

# In search for strength

A case study of regime (in)security in Yemen

Siris Hartkorn

# Abstract

Yemen is a weak state controlled by a narrow elite relying on patronage and financial co-optation. The balancing act performed by the regime for many years in relation to tribal, religious and political power centers, is increasingly failing as different groups openly oppose the regime and as levels of domestic violence is growing. The insecurity of the regime is manifested in a state-strength dilemma, where the regime tries to gain strength but meets resistance from society, the resistance makes the regime adapt more coercive strategies for consolidation of state power which generates further resistance. This thesis incorporates securitization theory into the dilemma, arguing that by securitizing social and religious challenges the Yemeni regime has tried to gain legitimacy, but instead provoked violent response. The challenges posed by radical jihad groups, the Huthis and the southern protesters are analyzed in relation to securitization theory and framed within the Gulf security sub-complex.

Keywords: Yemen, state-strength dilemma, securitization, regime security, domestic violence

Characters: 69.338

# Acronyms

<b>AQAP</b>	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
<b>YAR</b>	Yemen Arab Republic
<b>PDRY</b>	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>PSO</b>	Political Security Organization
<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>GPC</b>	General People's Congress
<b>YSP</b>	Yemen Socialist Party

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# 1 Introduction

Yemen is located in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, neighboring Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the east. For almost two decades the country enjoyed relative stability and widespread optimism on democratic reforms existed among international observers. This has changed dramatically in recent years, and Yemen is now labeled a weak state on the edge of collapsing. Due to the strategic location of Yemen, and the nature of the current challenges, a collapsed Yemeni state would impact both regional security dynamics and international security. Widespread poverty and illiteracy, unemployment rates around 40 pct, scarce water resources, declining oil reserves, large refugee flows from the Horn of Africa and piracy in the Gulf of Aden are just some of the challenges facing Yemen. On the top of these comes a civil war in the northern Sada'a province, a growing secession movement in southern Yemen and the strong presence of Al Qaeda and affiliated groups, both targeting western and state interests.

## 1.1 Purpose of study and research questions

The three challenges posed by the Sada'a war, the southern protests and violent jihad groups will be the subject of this thesis, and I will apply the securitization theory to each of the three conflicts, examining if the process of securitization can explain the way they have developed. I have chosen the state-strength dilemma as the theory that will frame the structure of the analysis, as I believe that the current situation is best understood by including both the state's attempt to gain strength and control on the one side, and the response from the society on the other. The purpose is therefore to incorporate securitization theory into the state-strength dilemma and apply this on the Yemeni case. Based on these considerations my research questions are the following:

- How has the Yemeni regime securitized the challenges posed by radical jihad groups, the Huthis and the Southern protesters?
- How has the three above mentioned actors responded to this securitization?
- Has the processes of securitization contributed to a state-strength dilemma in Yemen?

The timeframe for the analysis will be focused on the year the securitization process began in relation to each of the challenges, this

being respectively 2001, 2004 and 2007. Though it should be noted that some historical aspects also will be considered.

## 1.2 Methodology

Whereas my first two research questions are descriptive, the third is causal. In order to answer my third research question I will first need to examine the securitization process, but the purpose of this study is to test whether the theory on securitization provided by the Copenhagen School, can be integrated into the theory on the state-strength dilemma. Therefore this study takes a theory testing approach following the criteria of hypothetical-deductive method set up by Teorell and Svensson (2007, pp. 50). My motivation for this is to expand the analytical tools for understanding the processes in a state-strength dilemma, more precisely the process where a weak state react with coercive forces on a specific domestic challenge and the response this generates.

In order to test whether securitization provide the analytical tools which could explain this process, I have chosen to test the theory on a specific case study, this being Yemen. If I was aiming at making a generalization of my findings from the Yemeni case, Yemen should then be representative for all weak states facing the state-strength dilemma (Teorell – Svensson 2007, pp. 70). While I will examine Yemen in relation to structural characteristics shared by weak states, it is still necessary to note that the process of securitization in Yemen is closely linked to the specific circumstances of the country. This implicates that my focus is one testing the model on the Yemeni case, not necessarily arguing that it will fit other cases.

In the first part of this thesis I will set the theoretical framework and in the second part I will apply it on my case study. My case study can be separated into two main sections, first I will frame Yemen as a weak state and set it in relation with the Gulf security sub-complex. Second I will examine the process of securitization in relation to three challenges towards the Yemeni regime.

I have chosen Yemen as my case study because the country is interesting from the perspective of both the state-strength dilemma and securitization. The three challenges I will examine all reach back in history, but only within the last, for each respectively, eight, five and two years have they escalated into openly expressed hostilities and violence between the actors and the state. The fact that one country at the same time experiences three distinct and violent conflicts indicates a state-strength dilemma. However the state-strength dilemma can only explain the development of the conflicts to a certain extent, for example it does not provide any understanding of why the conflicts escalated at the time they did and not ten or twenty years ago, where the state was also weak and grievances existed. This is where the process of securitization comes into the picture, as I will test if securitization theory can explain what the state-strength dilemma fails to do.

I will concentrate on securitization actors and referent objects, thus leaving out the category of functional actors in my analysis. I have chosen this limitation because the multilayered set of alliances and complex pattern of actors in each of the three conflicts, combined with lack of reliable information, would make it impossible to separate the functional actors. Instead I have focused on the speech act of the securitization actor as well as the response from the movements securitized.

## 1.3 Material

For the theoretical framework I have used literature from the Copenhagen School on security theory and other scholars, primarily in the field of weak states and state-formation in the third world. For the case study I have used a greater variety of material, this ranging from secondary literature, assessment reports from donor organizations, Human Right reports, smaller articles from international analysts to television debates and personal interviews.

I have avoided using information from the domestic media in Yemen, first because media in Yemen are not neutral but affiliated to different parties, groups or organizations and second because a number of international reports were released recently, providing reliable information and good analysis. The only exception to this is the president's speech on Yemen's national day this year, where I have used a broadcast provided by the September 26 homepage, a medium closely linked to the military institutions in Yemen.

In relation to interviews, these are personal interviews made in Sana'a between July 2 and July 17. The persons interviewed has been relevant persons from different society sectors, reaching from a parliament member from Islah, a professor at Sana'a University, to a chief editor on one of Yemen's largest newspapers to members of different Yemeni NGOs and western donor projects. All interviews were semi-structured conversations, and some were made in Arabic with help from a translator. The interviews will primarily be used in the chapter about the southern protests, first because second hand material on the issue is very limited and second because this was the only issue where all persons interviewed shared the same perception. In relation to all other issues, the persons interviewed expressed very different perceptions depending on their political loyalties.

## 2 Theoretical framework

In the post cold war era new conflict patterns has emerged, transnational terrorism, border crossing criminal networks and shadow economies are all part of the logic in the new wars, and call for an approach to international security that goes beyond the classic realist paradigm, as these processes poses a constant challenge to state sovereignty and the state's monopoly over coercive means (Kaldor 1999, pp. 105-107). Put in another way, threats accumulated by these new conflict patterns do not root in traditional military threats from other states, but rather from vulnerabilities and insecurity within boundaries of especially weak states. Therefore addressing weak states and the challenges these face are essential for international security. The first step in this thesis will be to define the concept of security and outline the theoretical framework for my case study.

### 2.1 Defining security

The state-strength dilemma is the central theory in this thesis and therefore a discussion of the state as referent object for security is necessary. Sovereignty and the state's monopoly over coercive means are the foundation of the Weberian definition of the state, but Buzan argues that in relation to security more aspects of the nature of the state have to be considered (1991, pp. 59). I will in the following discuss those aspects as well as discuss the dangers of placing the state as referent object for security.

In order to analyze why certain states act in certain ways, it is necessary to use an approach that take into account the domestic sphere of states, as well as the relation between the government and the society. Buzan divides this nexus of territory, government and society into three component parts of the state: the physical base of the state, the institutional expression of the state and the idea of the state (Buzan 1991, pp. 65).

In terms of security the physical base of the state is more tangible than the other two component parts of the state, as threats towards the physical base can be measured in more classical terms as threats towards the territory, population or state property (Buzan 1991, pp. 91). I will not discuss the physical base of the state in details here, but instead focus on the idea of the state and the institutional expression as well as the interplay between these two component parts.

The idea of the state consists of two main sources the organizing ideology and the nation (Buzan 1991, pp. 70). The idea of the state is important in relation to

security because it defines much of the cohesion in the society and it exists as the fundament of the relation between the society and the government. The organizing ideology of a state is closely connected to the institutional expression of the state (Buzan 1991, pp. 79). In some states the organizing ideology will be well rooted in the society and hold widely popular support, while in other states the ideology will be strongly opposed and competing with other ideologies, resulting in the state standing on a fragile political foundation (Buzan 1991, pp. 79). Nation as an idea of the state refers to the cultural, linguistic and ethnic heritage shared by a large group of people (Buzan 1991, pp. 70). In a nation-state the nation preceded the state, giving it a strong sense of legitimacy and coherence within its boundaries (Buzan 1991, pp.72-73). In state-nations the process is opposite, the state is trying to create a nation and a shared national identity for its population (Buzan 1991, pp. 73). This process might be difficult when different tribal, religious or ethnic identities are strongly held in the society or if more than one complete nation exists within the same state. This can be a source of insecurity and conflict, especially if one nation dominates the state structures (Buzan 1991, pp. 74).

If the idea of the state is weak the institutions can compensate, even to a degree where there does not exist any idea (Buzan 1991, pp. 83). In that case the state will be nothing more than the interests of a ruling elite relying on use of force to control the physical base. This is an extreme example, but far from impossible, whereas the opposite, a state without any institutions but only an idea and a physical base is harder to imagine in the real world. The institutional expression is therefore an important component part of the state in terms of security, as the decline in institutional strength can bring the whole state to collapse (Buzan 1991, pp. 82). At the same time governing regimes can change without jeopardizing the state itself, which means that on the domestic level it is possible to separate the security of the regime from the security of the state (Buzan 1991, pp. 87).

Looking at the state from the perspective of these three component parts makes the task of doing security analysis with the state as a referent object for security more complex, and it even challenges the notion of the state as an object for security. In weak states that have failed to create a political and societal consensus, one of the main concerns will be domestically generated threats to the regime (Buzan 1991, pp. 99). The problem then arises that the regime might try to construct these threats as threats towards the state, and the security of the state therefore gets confused with the security of the regime (Buzan 1991, pp 102). The fact that in many third world countries the state will be hard to disentangle from the regime (Ayoob 1995, pp. 86) contributes to a further complexity of the picture. Therefore when using the state as the referent object of security, it is important to be critical to the security agenda set up by regimes in weak states. Exactly this distinction between state and regime security will stand as central in this thesis, and it leads me to the next chapter where I will discuss regime legitimacy.

## 2.2 The state as a referent object

A useful definition of security is provided by Buzan, Wæver and Wilde (1998, pp. 21), according to which security is “when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object”. What is interesting in this definition is that the issue has to be *presented* as a threat; it is not posing a threat in itself. This is consistent with the argument that security is not an objective concept, but rather intersubjective relying on the process of securitization (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, pp. 31). In accordance with the definition of security, securitization is when an “issue is presented as an existential threat requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure” (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, pp. 24). Securitization is therefore the next level after politicization and it legitimizes breaking of the normal rules (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, pp. 23-25). The question then arises if anyone can securitize any issue and of course that is not the case. The securitization of an issue is only successful when the audience accepts it and thereby legitimizes the extraordinary measures, which the securitization demands (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, pp. 25). The acceptance from the audience does not necessarily have to rely on a free choice, it can be forced as well, but without any sign of acceptance among the audience, there will not be securitization but only a securitizing move (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, pp. 25). The process of securitization cannot be done without a referent object and a securitizing actor, the referent object being the object of the threat, and the actor being who declares an issue a threat to the referent objective (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, pp. 36), an important distinction for this study. Approaching the concept of security from this perspective it can never be objective nor solely subjective, it is an intersubjective process where security is constructed in interplay between the securitization actors and the audience.

The above definition of security lay the foundation for an understanding of security that moves beyond the classical realist paradigm, but there is still a need to define what should be a subject to security studies. In order to broaden the security agenda Buzan, Wæver and Wilde (1998) propose five sectors in which the process of securitization can take place and in between type of interaction will differentiate. These sectors are the military sector, the environmental sector, the economic sector, the societal sector and the political sector, which will all be characterized by their type of units and nature of threats (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, pp. 27). In this study the focus will be on the political sector with references taken from the military and societal. This is not to underestimate the importance of studying the economic and environmental sector, on the contrary those are extremely important in a country like Yemen facing economic crises and scarce water resources, but I will argue that including those sectors would blur the focus of this specific study.

When focusing on the political sector, it can be useful to turn to Ayoob and the perspective on security presented by him. Ayoob also supports a broadening of the security agenda, but he takes a more classical stand as he argues that threats

from sectors such as the economic or environmental should only be considered subjects of security when they enter the political realm (Ayoob 1995, pp. 8). Ayoob makes the distinction between western concept of security, where external military threats towards the state is the core, and third world security, where the source of insecurity are primarily domestically rooted (Ayoob 1995, pp. 5-7). He argues that when looking at weak states it is important to identify the vulnerabilities, both internal and external, that hold a potential to threaten state structures, including governing regimes, as these vulnerabilities will be determining much of the behavior by these states (Ayoob 1995, pp. 1, pp. 9). Here the process of state formation is central as the level of security correlates with the degree of stateness achieved (Ayoob 1995, pp. 21), an argument I will return to in the section about the state-strength dilemma.

Even though insecurity in the third world are primarily domestically rooted, it would not be possible to isolate the national security of a state from external influence (Ayoob 1995, pp. 49, Buzan 1991, s. 57). Here it can be useful to turn to regional security complex theory, as patterns of rivalry, interstate conflict and perceptions of external threat between states will often be found on the regional level (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 45-46). A regional security complex is a group of states whose national security cannot be separated from each other's, and where the interaction among those states are more intense than the interaction between states within the regional security complex and states outside it (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 44-45). Regional security complexes are at the level between national security and international security, and it offers a framework for studying these processes within the context of regional dynamics (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 43, Ayoob 1995, pp. 58).

## 2.3 Regime legitimacy

As argued above the distinction between regime and state security is important when analyzing security and the same counts for legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy is linked to the societal coherence of a state and is an important aspect when trying to grasp the strength and weakness of different states. Some weak states might have a high degree of institutionalization but lack legitimacy, and will therefore have to rely on use of coercive means and fear among the population in order to survive (Ayoob 1995, pp. 41, Holsti 1996, pp. 84). The three aspects on legitimacy which Ayoob argues that those regimes lack is societal consensus on; the decision-making authority, the techniques by which the decisions are made and the means by which the rulers are put into power (Ayoob 1995, pp. 40). Holsti takes the question of state/regime legitimacy further and argues that it has to be integrated into the three component parts of the state set up by Buzan (Holsti 1996, pp. 97-98). Holsti divides legitimacy into two categories; vertical and horizontal legitimacy, and argues that those two forms of legitimacy interconnect with the physical base, the idea and the institutional expression of the

state (Holsti 1996, pp. 97-98). Vertical legitimacy refers to the social contract between the state and the population, or put in another way the authority of the state and the loyalty by the people towards the idea of the state (Holsti 1996, pp. 84). Horizontal legitimacy is to be found in the community that is subordinated to the state's authority, and is reached when all groups within the state have access to participate in politics and no groups are marginalized or oppressed by other groups in the society (Holsti 1996, pp. 87, pp. 93).

According to Holsti there are five main trends that erode the horizontal and vertical legitimacy or prevent it from developing (Holsti 1996, pp. 108-116). The first relates to security, if the state fails to provide basic security and protection of its citizens, or even become a threat towards the citizens, then security will get organized locally, undermining the authority of the state (Holsti 1996, pp. 108). The second trend is related to distribution of resources and wealth among different communities and groups in the society, where marginalization or favoring of certain groups can underpin social tensions (Holsti 1996, pp. 109). The third relates to the rules of the political game, where if the state relies on a patrimonial system, the formal constitution might hold little significance (Holsti 1996, pp.110). Fourth if one individual, family or community dominates the state it will often result in exclusion of others from participating in politics and the absence of a unifying idea of the state (Holsti 1996, pp. 101-111). The fifth trend relates to widespread corruption, both among the elite and in the bureaucracy (Holsti 1996, pp. 113-116).

Questions of legitimacy also become important in relation to the securitization process. When approaching the process of securitization from a state centric perspective, the state, or those who represent it, the regime, will be the securitization actor. If the state or the regime have a high degree of legitimacy, then the chances that the securitization will be successfully accepted among the population is bigger, whereas in the opposite case, if the regime lacks legitimacy, the risk that the attempt to securitize an issue will be opposed by groups within the state, will be higher. This leads me directly to the next section where I will discuss the state-strength dilemma.

## 2.4 The state-strength dilemma

The state-strength dilemma is a dilemma faced by weak states trying to gain strength. Before discussing the dilemma, it can be useful to examine some structural characteristics of weak states, set up by Holsti.

Weak states suffer from a lack of vertical legitimacy, the social contract between the state and the population will be fragile or absent, and loyalty towards the regime low (Holsti 1996, pp. 104). Often the state will be authoritarian in character and rely on a big coercive apparatus, but that is not to be confused with authority, which will be low as local centers of power will resist state decisions and perceive the state more as a threat than a legitimate authority (Holsti 1996, pp.

104-105). At the same time the state might be personalized, structured around the leaders and patrimonial systems (Holsti 1996, pp. 105). This is connected with the state/regime distinction mentioned in the above sections, a distinction which the leaders deliberately might try to erase in order to stay in power. Weak states will also lack horizontal legitimacy. The absence of vertical legitimacy makes it harder to create a national identity, thus giving alternative identities greater significance (Holsti 1996, pp. 106). In many weak states a myriad of different communities will exist within the state boundaries, ranging from full nations to smaller entities such as tribes, religion, ethnicity or class, and combined with the lack of a societal consensus on the state and a patrimonial regime, this can result in social tensions and hostility among different groups, preventing horizontal legitimacy from developing (Holsti 1996, pp. 106). Often the regime will create or play on these intergroup hostilities, for example through policies that discriminate and marginalize certain groups (Holsti 1996, pp. 107).

Many of the states today labeled as weak states emerged after decolonization and the structural characteristics described above are linked to the form of rule and institutions during colonization (Holsti 1996, pp. 100). Though I will not go further into colonization but instead focus on the state formation process, returning to the argument made in the section about the state, that security correlates with the degree of stateness achieved. States sharing the structural characteristics mentioned above have not yet completed the task of state formation (Ayoob 1995, pp. 21). Ayoob divides the process of state formation into three steps; war, policing and taxation (Ayoob 1995, pp. 22-23). War is the process where the state gains control and imposes order over a specific territory and its population, policing is the following maintenance of that order while taxation is extraction of resources from the population and territory (Ayoob 1995, pp. 22). Central to these three steps of state formation is the capacity of the state to create a monopoly over the means of coercion (Ayoob 1995, pp. 23). The lower the level of the state's capacity to monopolize the means of coercion in its own hands, the more coercive strategies will be employed by the state, in order to create this monopoly (ibid.). The coercive strategies are therefore to be seen as an attempt from the state to consolidate its power, but the lack of legitimacy and societal consensus on the idea of the state, undermines this attempt (Buzan 1991, pp. 99).

This takes us to the core of the state-strength dilemma, that in order to overcome the structural characteristics the state has to be strong but the attempt from the state to expand its reach creates resistance among groups in the society that perceive the state as posing a threat to their social, political or economic interests (Holsti 1996, pp. 117, Ayoob 1995, pp. 32). The state reacts by employing more aggressive and coercive strategies, which undermine both horizontal and vertical legitimacy and generates further resistance and domestic violence (Holsti 1996, pp. 117).

The securitization theory can be integrated into this dilemma, adding an extra perspective. As noted in the section about legitimacy, the regime can act as a securitization actor, declaring something a threat towards the state, and the criteria for this being done successfully will to some extent rely on the legitimacy of the

regime. If we at the same time assume that the regime will try to construct threats toward itself as threats towards the state (Buzan 1991, pp 102, Ayoob 1995, pp. 86), securitization can then be a way in which the regime can try to legitimate its actions, ranging from attempt to monopolize coercive means to oppressing political opposition or dissent. As Buzan, Wæver and Wilders note, security is not necessarily positive, because when an issue is securitized and thereby breaking of normal rules get justified, it indicates that the state has failed to deal with the issue through normal political procedures and institutions (1998, pp. 29).

## 3 Case Study

I have now provided a theoretical framework and discussed how securitization can be integrated into the state-strength dilemma. I have also examined different aspects of the state and the concept of legitimacy and I will now apply this on Yemen. My analysis takes its starting point in examining the Yemeni state, from there I will move on to the Gulf sub-complex and finally my examination of the three securitization processes.

### 3.1 Framing Yemen as a weak state

The Republic of Yemen was founded on May 22, 1990 after unification of Yemen Arab Republic and People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, often referred to as North and South Yemen. I will not go into the reasons for unification here, though note that four years after unification a civil war broke out in which the North defeated the South, and since then the elite of the former YAR has dominated the state structures (Phillips 2008, pp. 48). That contemporary Yemen is a weak state is a fact of high consensus among analysts, scholars and international actors, but for the purpose of this case study it will still prove necessary to examine the Yemeni state and point out more precisely where weaknesses exist. I will use Buzan's three component parts of the state, described earlier, and the perspectives of horizontal and vertical legitimacy added by Holsti for this analysis. Sarah Phillips has provided one of the most extensive studies on the nature of contemporary Yemeni politics (2008), and this will be the foundation of my examination of the Yemeni state.

An important key to an understanding of the Yemeni state is to be found in the physical base. The different political experiences between the former Northern and Southern state hold some significance, but in terms of sociopolitical and socioeconomic divisions, a more significant cleavage exists between Upper and Lower Yemen (Phillips 2008, pp. 41). Upper Yemen consists of the northern highland regions located within the former YAR, while Lower Yemen, besides the territory of the former PDRY, also refers to Ta'izz, Ibb and Hodeidah, three former YAR governorates (ibid.). The most significant division between Upper and Lower Yemen is in location of natural resources (ibid.). Upper Yemen does not have a resource base big enough to be self sufficient, and has therefore always had to rely on resources from the richer Lower Yemen in order to survive (Phillips 2008, pp. 42). The lack of resources in Upper Yemen historically meant that politics were centered around military-tribal units which were able to forcibly

extract resources from Lower Yemen, while Lower Yemen in turn enjoyed more stability and formal institutions based on tax paying (ibid.). Historically therefore Upper Yemen has been the political elite while Lower Yemen was the economic elite, but after unification this has changed, as the Northern based regime has to rely on oil money in order to survive, and therefore has relocated resources resulting in empowering of the former South (Phillips 2008, pp. 42-43).

The unified Yemeni state is internationally recognized, but it does not have effective sovereignty within its own territory nor monopoly over means of coercion (MacDonald and Khalil 2009, pp. 21). Tribal and patrimonial structures remain so strong throughout the country that some analyst talks about parallel states (MacDonald and Khalil 2009, pp.18). Rather than existing in parallel the Yemeni regime and the tribes are involved in an interdependent and complex relationship characterized by mutual consolidation of power, perceived threats and economic benefits (Phillips 2008, pp. 90; 93). This interdependence does not mean that the tribes renounce their autonomy; rather it is normal that tribes deny the government access to their territory and governs by their own tribal law rather than by the state constitution (Phillips 2008, pp. 90; 100-101). Many tribes also believe their use of violence is legitimate, and the high amount of weapons<sup>1</sup> beyond government control indicates the low degree of state monopoly on coercive means (Phillips 2008, pp. 97-98).

Though Yemen's oil production does not reach the level of most other oil producing countries in the region, the state should still be considered a rentier state as oil revenues are estimated to account for 70 pct. of state income (EIU 2009). This means that taxation is very limited, which affects the social contract between the state and its citizens, as citizens in return from their taxes can expect services from the state (MacDonald and Khalil 2009, pp. 25). The lack of a social contract based on taxation takes me to the examination of the idea of the state.

Unification stands as central when examining the discourse of Yemeni politics, but as an idea of the state unity has suffered from both the civil war in 1994 and the recent development of a secessionist movement in the south (Phillips 2008, pp. 47-48), the later will be examined in the last chapter. Democracy is the organizational idea of the Yemeni state, but even though democratic institutions exist and elections, to some extent free and fair, are held, the picture is more complicated than that. Alone the fact that Ali Abdullah Saleh has been in power as president for over thirty years<sup>2</sup> indicates that the significance of elections is limited. Phillips argues that democracy as an idea of the Yemeni state mainly serves as a mean for the regime to stay in power, first because it allows bigger opportunities for the regime to control public debate and opposition and second because it legitimize the regime in the eyes of the international donor community, thus securing aid and donor money (2008, pp. 65-66; 7; 114).

Phillips defines the Yemeni political system as pluralized authoritarianism, meaning that the state is authoritarian allowing space for alternative political

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<sup>1</sup>The number of small arms in Yemen is by recent research estimated to be around 6-9 million, but also large amounts of medium and heavy weapons circulate outside government control (MacDonald and Khalil 2009, pp. 24).

<sup>2</sup> Before Unification Ali Abdullah Saleh was the president of Yemen Arab Republic.

expression and dissent, as long as this is not leading to an alternative power base (Phillips 2008, pp. 15). Thus the state is relying on a patronage system centered on the elite, rather than an implicit social contract. It is necessary to note that the regime in Yemen is synonymous with the president and his closest allies, as parliament and cabinet is weak and restricted on action (Phillips 2008, pp. 52).

There has been an increase in voters in both parliamentary and presidential elections, which indicates interest for participating in politics (Phillips 2008, pp. 56). It is necessary, though, to note that the three main parties, the ruling party GPC and the opposition parties YSP and Islah, are founded more on social, religious and regional loyalties than on political ideology (Phillips 2008, pp. 50). Alliances in the parliament are also often based on regional, traditional and personal affiliations rather than political or party belongings (Phillips 2008, pp. 86). The objective of the ruling party GPC is to maintain stability and stay in power, which results in short term politics (Phillips 2008, pp. 5, MacDonald and Khalil 2009, pp. 20). This is manifested in the institutional expression of the state, which I will now turn to.

As mentioned above the Yemeni regime relies on a patronage system, and the regime has developed a strategy in dealing with perceived threats from political opposition and power centers, the later primarily located within the religious and tribal spheres. This strategy has three components legitimization, co-optation and coercion (Phillips 2008, pp. 6-8). Each of the three components is closely linked to an institution these being the parliament, the Ministry of Finance and the military and security apparatus respectively (Phillips 2008, pp. 67). As these institutions play a crucial role in the regime's attempt to overcome weaknesses, my focus will be on examining them rather than making an overall estimation of the institutional expression of the state.

The parliament was founded after the first election in 1993 and consists of 301 members elected for a term of six years (Phillips 2008, pp. 80). Even though the parliament's different functions are written in the constitution, performance of these functions remains low and the parliament weak (*ibid.*). In many ways the parliament could be considered an extension of traditional power structures, and tribal representation is very high (Phillips 2008, pp. 85). The parliament serves the regime in two matters, first giving legitimacy and a democratic stamp to the regime and second providing the regime with an early warning system in relation to public opinion and concerns (Phillips 2008, pp. 81).

The Ministry of Finance is extremely important in order for the regime to be able to control other state institutions and financially co-opt people into its power nexus (Phillips 2008, pp. 73). The regime controls all state transactions, which implicates that all other institutions and ministries have to maintain a good relation to the regime in order to stay on the state budget (*ibid.*). Spending is highly politicized, for example job patronage is very common and many civil servants is on the payroll for a job which they do not perform (Phillips 2008, pp. 70-71, MacDonald and Khalil 2009, pp. 25). Transparency International rank Yemen 141 out of 180 countries surveyed on its 2008 Corruption Perception Index, and corruption is considered one of the main hindrances to foreign investment (CPI 2008, Phillips 2008, pp. 64).

While the parliament and the Ministry of Finance belong to the soft power spectrum of the regime's capabilities, the military and security apparatus represents the hard power (Phillips 2008, pp. 6-9). The military is not under civilian control, but is instead controlled by a narrow elite centered on the president, his close family and people from his tribe (Phillips 2008, pp. 68). The military serve two main functions, traditional military performance and as an institution into which people with the potential of threatening the regime can be co-opted (Phillips 2008, pp. 70-71). The Political Security Organization is the traditional domestic intelligence service and is under the command of the president (Phillips 2008, pp. 68). The function of the PSO is both to monitor and react with coercive means (Phillips 2008, pp. 68-69). An important logic of both the military and the PSO is the way their capabilities are perceived within the population (Phillips 2008, pp. 67). As there is no consistency in the changing use of soft and hard power, and as the regime's reaction is often unpredictable, fear of provoking a reaction from the regime based on hard power prevent people from crossing the line from allowed dissent (Phillips 2008, pp. 8-9).

The above brief examination of the three main institutions used by the regime to secure survival and its power base illustrates that patronage has become a part of formal institutions, and therefore the Yemeni state could be characterized as neopatrimonial (Phillips 2008, pp. 4). The lack of social contract and consensus of an idea of the state is made up for by the strength of these three institutions. This secures the survival of the regime, but at the same time it undermines the potential for other state institutions to grow in strength and capability. As illustrated the Yemeni state is weak in both horizontal and vertical legitimacy, and at the same time the regime plays on and exacerbates divisions within both political opposition and tribes (Phillips 2008, pp. 93; 120). This combined with short-term politics, co-optation and repression further erodes the legitimacy of the regime, allowing it to be just a little stronger than the society it rules (Phillips 2008, pp. 93). This means the regime is dependent on constant crisis management, preventing state-building efforts and genuine democratic reform (MacDonald and Khalil 2009, pp. 20).

If some consensus seems to exist between political and social actors in Yemen, it is on the perception that change has to take place within the current system (Phillips 2008, pp. 168). This is based on fear of the alternative, a failed state and chaos, similar to that experienced by Somalia (ibid.). I will argue that this consensus has been seriously challenged in the development and exacerbation of three different threats to Yemen's stability, those steaming from radical jihad groups, the war in Sada'a province and the southern protests. Before turning to a closer analysis of these three conflicts, I will first examine Yemen in relation to the Middle Eastern security complex and the Gulf sub-complex.

## 3.2 Yemen and the Gulf sub-complex

The best level of analysis when trying to grasp the influence from international security on domestic security is the regional level. As argued in the theory chapter, regional security complex theory provides a framework for examining the regional security dynamics, the penetration from the international level and how these levels interact with the domestic level. Yemen is a part of the Gulf sub-complex, which in turn is a sub-complex to the Middle Eastern security complex<sup>3</sup>. I will briefly examine some characteristics of the Middle Eastern security complex and then turn to the Gulf sub-complex and Yemen.

The Middle Eastern security complex is a very clear example of how domestic, regional and international levels interplay and form a region characterized by its set of dynamics and perceptions (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 218). On the domestic level the insecurity of regimes within their own state boundaries combined with authoritarian rule and a high degree of repression of society play an important role in shaping the states' external policies and threat perceptions (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 194, Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 2). The influence from the global level has historically been high, and after the Cold War the region has continued to be an arena of global impositions, as western security concerns has remained high in the region (Bellin 2005, pp. 32). The two main concerns of the West have been oil supply and the threat from Islamism (Bellin 2005, pp. 32-33), two concerns closely intertwined with the domestic scene. Many states in the Middle East are rentier states, which as examined above, are a factor that contribute to disconnect the regime from the society (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 194, Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 7). At the same time most regimes have considerable domestic Islamic oppositions, and Bellin argues that one of the important factors that has contributed to the robustness of the regimes and their coercive apparatus is international support networks, based on western security concerns (Bellin 2005, pp. 27-28; 32-33).

The Middle Eastern security complex is what Buzan and Wæver describe as a conflict formation (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 187). Two narratives that have contributed to generate conflict and rivalry are the discourses of Arab nationalism and Islamism (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 190). While Islamism is based on the idea of unity of the Muslim world, including the non-Arab states, Arab nationalism calls for unity of the Arab states only (Bilgin 2004, pp. 30; 32-33). The consolidation of a Westphalia state structure in the Middle East has been in progress since decolonization, but this state structure goes against the idea of unity, both among the Arab countries and the Muslim world (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 216-217, Fattah and Fierke 2009, pp. 75). Therefore the states lack legitimacy in the eyes of Arab nationalists and radical Islamists (*ibid.*). As approaches to security these two discourses are

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<sup>3</sup> Buzan et al. define the Middle Eastern security complex as all the Arab states from Morocco to Iran plus Israel. The Horn of Africa, Sudan and Cyprus is not included in this definition. (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 187).

problematic, the first has generated inter-Arab rivalry more than cooperation, the second has been dominated by radical Islamist groups, especially since 9/11, which themselves pose a challenge to regional security and stability (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 190, Bilgin 2004, pp. 32). Nevertheless they add an important perspective as they put forward cultural and identity security concerns that contribute to regional dynamics. The importance of cultural and identity security concerns is very clear in the case of the Gulf sub-complex, to which I will now turn.

The Gulf sub-complex has historically consisted of a triangular rivalry between Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia in alliance with the smaller Gulf Arab states (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 190). The second Gulf war had a major impact on security in the Gulf, and it is necessary to note that Yemen at the time was represented in the UN Security Council and there advocated for an Arab solution to the conflict (Dresch 2000, pp. 185-186). This was perceived as Yemeni support for Saddam Hussein and has had damaging effects on Yemen's relationship to both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (ibid.). As it would be too ambitious to examine all aspects of the Gulf sub-complex here, I will instead focus on two aspects, which are also essential to the current domestic security situation in Yemen. These two aspects are transnational terrorism and the perceived threat from Shiite uprising.

The GCC<sup>4</sup> states are closely tied to the U.S. on military issues, having U.S. forces on its territory, and extensive defense agreements (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 4). This relationship is reinforcing domestic security of regimes as much as security in relation to external threats (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 5), but paradoxically the same relationship is the source of one of the biggest current challenges to the same regimes. This challenge comes from terrorist groups, which perceive themselves as at war with the Western world, and especially the U.S., and therefore strongly oppose and demand withdrawal of U.S. military presence in primarily Saudi Arabia (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 207). Islamic terrorist groups use the same securitization model as described in the theory chapter, but has a cultural referent object, this being Islam and the values of the Muslim world (Buzan and Wæver 2003, pp. 206). They play on and exacerbate anti U.S. feelings among the population in the Gulf States, thus posing a threat to the legitimacy of regimes cooperating with the United States (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 14-15). As much activities of such groups consists of spreading the message through different media, the threat does not necessarily depend on operational capability of terrorist groups, as it could be framed within the political security sector. But many of the groups have operational capabilities as well, thus posing a military threat to regime security. This is closely linked with the deteriorating security situation and the large areas outside government reach in Yemen (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 16-18).

Terrorist groups that have faced repression in Saudi Arabia, have reorganized in Yemen instead, for example the Yemen based Al Qaeda in the Southern Peninsula earlier this year officially merged with the Saudi branch Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the leadership of AQAP is now based in Yemen (Bakier 2009). There also exist many examples of Al Qaeda cells planning and training for

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<sup>4</sup> Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are the members of GCC.

attacks on GCC states in Yemen (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 16-17). This stresses the transnational dimension of terrorist activities in the Arabian Peninsula and underpins the link between domestic development in Yemen and security concerns of the GCC states (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 18).

The other aspect of Gulf Security, which I will examine here, is the perceived threat from Shiite uprising. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait all have significant Shiite populations (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 10) and the fear of Shiite uprising is mainly rooted in two perceptions. First the changed status of Shiites in Iraq after the U.S. invasion combined with sectarian violence has created a fear of spillover of conflict patterns from Iraq (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 10). Second, as noted above, a triangular relationship of rivalry exists between the GCC states, led by Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq. As the vast majority in Iran is Shiite, there is a fear in the GCC states of Iranian influence on their own domestic Shiite minorities (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 12). Saudi Arabia and Bahrain experienced Shiite unrest in respectively 1979 and from 1994-1999, and though the unrest was primarily rooted in domestic problems of distribution and marginalization, the regimes in their securitization of the conflict linked it to Iran (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 10). It should be noted, however, that it is not without reason that the regimes blamed Iran for interference in domestic matters, as Iran has both threatened with, and actively planned for, such actions (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 12-13). This perceived threat from Shiite uprising links to the Sada'a war in Yemen. Sada'a is a province in Northern Yemen located in the border region to Saudi Arabia and the rebel group, the Huthis, belongs to the Zaydi sect, which is Shiite.

In my further analysis of the three main challenges to Yemen's domestic security I will turn to a closer examination of both the perceived Shiite threat and its link to Iran, and the development of terrorist groups in Yemen and how the penetration of the U.S. plays a role in this. Though some remarks have to be made before that. First the perceived Shiite threat illustrates that the GCC states are more concerned about cultural, political and ideological threats from Iraq and Iran, than military threats (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 10-11). In relation to Yemen the threat of spillover is more tangible and has thus demanded more traditionally military response, such as increased border control (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 19). Second, as the returning Arab veterans from the war in Afghanistan played a crucial role in the emerge of radical jihad groups in the Peninsula, the history is now repeated by Arabs returning from Iraq (Ulrichsen 2009, pp. 17) The link between young males from the Arabian Peninsula that will return after fighting in Iraq, and the concerns of the gulf regimes examined above, will add a future dynamic to the already complicated net of threat perceptions and challenges in the Gulf.

### 3.3 Three challenges to Yemen's security

As mentioned above I will examine three security challenges currently facing the Yemeni regime: violent jihad groups, the war in Sada'a and the protests in Southern Yemen. I will argue that these three challenges mark a new development in Yemen's domestic security situation, as the actors are opposing the regime in a scale not observed since the civil war in 1994. Based on my theoretical framework and aiming at answering my research questions, I will examine each of the three conflicts in the light of the following criteria: the event that can be characterized as crucial in generating the violence, the way the regime has securitized the issue and the way the actors have reacted to this securitization.

#### 3.3.1 Violent jihad groups

The terrorist attacks in the United States 9/11 were an event that had significant influence not only the security dynamics in Yemen, but in the whole Middle Eastern security complex. Though the situation Yemen faced in the aftermath of the attacks differs significantly from that experienced by the neighboring GCC states. Yemen has a long history of integrating, not only moderate Islamist movements, but also radical Islamists into the state (Bonney 2009, pp. 1). Thus the regime welcomed afghan veterans returning from fighting soviet troops, and a paramilitary group consisting of those veterans fought alongside government troops in the civil war in 1994 (Johnsen 2006). Since then ties has existed between the regime and the afghan veterans, many of whom returned from Afghanistan with a radical interpretation of Islam and close links to what was to become Al Qaida (Johnsen 2006, Bonney 2009, pp. 4). This relationship changed radically after 9/11 when president Saleh went to Washington and promised U.S. president Bush Yemen's full cooperation in the war against terrorism. In the aftermath of 9/11 the Yemeni regime reacted with strong coercive force against afghan veterans and people suspected to have any affiliation with Al Qaeda (AI 2003, pp. 2). The regimes support for the U.S. led war on terrorism has to be seen in the light of the attack on U.S. Cole in Aden in 2000, in which seventeen U.S. marines were killed, and the number of Yemeni nationals involved in the 9/11 attacks (AI 2003, pp. 17).

The regime acted as a securitizing actor, as it argued that it was due to security, not justice, that people in large numbers were detained without charges or trial (ibid.). The referent object and nature of threat has differentiated depending on the audience, to which the regime presented al-Qaida as a threat. The Yemeni regime has ensured its willingness to protect western interests within the country, and the obligation to fulfill its responsibility towards the international community to fight terrorism (ibid.). Besides from this the regime has argued that cooperation with the U.S. would be the only way to avoid being the next country on the list for U.S. intervention after Afghanistan (ibid.). I will argue that the first two arguments are

aimed at the international audience, while the last is primarily aimed at the domestic audience. The Yemeni regime is facing a dilemma by supporting the war on terrorism, on the one hand it is important for the regime to reach legitimacy in the eyes of international donors and keep a good relationship to the United States, on the other hand, with a population with strong anti-U.S. sentiments, the regime can not afford too close association with the U.S. This dilemma is characteristic for the regime's counterterrorism strategy, on the one hand it benefits from military and security cooperation with the U.S. involving both financial support and training of security personnel (BG note, 2007) and the regime in return has let the U.S. operate on Yemeni territory<sup>5</sup>, but on the other hand the regime tries to use alternative strategies, such as release in return for promise of good behavior, financial co-optation of former detainees and a religious dialog program (Bonney 2009, pp. 8, Worth 2008). This balancing act performed by the regime is increasingly being pressured, especially by the U.S. as released detainees in Yemen have been caught fighting in Iraq and elsewhere and as doubt exists of the PSO dedication to counterterrorism, a doubt fuelled by the escape of 23 detainees from a high security prison in Yemen in 2006 (Phillips 2008, pp. 64-65).

The reaction from violent jihad groups on the regime's securitization differs. In general the groups could be divided into two sections, one that accepts the securitization and the deals offered by the regime, and which lie low inside Yemen while planning for and taking out attacks elsewhere and another section which strongly reacts to the securitization and perceive the Yemeni regime as illegitimate because of its cooperation with the U.S. (Hill 2008, pp. 4, Stracke 2008). The first section is mainly afghan veterans and their followers organized in AQAP while the other is a younger generation of primarily homegrown radicals operating under the name Kataeb al Jund al Yemen (Stracke 2008). While the threat posed by the young generation towards Yemen's stability might be limited, they still mark a dangerous shift in the tactic of violent jihad groups, as they are not only targeting foreign interests and the tourist industry, but increasingly aiming at the Yemeni state, for example by targeting police-stations and infrastructure (Stracke 2008, Bonney 2009, pp. 4).

### 3.3.2 The war in Sada'a

The Sada'a war has been fought in five rounds since 2004, with the fifth round ending in July 2008 (ICG 2009, pp. 4). As writing this thesis there are strong signs of a sixth round taking its start as rebels has taken new positions and the regime has launched a military offensive, including air strikes and artillery fire (Al-Jazeera, August 16, 2009). Between each round low level fighting has continued, and exactly what has triggered the rounds are difficult to point out with any

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<sup>5</sup> An example of US activity on Yemeni territory was the killing of six suspected members of Al-Qaida by a missile fired from an unmanned predator drone in 2002 (Kretzmer 2005, pp. 171).

certainty (ICG 2009, pp. 3-4). The conflict has some historical roots that can be traced back to the 1962 revolution, where the Hashemite Imamate was replaced by the YAR (ICG 2009, pp. 8), though I will not go into details with the historical roots of the conflict, but instead argue that the specific event that generated the violence was when security forces in June 2004 went into the Hayden district of Sada'a to arrest former member of the parliament and founder of the organization, The Believing Youth, Husein al-Huthi (ICG 2009, pp. 3). The Believing Youth is a Zaydi<sup>6</sup> revivalist organization created to increase Zaydi activism, primarily through education (ICG 2009, pp. 8). The decision to arrest Husein al-Huthi came after members of the Believing Youth continuously had demonstrated against the U.S. and as reconciliation attempts between Husein al-Huthi and president Saleh failed (ICG 2009, pp. 3). The security forces were met with resistance and fighting went on until September 10, 2004, where Husein al-Huthi was killed (ibid.). Since then fighting has resumed in the five rounds, and violence has included air bombardments resulting in destruction of villages and infrastructure and internal displacement of an estimated 130,000 people (ICG 2009, pp. 4). To understand why the conflict has escalated in this way, the rhetoric of both the regime and the rebels is central.

The Yemeni regime has described the Believing Youth as a threat toward the Yemeni state, as they, according to the regime, hold an intention of restoring the Imamate and therefore intentionally have started the war to undermine the stability of the state (ICG 2009, pp. 10). The Yemeni regime has furthermore tried to link the conflict to the war on terrorism, by arguing that the Believing Youth is a terror organization and accusing them for planning terror actions (ICG 2009, pp. 10-11). A third move by the regime to securitize the threat from the Huthis and the Believing Youth has been to accuse the movements of being funded and closely linked to Iran (ICG 2009, pp.10-11), thus linking the conflict to the regional security dynamics in the Gulf described in the earlier chapter.

It is interesting that no evidence exist to any of these three securitization arguments put forward by the regime, the Huthis have so far not expressed restoring of the Imamate as a goal, nothing suggests that they have been involved in violence outside the war zone and links to Iran are doubtful and, if they exist, might be on the grassroots level rather than directly through the regime in Teheran (ICG 2009, pp. 11-12).

The reaction from the Huthis on the regime's securitization has been quite clear; whereas in 2004 Husein al-Huthi declared his loyalty towards the Yemeni state and denied any accusations of rebellion, the leadership of the Huthis by the 2008 ceasefire openly opposed the Saleh regime (ICG 2009, pp. 5). The Huthis have not expressed any clear objective of their rebellion, but they have also engaged in a securitization process by calling upon self-defense and declaring the regime a threat to Zaydi identity (ICG 2009, pp. 12). Also the Huthis have claimed that foreign powers are involved; they have accused the Yemeni regime for acting on

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<sup>6</sup> Two main religious divisions exist in Yemen; the Zaydis and the Shafi'is. Historical some cleavages have existed among those two, but in contemporary Yemen the difference is mainly symbolic (Bonney 2009, pp. 1-2). Though some Zaydi revivalist oppose what they perceive as the spread of Salafi influence from Saudi Arabia (Bonney 2009, pp. 6).

behalf of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. (ICG 2009, pp. 12). In relation to Saudi Arabia the regional security dynamics again becomes important, and some analysts even suggest that the war should be seen as a proxy to the hostility between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the fear among the GCC states of Shiite uprising under Iranian influence (ICG 2009, pp. 12). While this interpretation might be taking the perceived influence from Iranian and Saudi Arabian rivalry too far, it is clear that it contributes to the dynamic of the conflict, especially since the war zone is very close to Saudi Arabia.

As noted above, tensions began when the Believing Youth started opposing the cooperation between the U.S. and the Yemeni regime. This illustrates that the decision of the regime to join the U.S. in the war on terrorism has provoked a response from Islamic groups beyond radical jihad groups. This relates to the regional security dynamics in the Middle East described earlier, and Fattah and Fierke argues that the cooperation between the U.S. and regimes in the Middle East generate a sense of both humiliation and betrayal among domestic Islamic groups (2009, pp. 81). In relation to the Believing Youth this sense of betrayal might be reinforced by the fact that they before 9/11 received support from the regime in Yemen (Bonney 2009, pp. 6). The regime's attempt to link the war in Sada'a to its counterterrorism efforts is therefore likely to have generated further hostilities.

### 3.3.3 The southern protests

In recent years a protest movement in Southern Yemen has increasingly gained political momentum and managed to challenge the idea of a unified Yemen. As the Sada'a war, the protests in the former South Yemen hold historical aspects (Al-Jazeera 2009). Those aspects are rooted in the socio-political and socio-economic differences between the former YAR and PDRY, the civil war in 1994 and the following marginalization of the south, all described in the chapter examining the Yemeni state. While grievances have existed in the South for long, they have recently turned into violent clashes with the government security forces, most recently during the spring 2009 where dozens of people were killed (Al-Jazeera 2009, Worth 2009).

The critical event that generated violence can be dated to May 2007 when retired officers from the former PDRY army went to the streets in Aden to demonstrate in demand for higher pension (Hill 2008, pp. 5). The regime reacted with strong coercive force resulting in many deaths and several hundreds being arrested (*ibid.*). Since then the movement has grown in strength and sporadic violence and riots occurred throughout most of the cities in the former South (Al-Jazeera 2009).

It is clear that the Yemeni regime chose to securitize the protests, portraying them as a threat to unity (Al-Jazeera 2009). The regime again took the role as a securitization actor with unity and the state as referent objects. As noted earlier,

unity is very central in Yemeni political discourse. President Saleh's speech on the anniversary day for national unity illustrate this:

[...] our people and their political, social and cultural organizations and constitutional institutions would confront any one who attempts to harm the people's revolution, republican regime, unity and democracy. [...] The achievements of unity means freedom, democracy, security, safety, stability, progress and prosperity for all citizens of the homeland.<sup>7</sup> (26sep.net).

Furthermore the regime has tried to describe the protesters as an isolated group without any legitimacy, and even blamed foreign powers for being behind the protests (Al-Jazeera 2009, 26sep.net).

It is more complex to examine the response from the protest movement to this securitization, especially since the movement consists of a wide range of organizations and smaller groups with different objectives and also little information gets published. Though it should be noted that the demands for secession and directly challenging of not only the regime, but also state-structures, started to gain momentum after the events in May 2007 (Al-Jazeera 2009). All persons interviewed during my stay in Sana'a, no matter political affiliation, expressed the view that the increasing secession demands and escalation of violence was a consequence of the government's strategy toward the protesters. A leading figure in one of the Human Rights groups that monitor the situation in the South expressed it this way:

There is a very dangerous situation in the South, and the way the government is handling it, only makes it worse. From 1994 and until two years ago people in the South was complaining but still trying to reach a mutual understanding with the government. [...] When the peaceful requests didn't bring any results, many people turned to rebellion. The shift was a process and came as a response to the government's use of force; killings, arrests, torture and military presence. The government made the situation escalates by dealing with the problems as a security issue<sup>8</sup>. (Personal interview, July 7. Sana'a).

A pro-government professor at Sana'a University also acknowledges the government's responsibility in generating the hostilities. He put it this way:

Due to some of the conflicts in the country, they could have been avoided if the government dealt with them through distribution projects. But the government does not act fairly, and demands therefore turns into threats to the stability of the country. (Personal Interview, July 8. Sana'a).

I have now described three of the main conflicts in Yemen and tried to examine the securitization process, taking place in relation to each conflict. This might wrongly create a picture of the three conflicts existing independent of each other. This is not the case, even though each conflict has its own set of dynamics and rhetoric, they also interplay. For example a strategy of Al Qaeda in destabilizing the country has been to support the protest movement in the South (Bakier 2009).

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<sup>7</sup>The speech was transmitted on the September 26 homepage, and translation is taking directly from the subtitles.

<sup>8</sup> The interview was made in Arabic with a translator.

This is noteworthy as the afghan veterans, as noted earlier, fought together with the government against the South in 1994. On contrary the support of Al Qaeda towards the movement in the South provide the regime with a chance of labeling the South as terrorist linked to Al Qaeda (Personal Interview July 12. Sana'a). As noted earlier the war in Sada'a province is also affected by the war against terrorism, as the Huthis strongly oppose cooperation between the regime and the U.S., and as the government has used the label terrorist against the rebels, in order to legitimize its actions. At the same time some analysts suggest that the Sada'a War has inspired the movement in the South, as it has shown the regime's limited capacity to crack on rebellion (Phillips 2008, pp. 72).

In the above analysis I have not paid much attention to the audience of the securitization. As noted in the theory chapter, a securitization is only successful when it is accepted among the audience. As a myriad of tribal, religious and political groups exist in Yemen it is hard to judge the level of acceptance among the audience as a whole. I will argue that in general the securitization of the three challenges has been accepted, but that the increasing level of violence and conflicts, which interplay, show signs of decreasing acceptance of the regime's speech act among the population. This leads me to the last chapter where I will make some final remarks on this analysis in order to point out which implications the securitization processes have had on the insecurity of the regime.

## 4 Concluding remarks

In the theory chapter I argued that engaging in securitization could be a strategy for an insecure regime in a weak state to gain legitimacy and justify its actions when trying to consolidate state power. I have now applied this on the Yemeni case and the analysis shows some clear tendencies. I will now try to summarize and make some concluding remarks on these.

The securitization processes examined above indicate a shift in the Yemeni regime's policy in handling challenges. I have earlier argued that the state exercises short term politics and is depending on a constant crisis management, and one of the cornerstones in this crisis management is cooptation. Especially in relation to Islamic groups the state has successfully practiced inclusion and cooptation resulting in relative stability. It is therefore not surprising that the sudden securitization of radical jihad groups was likely to generate some resistance among those groups, but what is interesting is the spillover of this resistance to fuel hostility among a different group, the Huthis. When the Huthis opposed the cooperation between the U.S. and the Yemeni regime, the government chose to deal with it through yet another securitization, which has now resulted in a full-scale civil war. As argued above, the difficulties of the regime to quell the rebellion is likely to have inspired the Southern protesters. This illustrates that the Yemeni regime is increasingly failing in its crisis management and has undermined its own legitimacy. While there before seemed to exist a consensus among societal and political actors, that change should happen within the current system, this equilibrium is now broken.

Several factors might have motivated the regime in engaging in securitization instead of co-optation and inclusion. The decreasing oil revenues might make it impossible for the regime to financially co-opt all challengers and it might have been true that the consequences, had Yemen not joined the U.S. led war on terrorism, had been extensive. However it is not the objective of this thesis to examine the factors motivating the securitization processes, but rather the impact these have had on a state-strength dilemma in Yemen. In relation to this I will argue that instead of consolidating its legitimacy and power through acting as a securitization actor, the Yemeni regime has instead ended up in a vicious circle of violence and instability, the characteristics of a state-strength dilemma. The balancing act performed by the regime in many years managed to keep it just a little stronger than the myriad of tribal, religious and political power centers over which it rules. As this balancing act now seems to have failed, the consequences do not just hit the regime but also the state as such. Whether the idea of a unified Yemen engaged in democratic reforms will be able to recover from the current instability, only the future can show.

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