitutional amendments for a new or/and extended presidential term whenever it is needed! Even the party that he has established, i.e., the General People's Congress (GPC) has been controlling the country since its creation in 1982. It is a false political party within a corrupted sphere that has been used as an external frame for security and dictatorship.

So, though popular competitive elections do occur somehow (up to a certain margin and limit within an emerging democracy and freedom of press) the same party, tribal, and social forces are still there. In Japan, Italy or even South Africa where similar experiences and forms of single party rule have been witnessed, still the internal democracy within the ruling parties there did allow for new faces and forces to emerge. However, after the last February Local Council Elections of 2001, a new young academic cabinet was formed by the ruling band or regime, allowing economic reforms and fighting corruption to go on deeper, and giving the nation a new hope for better future that was yet have to be approved and tested by time. It still within the domain of the same party or let us say individuals. Thus, in Yemen, as might be in all the other Arab Countries, a limitless unidentified mixture occurred between the theory and practice that attempts for consolidation and reform in the country.

In theory, the procedures for the registration of candidates in elections and parties to practice are really very fair. The law gives them the right, space, and time. And in reality it is fully applied and practised freely with few exceptions that have to do with the socio-political interactions between the tribal, social, religious, and class structures and the state political parties' policies, interests and goals. For example, all candidates in elections, in accordance with the law, have a reasonably fair access to the independent and government media as well their own parties' press and propaganda. In general, the interaction is healthy and democratically resolved in most cases.

In Yemen, because of this great sense of individuality and individualism (in rural and urban areas), there is a lack of a real deep political party ideology and organisational commitments. The high percentage of illiteracy, the tribal social structure, the accessibility and spread of wealth for certain groups, external elements, the sense of social pride, great spirit of competition, etc. do allow the voters an effective range of choice. So, there is no doubt that these are mainly the parties' constituents and constituency affairs that determine the selection of candidates more than the parties' ideology and history. Moreover, we still have very few exceptional examples where certain parties' members or sup-

porters are forced to support other parties' candidates or even independent ones for lack of parties' members and influence in the concerned constituency or poll station; or due to direct or indirect coalition with other political organisation.

In addition, as the Yemeni elections usually witness many withdrawals, the government or ruling party and authority interference³ to support certain candidates more. The parties, as well, usually run candidates-tests to measure the political electoral field to decide who is going to represent them and be their candidate. Thus, there is no doubt that there is a range of choice and socio-political competition to be reflected in the final results and the parliamentary structures. Therefore, with more intellectual parliament in 1990-93, a more tribal one in 1997, and a balanced mix in the 2001 local council elections, academic studies still needed to be conducted to determine the positive and negative impact of these elections and types of individuals. A study on effectiveness and performance in the legislative bodies, and the general impact on the process of development in Yemen must be carried out.

The Yemeni constitution and all the concerned laws are very clear and direct with regard to the freedom of formation of political organisation at the national level to political activists and citizens who share a common ideology, goals, democratic activities, programs, and clear financial records. It is strictly organised and closely monitored freedom within laws, articles, and long complicated procedures. It is a Republic based on political and partisan pluralism in order to achieve a peaceful transformation of power through peaceful means!! It is a right that can't be cancelled, restrained, or limited. A right that can't be misused in contradiction with the national interests in preserving national sovereignty, security, stability, cohesion, and Islamic precepts and values. But why, when, and who will decide and determine this is the real turning obscure point. For example, the Committee for Parties and Political Organisations at the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Supreme Election and Referendum Commission will decide and judge a case based

³ Since it is very difficult to distinguish between the two at the same time.

on the political mode and the different interpretations of laws and by-laws.

Based on Law No. 66 (1991) concerning Governing Parties and Political Organisations and the Yemeni Constitution it should be very free for any political organisation to form, recruit members and campaign for office, but still there are those factors that we talked about in our previous conclusion that limit and marginalise the process. Yet, there is no doubt that the well-known existing parties, it is easier to recruit members and campaign for office, openly and freely, if they really want to and work hard at the grass-root levels to achieve. But it is really harder and almost impossible to create a newly born party or political organisation even if all the conditions are fulfilled; that a special informal request must be asked for and that loyalty (to the regime or to one of its security or tribal structure and allies) must be granted. It is easier to split a party and find a counter part and a copy of it if it's needed and serves the states interest by weakening the others legally and constitutionally. However, a detailed academic study should be carried out to explore the process of establishment and approving the most recent created Yemeni political party, the Green Party – in order to keep research on track.

Since 1990, the different political parties and organisations who had the chance to reach an office in a coalition with the ruling immortal party the GPC (four years for the socialists, three for the Islamic, and eleven years for the GPC) did manage to participate effectively, providing their best elite's and intellectuals, and professionally sustaining their positions until they were removed by a civil war or by a free and fair election. YSP (Yemeni Socialist Party), one of the two main parties, who was ruling in the South, came to the unification of 1990 and started ruling within a coalition with its other partner from the North (GPC) until it was kicked out after the 1994 Civil War (or the Separatists Action as the current regime names it). While The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (The Islah Party) participated as an opposition party in the 1993 elections and managed to join the coalition and ruled until it was kicked out by the results of the 1997 elections.

The opposition parties have around 64 seats in the current Parliament (Islah 52, Nasserite 3, Ba'ath 1, Independents 8) out of 301 seats and almost the same percentage was in the last term. Yet, they are very strong and active inside the Parliament and their voice is very loud and listened to (even more than the ruling party) - due to many factors. Among them is that the speaker Sheikh Al-Ahmar is the head of the opposition Islah party. And above all, and beside the limited freedom of the press that Yemen enjoys, the debates and coalitions within the parliament and among the democratic margins that Yemen started to obtain after 1990 (though a serious decline occurred after 1994) are allowed from the ruling band to be practised since it is far away from the red lines (like the nomination of the opposition presidential candidate in 1999 presidential elections).

So, beside the red lines, MPs are gathered and unified around so many issues that of great public interest and concern. And many times joined by MPs from the ruling majority caucus. The ruling governing party's disciplines are fair and effective especially in terms of "*floor crossing*", regarding the executive/legislative relations and government accountability; a record and a struggle that the Yemeni MPs are, though slowly, gently and smartly achieving a political history and a public advantage in spite of the semi-authoritarian spirit.

Generally, the parties' organisational commitments are effective when the parties' senior and junior leadership really want to activate their grass-roots work and relations. Yet, widely with the Islah Party (the Islamists) and, most recently, secondly with the Socialist Party's strong sub-organisations in small towns and even villages, an interaction started to emerge with its elite's and intellectuals, spontaneously activating their social role and later their political demands, and uprising from bottom to top until they began to awake their leadership. On the other hand, parties' members do effectively and strongly affect parties' policies within a semi internal democratic structure (the Socialists and the Islamic) especially if it was far away from the state ruling party's formal and informal conferences and consultations; and especially with regard to the most important political cases which the law and the par-

ties' interests allowed and approved like the so many temporary, seasonal, and permanent political coalitions.

On the other hand, based on the legal framework, the parties are due to receive an annual aid from the government institutions that enable them to run their affairs, based on their representative portions in the election. Each registered party is entitled to two types of government funding according to the Law of Parties and Political Organisations. The first source is a percentage sum based on the number of seats the party was able to win in the previous parliamentary elections. The second is an amount guaranteed to all parties, which are officially registered with the Supreme Committee for Political Parties and Organisations.

But in reality, so many parties, if not all, have their own private financial business and investments that provide them with the necessary support when needed. However, with no exception at all the system is clear and does prevent external and international subordination, every one due to corruption, former intelligence background of so many leaders, lack of the national spirit, false dreams of applying and importing foreign ideologies, etc. are receiving moral and tangible aids and support from our neighbouring Arab countries and the international community in general which are clearly against all the valid Yemeni legislation.

It is a dirty political behaviour that wouldn't be accepted by the public, though widely well known, and though a continuous race is kept carried on to obtain such and more support. Yet, such behaviour was decreased somehow due to the indirect declaration of Yemeni/Saudi relation (a new era) after signing the boarder treaty, which represents a new era of co-operation and co-ordination and support at all levels in different fields. Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Syria who have been busy with their own internal and regional problems and affairs in the last decade have been gradually developing their relations with Sana'a.

In Yemen, it is easy to identify that almost 80%, if not more, of the parties structure and parties membership system is build on ethnic, religious, linguistic, regional, and social divisions (The Sana'ani group, the

Hijaria fraction, the Judges Class, the Hashemite, The Sultans, The Sana'ani Congregation, the Sheikhs Class, etc.). Externally, the structures of the parties may look mixed and pluralistic with variety of names of senior and junior leadership from all over the country, but if one explores the real inner levels and hierarchy and the running of the parties' daily routine the reality becomes apparent immediately. Therefore, there is no exception at all in Yemen from the former communist and social party (with all their slogans and ideologies), through the newly created oppositions parties, and ending with the Islah (Islamic) and the ruling party (The GPC). Thus, considering such party system to be built on such divisions being a negative indicator, the comparison is among bad, worse, and the worst.

In short, the biggest parties, and all parties in general, are trying occasionally to deal with such problems of the parties: membership affairs and divisions, internal democracy, external subordination, electoral issues, and the real opposition role. In addition, the Yemeni Constitution is clear, the concerned political parties laws are obvious, and the parties' bylaws and political and organising programs are even clearer. The key matters are the parties' leadership and social elite's who have been there for years and who have been corrupted in so many ways. In Yemen, the public are no longer interested in the parties, they are increasingly losing the faith and the hope in the political system that they don't, and will not carry for them any answers for their socio-economic suffering. The Yemenis are looking for and having a battle with illiteracy, security, food, tribal and traditional understandings that the parties through the Yemeni contemporary political history didn't help them with. Revolutions existed, republics raised the hopes, and a dream of a unified country is questioned after it has been achieved that the people, the commons, it doesn't care about any more.

5. Outlook

Yemen is a very poor developing country that is greatly in need of western aid and support. Democracy could be the gate. But what makes it worse is that the state is suffering from the reflection of its social, religious, and tribal conservative and traditional Islamic mixture. Corruption, as well, and the bad administrative units within the state and the parties are also serious problems and are growing. If they were not terminated or decreased then what so ever the political will be, the parties' performance, and reforms program adapted and applied, it will never guarantee the minimum standards of a better future for the Yemenis. There should be a real attempt to strengthen the state and its different authorities within. A good accepted political life and interactions couldn't be built and developed further in the absence of the minimum standards of State consolidation, ineffectiveness, poverty, corruption, and the needed basic infrastructure.

The emerging democracy of the 1990 unified Yemen, constitutionally, has been introducing pluralism in Yemen politics and other democratic values, providing the legislative framework. Yet, it is very clear that the practices are less advanced and developed compared to the legal written articles of the different concerned laws which are generally considered really good, up to the international standard. It is an emerging democracy, with limited freedoms, struggle and debate, a restricted gap of media and expression. A shaking starts in a unified promising country that might scare neighbouring countries and some international powers as well. It looks like a coming attempt by some doing their best to destroy and marginalise what Yemen already founded (what so ever the negatives threats, and advantages are) a process to decrease it in the best scenario.

There is no doubt that the 1994 separatist action have shaken the balance of powers between the two ruling parties, YSP and GPC, and that it might be considered as a turn over and a milestone with which a count down for Yemen emerging democracy started. It is the balance of different forces that is the only guarantee for its future and prosperity. Thus, many believe that the unity of the country in itself, as the greatest

achievement of contemporary Yemen political profile, is worth protecting even if it is kept within a dictatorship. What is happening in Yemen has been viewed and interpreted can be justified as a question of time, creating first the basics, developing missing infrastructure at all levels and in all fields. There is a need for a stable and secure country that may allow inner infrastructure developments and foreign investment.

Theoretically, there isn't a specific problem with structure(s) of political parties in Yemen. The challenge for the parties is how to activate their structures, infrastructures, and internal relations at all levels to be more effective and close to their membership and grassroots. A fact that should be based on dedication and above all the leadership goodwill to develop and improve their parties based on specific future strategy, policy line, and the party's ideology. Therefore, a real competitive election, political interactions, and creative means of communication are badly needed to support the process of parties and democracy consolidation.

Political parties in Yemen have a serious obstacle regarding internal democracy. Most of their leadership has been there for decades. And except for some efforts, theoretically and practically, that attempt to modify the experience, the phenomena is still quite obvious. This is due to the nature of fractions' leadership; their back knowledge and history of classified and secret cells, organisations, and activities. This is also a reflection of the Yemeni socio-political composition that reflected itself spontaneously inside the parties. It is a product of a totalitarianism history that was dominating over the politics of former North and South Yemen.

Thus, it appears that political parties in Yemen don't represent or reflect the full and real socio-political composition. Parties simply are not nation's mirrors of that proportional representation of elite's. Parties and leadership, though normally (and most important constitutionally) representing the whole nation, work for and represent their group and individual gains and interests. So, a lack of understanding and application of the political ideology and terminology exists. The real role of an

opposition, the accepted behaviour of a ruling party, coalition strategies, and parties' media values are still not well defined.

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