

# Framing Opposition as ‘Terrorism’

A Case Study of the Framing of the Houthis and the Southern  
Movement in Yemen

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# Abstract

This thesis takes off in framing theory and the theory of securitization to investigate the Yemeni government's framing of its oppositional groups the Houthis and the Southern Movement. My purpose is three-folded: 1) to describe the conflicts between the Yemeni government and these two oppositional groups within their local and global context; 2) to illustrate how the Yemeni government is using the terrorism frame against the Houthis and the Southern Movement; and 3) to explore the reasons why the Yemeni government have chosen this frame. I argue that the Yemeni regime has used the terrorist frame against the Houthis and the Southern Movement. However, none of these groups strive to target civilians, and their unrest clearly stem from political, economic and/or religious marginalization. The acceptance of the government's framing, i.e. the lack of international protests against this conflation of diverse oppositional groups with terrorism, has made this securitization move successful. The incentives for the Yemeni regime's framing attempt are the diffuse definition of terrorism, the vague constitutions, the context of the Global War on Terrorism undertaken in the country, the attaining of legitimacy for its violent responses against these groups, and the extraction of financial and military support from the functional actors pursuing the Global War on Terrorism.

*Key words:* framing, terrorism, Yemen, securitization, politicization, opposition.

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## Acronyms

AL	Arab League
AQAP	Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula
AQ	Al-Qaida
CT	Counterterrorism
EU	European Union
FIDH	Fédération International des ligues des Droites de l'Homme
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GoY	Government of Yemen
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crises Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
SCC	Specialized Criminal Courts
SM	Southern Movement
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USG	United States Government
WB	World Bank
GWoT	Global War on Terrorism
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic

# 1 Introduction

The Yemeni government is facing a civil war against the Houthis, opposing in the north of the country, and secessionist endeavors from the Southern Movement in the south. Both these oppositional groups consider the Yemeni regime illegitimate and contain voices that to some degree claim greater autonomy. During the last years, there have been reports about the regime increasing its violent measures to cope with these two conflicts. The efforts within the Global War on Terrorism (GWOt) currently undertaken in Yemen, add an international aspect to the country's dynamics. In the last week of 2009, a person who apparently had been trained in Yemen failed a bombing attempt on a passenger plane approaching Detroit. The Western regimes' pressure on the Yemeni government to counter the terrorist threat emerging from Al-Qaida (AQ) in the country hence increased.

There have been notions on leaders trying to link their own domestic problems with 'terrorism' as parts of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOt). So has for example been the case in Russia, China, Israel and India. (Buzan 2006:1104) International security researcher Elena Pokalova also finds that the countries' governments in the cases of Russia, Turkey and Kosovo, have used the terrorist concept in order to handle its' secessionist struggles with strategies that would not have been considered legitimate without the terrorist frame. (2010:429) Considering the occurrence of both extensive domestic oppositional conflicts, and GWOt-efforts undertaken within the Yemeni borders, I seek to explore the Yemeni government's employment of the terrorism frame in relation to its two main oppositional groups, the Houthis and the Southern Movement. Considering the ongoing GWOt pursued around the world, it is highly important to know what might induce leaders to target its own people with terrorist framing, in order to avoid such strategies, and find ways to instead strive for non-violent solutions.

## 1.1 Statement of Purpose

This thesis seeks to investigate the Yemeni regime's employment of the terrorism frame against the Houthis and the Southern Movement. The regime's conflicts with these two oppositional groups, combined with the Al-Qaida presence in the country, presents an interesting context since it covers aspects ranging from separatism to terrorism.

I thus aim to identify the character of the Yemeni government's conflicts with the Houthis and SM, and to illustrate how the terrorist framing has been used by the Yemeni government in these conflicts.

When these aspects are covered, I apply the theory of securitization to investigate why they have chosen such framing. My purpose is therefore three-fold with the emphasis of the thesis on the third part:

- 1) to distinguish the conflicts between the Yemeni government and the Houthis and the Southern Movement respectively,
- 2) to illustrate how the Yemeni government is using the terrorism frame against these oppositional groups,
- 3) to explore reasons for the Yemeni government to use this frame.

### 1.1.1 Previous Research

There is already some research on securitization of opposition with the terrorist concept and what opportunities such strategies present for governments facing different conflicts (Buzan 2006; Pokalova 2010). In the cases of Russia, Turkey and Kosovo, Elena Pokalova (2010) distinguished some of the incentives as being the possibility to change the understandings of the conflicts before a domestic and international public and hence make different, often violent, responses feasible. She also found that the differences between whether the framing attempts had been successful or not had been depending on the roles of international actors.

The last two years have seen an increase in publications on Yemen, as the country's role in the GWOt has increased, but the quantity is still humble. In her bachelor thesis within Peace and Conflict studies, Siris Hartkorn (2009) explored Yemen from the perspective of securitization and the state-strength dilemma theory. Her contribution is a good overview of the Yemeni regime's different securitization processes.

However, there is no specific research concerning the Yemeni employment of the terrorism frame against opposition and potential incentives thereof. I thus aim to fill the void on this topic since it is a current issue, directly affecting Yemeni opposition, and also because it implicates important considerations for the international community.

## 1.2 Theoretical Considerations

This thesis employs two theories to explain the framing dynamics of the Houthis and the Southern Movement as terrorists in Yemen: 1) the social constructivist framing theory; and 2) the theory of securitization, which balances between constructivism and realism by using a constructivist departure, and yet incorporating the traditional military-political understanding of security.

### 1.2.1 Framing Theory

Social constructivism concentrates on how the world is interpreted and socially constructed through intersubjective processes. This logic is useful to demonstrate how security issues can be created and eliminated (Parker 2009:378) and hence makes part of both theoretical approaches to this analysis. From the social constructivist perspective stems framing theory, which is the base for this study. Framing theory originates from the field of psychology and emphasizes the need to understand the importance of interpretative and strategic considerations behind policy positions, such as choosing whom to call a “terrorist”, in order to induce a certain action. For this thesis, I have selected relevant contributions from the many authors of framing theory in order to understand the dynamics behind the frames used to portray the conflicts under study.

### 1.2.2 The Theory of Securitization

The realist perspective, which underpins the traditional military-political understanding of international security, focuses on states as the sole important actors. From a realist perspective, terrorism is considered a phenomenon which strengthens states by providing them with greater freedom of action to pursue their own interests. (Parker 2009:375)

The theory of securitization, employed to explore the third purpose, is authored by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap De Wilde (1998) from the Copenhagen research group. This theory was developed in order to widen the traditional focus of international security studies. While taking off in social constructivism, they incorporate the traditional position and construct a more specific conceptualization of security, which can be employed also outside the military arena of the traditional focus. Their approach to a wider agenda is based on the belief that:

*“even the socially constituted is often sedimented as structure and becomes so relatively stable as practice that one must do analysis also on the basis that it continues, using one’s understanding of the social construction of security not only to criticize this fact but also to understand the dynamics of security and thereby maneuver them.”* (Buzan 1998:35)

In this way, since states traditionally have been accepted as the locus of international security issues, this acceptance in itself (an intersubjective construction) affects the arena of international security issues. Consequently, as the use of the word ‘security’ has been a way for states to use whatever means deemed necessary to hinder a threat, this consideration has to be included in securitization theory (Buzan 1998:21). The parts of this theory that are more relevant for this case are the emphasize on the intersubjective politics behind international security issues, and the highlighting of security issues as something

far from normal politics (ibid:5,19). The criteria defined as distinguishing security issues is that the issues “have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind.” (ibid:5)

Even though Buzan et. al. made the theory applicable on different sectors (political, societal, economic, military, environmental), they emphasize that the world should not be analyzed as cut up into sectors. In order to get a hang of political dynamics, it is important to focus on the “most dynamic interactions, the loops, the vicious circles” –regardless of whether these securitizations operate across sectors. (1998:168)

A combination of framing theory and the theory of securitization is hence useful for this thesis since the first helps us understand the all-underpinning processes of framing, and the second is a tool with which we can explore the reasons for the Yemeni government to frame terrorism as a security issue. Hereby, the point of departure is that social constructions and the intersubjective acceptance thereof, is of great importance to what consequently becomes considered as having the status of “rules” on the arena of international security. My approach to securitization theory is however not to empower the processes of securitization. Rather, it aims at critically investigating these securitization processes in the specific Yemeni case.



## 2 Methodology

This is a case study of the dynamics behind the framing of the Houthis and Southern Movement as terrorists in Yemen. In this study, the case is the center and the theories are selected to explain how and why the Yemeni regime has chosen this framing. The thesis is thus theory consuming. (Essaiasson et. al. 2007:42f)

In order to explore the three-fold purpose of this study, it combines a social constructivist perspective with a more traditional understanding of international security. Following this approach, the methodological considerations underpinning the thesis emphasize the recognition of both particular, varying and context-bound phenomena, and more rule-bound phenomena.

Firstly, in order to **describe** the conflicts under study properly, it is necessary to see them in their proper contexts. “Proper” here refers to both the minor, local context which gives the immediate meaning of data and events, as well as the larger, international and global context in which the general and conceptual significance of such phenomena can be considered. (Flyvbjerg 2001:136)

The two following parts of this thesis is theory consuming. The second part of my purpose, to illustrate how the Yemeni government has used the terrorist frame against the Houthis and the Southern Movement, is performed with framing theory underpinning my choice of material and analysis. Here, highly relevant to answer my purpose is the rhetoric used by the Yemeni regime, but also the practice in which these groups have been targeted as terrorists.

This approach is by Bent Flyvbjerg<sup>1</sup> highlighted as necessary within social sciences. My method follows his advice to the extent that I will explore the frames the Yemeni regime has presented of the two groups in order to document discontinuities and changes herein. Practice, which I interpret as the actions performed by the Yemeni government, is to be recorded purely as data, events and phenomena and be “presented together with their connections with other data, events and phenomena”. (Flyvbjerg 2001:134) This thesis hereby recognizes the importance of both discourse and practice, and the relation in between.

Thirdly, in order to explore why the regime have chosen to target these groups with the terrorist frame, I employ the already existing theory of securitization. Even though it would be highly interesting if we could discern the motives behind the framing under study, as Peter Essaiason et. al. highlights, motives are inevitably linked with uncertainties – a fact leaving the justifications actors

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<sup>1</sup> Danish philosopher, economist and geographer and author of “Making Social Science Matter” , in which he develops a research methodology called phronetic social science. He argues that social science should contribute to practical reason by a focus on values and power.

present as the suitable locus for investigation (2007:329). This thesis hence seeks to explain why the Yemeni government is presenting the Houthis and Southern Movement within the terrorism frame. By employing the theory of securitization, this case of framing is explored as a justification given for a securitization.

The advantage of employing a predefined theory is that the results are more likely to consider the existence of self-interests and strategic considerations behind the justifications given. By using a predefined theory, the analysis thus becomes more sensitive to a larger extent of the potential motives, than merely those pronounced by the actor. (ibid:330) A similar framework as that of securitization theory was proven successful in cases exploring some aspects similar to those of my purpose (see Pokalova 2010; Hartkorn 2009), and the theory of securitization is therefore likely to prove fruitful also in this case.

However, this thesis does not claim to produce knowledge that can be formally generalized, since it focuses on one single case. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the knowledge produced by case studies cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge -explicitly based on interpretation- and thereby be open for testing against other interpretations. Since there is no possibility to reach “complete” experience, -“complete” answers cannot be expected from social scientists. But what should be expected is partial answers that can widen the social dialogue about the problems we face, and that emphasize the fact that things can be done differently. (Flyvbjerg 2001:61)

## 2.1 Material and Sources

The amount of material giving a comprehensive picture of the political Yemeni context is rather limited. The recent contributions have been indispensable;

“Yemen’s Democracy Experiment In Regional Perspective - Patronage and Pluralized Authoritarianism” (2008) by Sarah Phillips who works at the National Democratic Institute in Yemen has been a useful source for understanding the governmental rationalities.

“Yemen- Dancing on the Heads of Snakes” (2010) by Victoria Clark who works as a freelance for London Times, Independent, BBC World Service etc. have been my prime source for the historical political context.

Moreover, Siris Hartkorn’s thesis within Peace and Conflict studies, “In search for strength – a case study of regime (in)security in Yemen” (2009) and her report “Yemen: from Cooptation to Securitization” (2010), has provided a good in-depth understanding of several of the Yemeni government’s securitization processes also useful for this thesis.

The other empirical material employed for this study is based on secondary scientific sources, media articles, various other books, governmental web publications and other online documents from NGO: s, such as Amnesty, FIDH, HRW, ICG etc. My aim was to get an as wide picture as possible of the presentation of these conflicts concerned, and I have considered both Western and Arabic medial sources.

## 2.2 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. I initially present the two theories; “framing” theory (3.1), and the theory of securitization (3.2). Then, various understandings of the terrorism frame are presented, including one definition that I chose to employ in this study (3.3). To get a deeper understanding of the myriad dynamics in the Yemeni context, the main events in the modern history (4.1) of Yemen are introduced, followed by a presentation of the ‘governmental rationalities’ (4.2) within the Yemeni state. The empirical material then continues with chapter 5.1 and 5.2, describing the two conflicts, each of them followed by an illustration of the terrorism framing the Yemeni government has presented concerning them (5.1.1, 5.2.1). Then, the final part of my empirical material is a description of the international counter-terrorism context surrounding the case (5.3). In chapter 6, I firstly give an analysis of the Yemeni securitization of terrorism in the big picture (6.1). Then follows a summary of the descriptions given of the conflicts, and the terrorist framings presented (6.2). Finally, I distinguish the reasons for the framing in accordance with the empirical material (6.3). Chapter 7 constitutes the conclusion of the thesis.

## 3 Framing and Securitization

### 3.1 Framing Theory

*“As interpretive lenses, frames help us make sense of complex situations in ways internally consistent with our worldviews, giving meaning to events in the context of life experience and understandings. As strategic tools, frames help rationalize self-interest, persuade broader audiences, or promote preferred outcomes.”* (Shemuli et al. 2006:208)

As the above suggests, the process of framing has both an interpretative and a strategic function. Frames can, moreover, be understood as cognitive shortcuts, which help us interpret the world, and represent it to others. (Schmueli et al. 2006:208) Or like interpretative schemas, which are used to organize confusing situations, and in such way constitutes the foundation for not just discussion, but also for action. (Laws et al. 2003:173) As frames sort out what is to be considered a fact and what arguments are more relevant, frames are considered the foundational structures of belief, perception and appreciation on which policy positions are built. (Schön et al.1994:23) This process simplifies the world and defines peoples visions (Schmueli et al. 2006:208). How people develop certain conceptualizations of various issues is thus dependent on the process of framing. (Pokalova 2010:432)

What framing theory hence suggests is that an issue can be seen from an array of perspectives, and also, that one issue can be interpreted as having implications for various values or considerations. (Chong et al. 2007:104) Hence, frames can lead to very different interpretations of an event (Schmueli et al. 2006:208).

The process of framing, together with its complementary process of naming creates a story, which when presented constructs its' view of social reality. The things that are selected as relevant are named in a certain way to fit the frame constructed for the situation at hand. (Schön et al. 1994:26) The role of frames in policy making is thus “to note a special type of story that focuses attention and provides stability and structure by narrating a problem-centred discourse” (Laws et al. 2003:174). These “normative-prescriptive narratives” unite facts and values into belief about how to act and thereby interpret a complex situation into a specific policy problem. The problem thus specifies the phenomenon, shapes views about what counts as progress, and thereby connotes a course of action. (ibid)

This strategic function of frames are described as a communicative means, used to rally support for our opinion and achieve advantage in negotiations

(Shemuli et al. 2006:209). For example in order to achieve a desired level of policy support, framing targets selected social values. (Pokalova 2010:432)

Frames are of course also used within international affairs to highlight problems affecting national interests, to specify security threats, and to deliver solutions to policy problems. (Norris et al. 2003:11)

## 3.2 Framing as Securitization

The case of international security is traditionally understood in military-political terms with a state-centred focus. From this understanding, security enters the stage when something is presented as an existential threat to the state, which implies government, territory and society. The emergency of such threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures. By this traditional approach, calling something a security issue is a way of legitimizing the use of force, and it allows the state to take special measures to handle the threat. (Buzan et al 1998:21)

According to Buzan et. al. the status of an issue can be placed somewhere along a spectra from the non-politicizing of an issue, thru politicization, to where an issue no longer confirms to the established rules and reaches the status of securitization. The concept of securitization can hereby be seen as the extreme version of politicization. Where on the spectra an issue ends up differs greatly among countries and their respective circumstances. (ibid:23f)

Since politicization involves open processes and decisions which entail responsibility, securitization is in a way also *opposed to* politicization. The term “national security” often provides power holders with opportunities to exploit threats for domestic purposes in order to handle the securitized matters with limited democratic control and constraints. This way, securitization reflects a failure to handle an issue as “normal politics”. In democracies, the reason for handling security issues differently must thus at some point be justified. Buzan points out that, whereas in well-developed countries the armed forces and the intelligence services are separated from “normal political life” and subject to “elaborate procedures of authorization”, the normal political life of weak states is, on the contrary, often pushed into the security realm. (ibid:28f)

It is also highlighted that governments can employ securitizations in relation to the state, when it is in fact the existence of the government itself that is threatened. When leaders of weak states make such moves, as the basic institutions of weak states are often questioned and political violence is common, their authority to do such moves will be further questioned. (ibid:146)

The relative nature of the concept implies that it is not an analytical definition that gives meaning to the concept “security”, but rather the practice in which it is used. This practice refers to when something is presented as an existential threat. Buzan hereby highlights that “security” is a self-referential practice which does not necessarily imply that a real threat exists. (ibid:24)

Buzan regards three units as important for security analysis: the **referent objects**, which are perceived as existentially threatened and have a legitimate claim to survival; the **securitizing actors** declaring the referent object threatened; and the **functional actors** who influence actors in the field of security. (ibid:35f)

For an issue to be considered “securitized” and not merely a “securitizing move”, the discourse presenting something as a threat must be accepted by the audience. Acceptation only implies large enough a platform from which to take measures that would not have been possible without the discourse of existential threat (ibid:25).

The long-term option when dealing with security issues should aim for “desecuritization”. Through this process, an issue is shifted out of “emergency mode” and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere. (ibid:4,29) In the case of constructing or keeping an issue securitized, it is important to note that this is not “an innocent reflection of the issue *being* a security threat; it is always a political choice to securitize or to accept a securitization.” (ibid:29) The interplay of securities within the international system is shaped by the socially constituted relationships and has to be understood as an **inter-subjective process**. Therefore, in order to curb security dilemmas, it is important to know what issues threaten people to “do” security issues. (ibid:30f)

#### The connection between framing theory and securitization

The connection between framing theory and securitization is a bit complex, since there is a two-fold approach to framing theory: an interpretative –as certain perceptions lead to the creation of a frame, and a strategic –indicating certain actions emanating from a frame. I interpret it as the theory of securitization has been constructed with regard to framing processes that actors traditionally have employed to conquer threats to a state’s existence by violent means. This certain interpretation of threats, and what strategic action should reasonably follow, has previously been intersubjectively accepted within international security. Securitization theory also suggests which actors affect the security framing, i.e. affect both the interpretation of a threat, and what kind of strategic actions are likely to follow.

### 3.3 Divergent Frames of the Terrorism Concept

Here follows some of the framing dynamics surrounding the terrorism concept.

The original definition of the term terrorism stems from the eighteenth century and at first denoted political violence from “above”, such as the mass guillotining of the aristocracy, who were considered enemies of the state, in the backwash of the French Revolution. At the end of the nineteenth century, much due to bombings and assassinations performed by anarchists, the term had evolved to

indicate violence from “below”, directed towards political leaders. The later definition gained ground during the twentieth century, and shifted even further to benefit government officials in successfully rejecting the terrorist label for violent actions performed by governments. (Nacos 2005:20f) The terrorism concept has thus transformed from concerning officials to activists.

Despite there being more than a hundred definitions of the term terrorism, none renders a generally accepted application. Considering the current “war on terrorism” waging, it should be explicit what is, and what is not, to be considered terrorism. (Balagangadhara & De Roover 2010:2f) However, the subjective interpretations, and the political character of the term terrorism have kept an international consensus distant. As of 2010, the UN General Assembly has not yet managed to agree upon a resolution defining terrorism. (Parker 2009:365; Hudson inst.)

A common understanding seems to be that “some religion (Islamic fundamentalism) or political doctrine (Marxism) provides the foundation for terrorism”; the motives being religious or political is somehow used to separate the acts from ordinary crimes. (Balagangadhara & De Roover 2010:1) However, terrorism has sprung from as diverse beliefs as Zionism, Islam, fascism, animal liberation, ethnic self-determination, Christianity, communism, nationalism etc. (ibid).

Today, the following properties are commonly attributed to the concept of terrorism: 1) violence of some sort; 2) towards innocents or non-combatants; 3) with an aim of coercing others; 4) the motives being political, religious or ideological; 5) seek publicity for its goals (Balagangadhara & De Roover:3; comp. Nacos 2005). Accordingly, violence or the threat of violence directed against combatants is not included in the definition.

## 4 Yemen in Context

Yemen is located on one of the most important shipping lanes in the world, “Bab Al-Mandab” (The Gate of Tears), where the Red Sea meets the Indian Ocean. An estimated three million barrels of oil pass through it every day, which lends Yemen a position of strategic importance. Nevertheless, Yemen is the poorest country in all of the Arab World with a GDP/capita of about \$800. Beside a serious water shortage and insufficient national food production, it seems impossible that Yemen’s GDP of 2.4 per cent will keep a pace with one of the highest population growths in the world. (Phillips 2008:39f) Moreover, 46 per cent of the population is under the age of 16, and unemployment is estimated to be about 50 per cent among the people aged 18-28 (Yemen Observer).

### 4.1 The Political History of Yemen

Until 1962, Yemen was ruled by the Zaydi Imams for about one thousand years, with the exception of Ottoman occupations (1538-1636, 1849-1918) and British (1839-1967) empires. (Phillips 2008:43ff) The seed for what would later become North and South Yemen was sown when the Turks and the British in 1914 drew the borders dividing the country into Turkish Arabia in the north, and British Arabia in the south. (Sohlman 2007:297; Clark 2010:50) During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the British kept a firm grip of Aden - thus keeping them and the US off the list of possible alliances – the Yemeni Imams instead turned to the regimes of Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, China and Japan. While maintaining the country as conservative and independent, “anyone prepared to grant Yemen material or financial aid while demanding nothing in return was a valued friend and ally”. (Clark 2010:52,58f)

According to Philips, throughout history “the physical contours of the country have had a considerable impact on its political contours”. And they still have. The more rainy parts of Lower Yemen have historically been more productive, allowing for more economical and political stability. The majority of the population in these lowlands are Shafi’i Sunni Muslims, and the Shari’a law has put the boundaries for organization. In Upper Yemen, on the other hand, most of the population are Zaydi Shi’ite Muslims. Here, the tribal code has founded the political organization, which has allowed for raids to be undertaken against Lower Yemen to compensate for its own lack of resources. (2008:41f) Despite belonging to different religious groups, the Shi’ite Zaydis are in many ways closer to Sunnis than to other Shi’ite sects; thus, the split between the two parts of the country steams more from cultural, social and political grounds than religious (ibid).



In 1962, a revolution resulted in the overthrow of the Imamate and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) was declared. The declaration was disputed and a civil war that would last until 1970 broke out between royalists supporting the Imam, now backed by Britain, Saudi Arabia, France, Jordan, Iran, - and Israel, and republicans, supported by Egypt<sup>2</sup>, the Soviet Union, Iraq and Syria (Clark:91,96). At the time of the overthrow of the Imam, the British had surmounted enough reluctance among the Sultans and Adenis for the proclamation of the Federation of South Arabia – which joined together the protectorates with Aden - to be made in 1963 (ibid:79f).<sup>3</sup>

Prime Minister MacMillian is cited conceiving the real problem as being “how to use the influence and power of the Sultans to help us keep the Colony and its defence facilities” (ibid:77). The British, together with the Indian and Jewish merchants which constituted the majority of Aden's middle class, and the sultans of the protectorate, were striving for an independent South Arabia. “The old mistake of fatally over-estimating the power and authority of the sultans whom Britain was subsidising” (ibid:76f) soon seemed to have reoccurred<sup>4</sup>. Less than a year after the proclamation, the British were taken by surprise to find that the National Liberation Front had mobilized Radfan tribes north of Aden against the British military (ibid:81f).

At that time, Aden was much poorer and less developed than its surroundings. Leading to independence was, according to Phillips, the mix of the surge in various forms of nationalism following World War II, the republican revolution in the north of the country and the pro-republican assistance of Egypt against Britain. (2008:45) Sohlman stresses the reasons for the uprisings as the southerners being incited by the British support for the unjust Imam, and revolted against the British colonial power who they considered had been exploiting Aden, without having contributed to any development in the surrounding area. (2007:299 comp: Clark 2010:80f)

At the time of Britain's withdrawal<sup>5</sup> the economy of the South was near a collapse (Sohlman 2007:299f). The leading role that Britain had played in the establishment of Israel combined with the Israeli victory in the Six Day War, speeded up developments (Clark 2010:85f) which led to the departure of the last one thousand British troops just hours before the 'People's Republic of South Yemen was declared on November 30 in 1967 (ibid:88). This Marxist regime, re-

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<sup>2</sup> Approx. half of Egypt's ground forces were in Yemen when the Six Day War began in 1967. (Clark 2010:9)

<sup>3</sup> Worth noting is that the Northern tribes historically has had more influence on the rulers, being larger and more interconnected than the tribes in the South, which the British divided rather easily. (Phillips 2008:92)

<sup>4</sup> Already in the 1830's, the British were surprised to find that the sheiks, sultans and imams were not as easily coopted as have been the Indians. The sheikh's role was restricted to conciliate and pass on wealth, and not to take full responsibility for their tribes. A British officer who served in Yemen during World War II noted that Yemeni tribesmen ““didn't appear to understand the word “rule””. One clue to the confusion might have been found “in the Arabic translation of the western concepts of ‘ruler’ and ‘government’: the Arab idea of rule is contained in the stem word *hukm*, which suggests wisdom, arbitration and justice.” The Arabic equivalent does thus not suggest any absolute power, neither divinely, dynastically or democratically granted. (Clark 2010:33)

<sup>5</sup> which coincided with the closure of the Suez Canal that lasted until 1975 and dramatically diminished the importance of the port of Aden (Sohlman 2007:299f)

named PDRY, opposed the tribalism of the Northern elite, which in 1972 and 1979 respectively, escalated into border wars. (Phillips 2008:46) After the revolutions, both YAR and PDRY were dependent on foreign financial support: YAR received contributions from Saudi Arabia and the West, and PDRY from the Eastern Block. (Sohlman 2007:300) Factional conflicts within the ruling party of the PDRY undermined the state-led development policies that were initiated in the 1970's and resulted in a civil war in 1986. The same period was very different for the YAR, which experienced socio-economic developments. This was stimulated by remittances from the huge Yemeni worker force in Saudi Arabia, large amounts of foreign aid, and the local development association movement. Nevertheless, power struggles continued in the YAR as well, and two presidents had been killed when Ali Abdullah Saleh assumed presidency in 1978. (Phillips 2008:44ff)

The relations between the two states improved in the mid 1980's, partly due to a modest discovery of oil resources.<sup>6</sup> (Clark 2010:135)

However, hoping to gain from the new quantities found in their border region, the leaders of both states would come to "'escap[e] to unity' to save their skins" (ibid). Following the unification of YAR and PDRY in 1990, President Saleh created a new constitution that declared Yemen a democracy. (Phillips 2008:1,47)

Whatever hopes were lit by the rhetoric of democracy and unity, would soon prove to have been rather empty.

## 4.2 The Yemeni Governmental Rationalities

Following the civil war in 1994, which lent victory to the North, the country has been nearly entirely dominated by Northern political culture, institutions and elites (Phillips 2008:47). Sarah Philips describes the Yemeni political system as somewhere in between authoritarian and semi-authoritarian. By 2007, the president suggested amendments that could prolong his term by ten years. Even though the centrality of President Saleh has obvious traits of a dictatorship, some political space for oppositional voices has been permitted. But this level of pluralism has not allowed for alternative power centre to become institutionalized. (ibid:1ff) Rather, these periodic progressive reforms have come about as part of the regime's strive for political survival. (ibid:66)

According to Phillips, the regime has maintained its power by a combination of **co-optation**, **legitimization** and **coercion**. The **co-optation** process of the Yemeni regime has the main characteristics of a patronage system, where the

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<sup>6</sup> But the oil era also brought about new governmental rationalities which distorted the "traditional mechanisms of dispute resolution and resource distribution", and created a gap between the wealth of the tribal leaders and their tribes. A gap that fuels the longstanding dislike for central authorities, and renders some space for AQ to operate. (Phillips 2010:2)

president maintains power through patron-client relationships.<sup>7</sup> In exchange for more or less informal government contracts and licences for economic commons benefiting the elites, the president receives their acquiescence.<sup>8</sup> (ibid:4) The lack of resources available to the regime today reduces the possibility to use co-optive financial incentives among wider parts of the population. Therefore, the regime must also try to increase its **legitimacy** through “populist politics, moves against a perceived national enemy, or the introduction of political reforms”. (ibid:7) Furthermore, Phillips highlights “rational responses made by elites to enhance their legitimacy in the face of perceived threats to their power” as the major key to understanding the variations in political openness in the Middle East. This is exemplified with cases where reforms have been offered during alliances with the US. As the reforms have then transformed to be perceived as a threat to the regime, they have consequently been retracted. (ibid:29)

Phillips identify the military and security apparatus as the hard power measures, i.e. the **coercive** means used by the regime when it deems the employment of the soft power too much of a risk to inflict. (ibid:7f) The government spending on the presidential office, Ministry of Defence and other security services amounted to 25.4 per cent in 2003, but unofficial numbers pointed at 40 per cent. (Ibid:70)

Further factor contributing to maintaining the political status quo in Yemen is the weakness of oppositional groups, disadvantaged by the vague constitutions. The constitutions may thus be subject to arbitrarily interpretations by the rulers and legal system, which do not protect citizens equally, especially not those calling for change. (ibid:29)

The externally generated incomes, rents, also perpetuate the resilience of authoritarian structures. A rentier state feeds mainly of income generated from abroad, such as foreign aid or the oil market. (ibid:29-30) Yemen thus highly qualifies as a rentier state, since 75 per cent of its income is drawn from oil revenues, and the second largest income is foreign aid. (ibid:63) Among the countries with oil companies operating in Yemen are the US (Hunt Oil, ExxonMobil etc.), France (Total), South Korea (KNOC), Spain (Cepsa), Canada (Nexen), Sinopec (China) etc. (Oil).

The largest part of the aid supplied to Yemen is provided by the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), among which Saudi Arabia donates the lion’s share: the commitment of development assistance for 2010 to Yemen amounts to \$1.25 billion. Yemen also received aid from donors outside the region. Since the US has not considered development assistance to Yemen a priority, the allocation

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<sup>7</sup> Phillips argues that the resilient authoritarianism is likely to stem less from the dominance of kinship links - which are not necessarily antithetical to civil organisations or independent political action, than from “the ability of leaders to work these relationships into a patronage system that undermines other forms of affiliation.” (2008:25f)

<sup>8</sup> Creating alliances with the local sheikhs by showering them with gifts was a strategy used already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Ottomans to be able to collect tax, and later by the British, in order to protect its coaling station from tribal attacks. (Clark:15,37) This despite the objection of Prime Minister William Gladstone who, in 1870, saw 'every imaginable objection' to such procedures since 'it binds us to support those over whose conduct to others we have no control'. (Clark:37)

of such aid from European donors such as the UK and Germany has exceeded that of USAID.<sup>9</sup> (Burke 2010:2f) Among EU member states' donors are the Netherlands, France, Italy, Denmark and the Czech Republic. Other important donors are Japan, as well as UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank. (EU:24f)

The rentier system makes states less dependent on collecting tax from their population, which creates a barrier between state and society, and provides the state with means to buy legitimacy in exchange for economic benefits. John Waterbury argues that this allows the state to build an economy of reward and punishment, decided by "loyalty to the regime and inclusion in its patronage networks". (Phillips 2008:30)

Since the Yemeni oil reserves are fast running out, the levels of patronage that keep the regime afloat are not likely to sustain.<sup>10</sup> (ibid:40) Many analysts have discussed whether Yemen risks turning into a "failed state". According to Clark, this is not a likely scenario considering the stability of tribal structures outside the government's control, and the fact that the majority of Northerners always have managed without state-services to fulfil their needs. (2010:255)

While the coercive capacity and willingness of Arab Middle Eastern states are the most salient factors in explaining the resilience of authoritarianism, physical force and the threat thereof is not the only factor. Phillips emphasizes that in the Yemeni case this is reinforced by ethnical, religious and regional divides, the high level of poverty and the regime's success in combining the financial soft power with legitimacy enhancing measures and coercion. But above all, the authoritarianism is kept afloat by the patronage network "fuelled by rentier income and the coercive power that this underwrites". (2008:33)

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<sup>9</sup> For 2009, the US development assistance amounted to \$11.2 million. (US 2009)

<sup>10</sup> However, there are suggestions that "Liquefied Natural Gas are projected to offset Yemen's falling oil export revenues in 2011". <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Yemen/NaturalGas.html>

## 5 Framing the Conflicts

After having described the theories, history of Yemen and governmental rationalities, this chapter is dedicated to the descriptions of the two conflicts under focus. Each of these presentations is followed by an illustration of the rhetorical frames the Yemeni government has presented, targeting these groups as terrorists.

### 5.1 The Houthis vs. the Yemeni Regime

In 2004, the Sa'ada wars took off near the Saudi border and have so far seen six surges of fighting between the Yemeni regime and tribesmen (Clark 2010:246,250). By March 2010, UNHCR stated that 250,000 people have been registered as internally displaced people due to the conflict. Government numbers are higher, suggesting 350,000 (UNHCR).

The conflict is very complex and multifaceted. The build-up to the first of six wars between the Yemeni regime and the Houthis came after Saleh's decision to align with the US in its "war on terror" - despite knowing that this would trigger a wide fury among people already outraged by the invasion of Iraq. During a broadcast from Sana'a's main mosque in 2003, the Houthis were seen chanting 'Death to America and Israel'. As the anti-US and anti-regime protests continued, the president fearing for his life arrested hundreds of protesters. (Clark 2010:249) This anti-US slogan was seen as the catalyst for the rebellion, fuelled by the "massive American arrogance" that is considered to constitute US politics affecting the Muslim population in for example Gaza, Lebanon and Iraq. There are however several layers to this conflict. (Fattah 2009)

According to the official version of the regime, the conflict originates from a class conflict which was the result of the reduced power of the sayyid families<sup>11</sup>, after the overturn of the Imamate. This description also focuses on a perceived rift between the Republican Zaydis, to whom President Saleh belongs (though he is said to be practicing his religion "so lightly it was more or less Sunnism"), and the more hard-core Sa'ada Zaydis who are striving to restore the Imamate. How big a part of the conflict this version actually discerns is hard to assess. (Clark 2010:246ff) The following events are however presented as more likely to have contributed to the current tension.

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<sup>11</sup> The sayyids claim to be descent from the Prophet (Clark:247)

After the unification in 1990, the initially increased freedom of expression and association led to the establishment of religious schools preaching Zaydi Islam, something that not had been possible since the overturn of the Zaydi Imam in 1962.<sup>12</sup> The Shabab Al-Moumineem, The Believing Youth, was formed, largely in protest to the alien Salafism and Wahhabism imported with workers returning from Saudi Arabia<sup>13</sup>, as well as Saudi-funded religious leaders who strongly preached against Zaydism for adhering to Shi'ism (regardless the religiously close resemblance of the Zaydis to Sunnis). The Houthis were later created out of the more extreme fraction of the two, which emerged from the division of The Believing Youth. (Clark 2010:248ff)

Blaming the government for corruption and demanding freedom of worship and social justice, the Houthis are also upset with the support they consider Saleh to be giving Salafi groups aligned with Saudi Wahhabi Islam. Moreover, the Houthis argue that Saleh has manipulated Saudi fears of Shi'ia unrest on the Yemeni-Saudi border, in order to attain financial and military support to prosecute his war. (Hill 2010:5) In 2009, Saudi Arabia openly joined the conflict by employing military operations against the Houthis. A few days earlier, Saudi guards had been killed in the border region by Houthis, possibly in retaliation for the Saudis tacit cooperation with the Yemeni regime. (Boucek&Ottaway 2010:57)

Complaints about deficient infrastructure in the Sa'ada region, as well as economic marginalisation and market access, are further contributing to the insurgency (Hill 2010:5).

### 5.1.1 The Regime's Framing of the Houthis as Terrorists

In 2005, the terrorism framing of the Houthis began as part of the build-up to the second war. At this time, the regime accused the group of small-scale attacks against government officials in Sana'a, and to have planned to kidnap foreign ambassadors. (ICG 2009:3)

The Yemeni regime also asked the UN to list the Believing Youth as a terrorist group (ICG 2009:11). Also media reporting about the wars have been targets for the regimes framing. For example, the editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper "Al-Shoura", Al-Khaiwani, was sentenced to six years in prison for supporting terrorism, only for covering the Sa'ada wars. (FIDH 2009:10f)

Moreover, in the EU Strategy Paper for 2007-2013 it is stated that -even the largest part- of the incidents presented as linked to international terrorism are more of a local than international nature (EU:13).

In 2009, the Yemeni regime launched a campaign accusing Iran, Hezbollah and an Iraqi Shi'ite cleric for supporting the Houthis with weapon and arms

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<sup>12</sup> About 45 per cent of the Yemeni population adheres to Zaydi Islam. (Popp 2010:2)

<sup>13</sup> Among those, 1 million workers were expelled from Saudi Arabia in response to Yemen's protest against the international military campaign against Iraq in 1990 as Yemen instead favored an "Arab solution". (Phillips 2008:55)

(Fattah 2009). Comparing the Houthis with Hezbollah places them on par with a local jihadist movement most likely to join Al-Qaida. Still, the Houthis' resentment towards Salafism and Wahhabism makes it highly unlikely that they would cooperate with Al-Qaida. (Clark:247ff)

The Yemeni Foreign Minister is by the Yemeni Post cited mentioning the listing of the Houthis as terrorists as "at the heart of the dispute between Yemen and US". (Yemen Post)

The diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks in December 2010 stated that, during 2009, Yemen repeatedly diverted its' US supported CT-forces and possibly US-supplied military vehicles to fight the Houthis. US diplomats are said to have protested against these events, but without significant results. (Human Rights Watch)

Indicating that these diversions been on-going for a while, Sarah Philips refers to an interview with a senior Yemeni government official "who paused as a fighter plane roared overhead: 'See, this was supplied by the U.S [to combat terrorists], but all this is for [non-terrorism related uprising in] Sa'ada now'" (2008:33).

## 5.2 The Southern Movement vs. the Yemeni Regime

The unification of the former Northern tribal state and Southern socialist state would soon turn out to have been a mistake. The president, together with the Zaydis in the North, kept control of the essential levers of power: the financial and the military sector, and the merger of the two side's civil servants failed due to relegations and mistrust. (Clark 2010:135,138) The main reason for the failed unification is likely the lack of rule of law. The Southerners have traditionally had a financial system regulating society, whereas the modus operandi in the North long has been fighting and bribing. Complaints raised by Southerners until this day concern the theft of property and land by Northerners (ibid:244f), perceived neglect of the southern port of Aden, and the southerners lack of access to revenues from the oil fields, which are mainly located in the South (Popp 2010:2).

The civil war of 1994 left the Northerners dominating most state institutions and the Southerners, still mistrusted as Marxists, were unable to work the patronage network to make a decent living. Southerners could neither join the national army nor find a job in the oil industry. The Southern Movement of today originates from the Retired Military Consultation Association, which consisted of former PDRY army officers who were forced to retire on insufficient pensions after the 1994 civil war. (Clark 2010:242) Starting off in 2006 with a modest non-violent demand for higher pension payments, by 2007 the message had hardened into secessionist demands ventilated at demonstrations (ibid). Government forces intervened in the demonstrations, resulting in arrests and deaths. (Hill 2010:6)

The movement gathers wide support ranging from military to Marxists, intellectuals recalling the British epoch, wannabe oil-workers, and southerners in

governmental positions (Clark 2010:242f). Also former government allies who struggled against the Socialist regime, such as Tariq Al-Fadhli<sup>14</sup>, have now allied with the Southern Movement against the exploiting regime (Burke 2010:2). By 2010 there are several groups claiming to represent the southern people, directing their own local agendas. When the movement emerged it was declared a non-violent movement to avoid armed clashes, and to avoid being connected to Al Qaida jihadists. (Day 2010:9)

The demands for secession have today reached wide support, and the government has countered several protests and demonstrations with violent responses. Even though this conflict is still not close to reaching the same violent measures as the clashes between the government and the Houthis, it is considered “a greater potential threat to the central power” (Popp 2010:2). Since a ceasefire was declared between the government and the Houthis in February 2010, the government has turned more efforts into curbing the secessionists in the south. They have also increasingly targeted the people in this same region and its surroundings who are alleged to be allies of AQ (Amnesty International).

### 5.2.1 Framing the “Southern Al Qaida Movement”

In 2004, the Specialized Criminal Courts (SCC) was broadened to include “vaguely worded crimes against national security”. The court is increasingly targeting demonstrators in the south and is reported lacking in fair trial standards. Since the SCC was taken into practice, it has tried hundreds of suspects accused of belonging to terrorist cells, of which dozens have been sentenced to death. People accused of crimes against national security or national unity, are reportedly handled in a way much similar to suspects of terrorism. (FIDH 2010:10)

The Yemeni government has presented the Southern Movement as both “bandits, terrorists, and agents of foreign countries interests” (Hartkorn 2010:21f). The regime has also repeatedly renamed the movement as “The Southern Al-Qaida Movement” (ibid:22).

Even if the fact that there has been nothing suggesting a bond between the Southern Movement [and the Houthis] and Al Qaida has managed to calm the Western governments, this has not calmed Saleh. (Clark 2010:254) Despite Saleh’s highly dubious presentation of the Southern Movement as an additional front in the GWoT, the US and the GCC has reiterated their support for a unified Yemen under Saleh’s rule. (Clark 2010:256)

In 2009, violence escalated and despite eight people -both protesters and security forces- being killed and eight southern newspapers were forced to stop printing, foreign governments remained silent. The reason for the silence is by Clark reported to have been “fear that AQAP would hitch its star to the

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<sup>14</sup> Al-Fadhli fought with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and was named “would-be American ally in South Yemen” <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/27/world/middleeast/27tareq.html>



secessionists' wagon, adding its own weight to the centrifugal forces tearing Yemen apart, before stepping in to take charge". (Clark 2010:254)

In August 2010, the government run Yemen Observer reported that the political parties had held their first meeting "for national dialogue...aiming at finding solutions for the challenges facing Yemen, mainly the separation sentiments in the south, the armed rebellion in the north, the Al-Qaeda insurgency growing nationwide, and economic deterioration." (Arrabyee 2010)

Since this announcement there have been several governmental attacks against AQ in the southern provinces which have also resulted in deaths of civilians and displacement of thousands of people. During protests in Aden in September 2010, southerners accused the Yemeni regime of "targeting them under the pretext of fighting terrorism." (Tayler 2010)

### 5.3 Yemen's Role in the Global War on Terror

In the last week of 2009, a failed bombing attempt took place on an aircraft heading for Detroit. The attack was believed to have been planned in Yemen and remarkably increased the international attention towards the country, by Western governments now considered the latest safe haven for Al Qaida. (Popp 2010:1)

Earlier in 2009, the Yemenite and Saudi elements had formally merged into "Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula" (AQAP). AQAP announced the motive for the attack as "retaliation for two US-led missile strikes earlier in December, targeted at Al-Qaedas leadership in Yemen"<sup>15</sup>. (Hill 2010:2)

An attack in the port of Aden on the USS Cole in 2000 had marked the beginning of a round of close counterterrorism (CT) cooperation between the US and the Yemeni security forces. After 11 September 2001 the cooperation was further enforced, but soon hailed by the Yemeni government, partly due to domestic pressure, as the invasion on Iraq was on the verge. (Popp 2010:1f)

Between 2005 and 2007, the US rhetoric towards Yemen went from praising Yemeni democratic efforts to questioning its commitment against terrorism, to again praising it as president Saleh emphasized the need to reduce corruption and improve the business climate. "It seemed that as long as Saleh was willing to toe the lines set by the United States, it would turn a blind eye to Yemen's constricting political arena". (Phillips 2008:64) However, the level of sympathy for Islamist extremists among some actors within the Yemeni regime has made the US publish several concerns about Yemen's commitment to the cause. (ibid:40)

During the same period, Al-Qaeda increased its foothold in the country due to factors like the dubious escape of 23 suspected terrorists and the successful CT-

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<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, at least 42 civilians were killed in an US-assisted air strike in the South where the targets were said to have been Al Qaida operatives. (Human Rights Watch 1)

measures in Saudi Arabia leading to an influx of Al-Qaeda supporters to Yemen. (Popp 2010:2)

The US Section 1206 spending on Yemen increased from \$67.1 million in total in 2009 to \$252.6 million by mid-2010, and half way through that year Yemen was receiving the largest part of the Section 1206 funding spent that far.<sup>16</sup> (US 2009; Serafino 2010:6) In 2009, the CT-cooperation between US and Saudi Arabia intensified substantially, and the US have dedicated significant time and expertise to develop Saudi intelligence capabilities (Global Post). Saudi Arabia considers Yemen a major security challenge since many militant Saudis escaped there after AQAP made Yemen its' headquarter. (Boucek & Ottaway 2010) Also the UK is working with the US in its' counterterrorism endeavours, and have promised support to Yemen likely to exceed 100 million pounds by 2011 (BBC). In 2010, also the EU was to undertake a CT programme in Yemen. (CTC 2010:6)

In January 2010, Friends of Yemen (FoY) consisting of 22 countries, the UN, the European Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank held their first meeting to discuss the many problems Yemen is facing. The British prime minister expressed that the meeting would "be an important means by which we will help the Yemeni authorities who are fighting terrorism to develop the means and the will to do this even more". (GOV UK 1) After the second FoY meeting in September 2010, a joint statement announced unequivocal support for the "unity, security and stability" of Yemen and the principle of non-interference in Yemen's domestic affairs (GOV UK 2). A cross-Government Counter Radicalisation Strategy for Yemen was also announced (GOV UK 2) as providing:

*"a strong foundation for tackling the underlying economic, social, political root causes of terrorism and extremism, and formed a good basis for partners' support and for the Government of Yemen's efforts to counter terrorism and radicalisation".*

However, many analysts believe that president Saleh embraced the rhetoric of the GWOt to please the US and attain the vastest possible amount of intelligence and military support. (Sharp 2010:10)

There have been calls from the US and its allies to get Saleh to respect human rights. But by participating in Yemeni counterterrorism measures without taking more concrete steps to end Saleh's repressive tactics, these countries strengthen Al Qaida's narratives that they [US and allies] disregard the Saleh government's abuses. (Tayler 2010)

The Amnesty International report "Yemen: Cracking Down Under Pressure" (2010) also declares:

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<sup>16</sup> The Section 1206 authority belongs to the Department of Defence and is used mainly to provide counter-terrorism efforts by training and equipping foreign military and foreign maritime security forces (Serafino 2010:6).

*“[t]he largely uncritical international support for the anti-terrorism campaign has facilitated the Yemeni government’s resort to unlawful methods not just against people suspected of links to Al-Qaida but against all perceived opponents”.*

Further is the FoY meeting held in January 2010 mentioned as having put little attention to urge the Yemeni government to adhere to international law, while instead highlighting the need “to pursue those who pose a serious threat to public security”. (Amnesty:7f)

In 2010, the US rejected proposals by President Saleh to negotiate with groups connected to AQAP (Burke 2010:2).

## 6 Exploring the Results

### 6.1 Yemeni Securitization of Terrorism in the Big Picture

In this study, **the securitizing actor** is the Yemeni regime and **the securitization move** under focus is its framing of the **referent object**, the Yemeni state, as existentially threatened by terrorism.

The regime's initial resistance against framing AQ -in accordance with the GWoT- as a threat emerging from within its borders implies the importance of framing within policy positions, and the importance of framing for what actions consequently are chosen as solutions. As framing theory hence suggest, the terrorism frame here had implications for different values and considerations. That the government at first did not recognize the terrorist frame indicates that it either did not perceive its content suitable, or did not perceive the violent strategies that were to follow from it as a suitable solution. However, today the GoY has also securitized 'terrorism' and joined the GWoT, which has allowed for a legitimization of military attacks against terrorists. The regime's choice to make this securitization move was induced by the international **functional actors**.

The functional actors identified in this material are mainly the US, Saudi Arabia, and more recently the EU and Friends of Yemen. The impact of the GWoT and the US struggle to get the Yemeni regime to hitch the CT-wagon seems to have had increased resonance on the regime's CT-engagement as of 2009-2010. The same goes for Saudi Arabia, who has its own securitization of AQ. Yet, international actors as those included in FoY –who has stated consent for violent measures to be undertaken against AQ in Yemen– also contributes to the acceptance of the GoY:s general terrorism framing. The interplay of this securitization is, as Buzan states, a “socially constituted relationship” based on intersubjective politics. AQ and its allies have in this way been agreed upon as something beyond normal politics, in need of a violent solution. That the US has rejected to engage in negotiations with groups connected to AQAP is moreover not contributing towards shifting the issues out of emergency mode, rather the contrary.

However, the rationalities of the regime bring further actors in from the context that deserves mentioning. The rentier system –feeding the patronage system in both its soft and hard power measures– adds a further potential audience for the securitization that deserves attention. As 75 per cent of the regime's income springs from oil revenues, and foreign aid adds the second largest income,

donor countries as well as the countries with oil companies working in Yemen, should qualify as part of the audience, as they are the main financiers of the regime. Even those countries who are not involved in the GWOt, –if they have interests in the oil industry, they are likely to have some influence on the security sector.

Also, that the Yemeni regime increasingly has allowed for CT-programmes to be undertaken against AQ in the country suggests that the GoY:s securitization move of the threat arising from “terrorism” also has been nationally accepted to a sufficient extent to allow for such platform. This national consent is likely to have been ensured by the rationalities of the patronage system, which secures affiliation in favor of the regime by financial incentives.

Considering the growing opposition and secessionist demands within the state, and the diminishing resources financing Saleh’s patronage system, this seems to be a case where the government has presented a threat against the state, when it is in fact the regime that is threatened. As Buzan predicts, this move has fuelled discontent and been followed by further protests. According to my material, among these protests the Southern Movement denounced the government’s right to target them as terrorists, which brings us to summarize our descriptive purpose.

## 6.2 Summoning up the Conflicts and the Terrorism Frame

The Houthis.

There are several layers to this conflicts, but the main reasons seem to be rooted in a feeling of religious marginalization due to repression since the overturn of the Imamate, and Saleh’s perceived current support to Salafists, which also opens up for a Saudi aspect to the conflict. Moreover, there is the perception that the president is a de-legitimate ruler due to corruption and economic marginalization of the group. The cooperation between the regime and the US in the GWOt is further contributing to the Houthis’ discontent. Whatever the reasons, the Yemeni regime has literally presented the Houthis as terrorists. They have also compared the Houthis with Hezbollah, which equates the group with jihadists likely to join AQ. Also journalists -only reporting about the Houthis- have been sentenced to jail for “supporting terrorism”. There has even been a request from the regime to get the UN to list the group as terrorists. Also in practice the regime has directed CT-forces, supported by the US, towards the group.

The Southern Movement.

After the civil war in 1994, the Southerners were not included in the important military and financial state institutions, and neither did the oil resources mainly located in the South come to profit the Southerners. A perceived lack of rule of law and theft of southern land also contributed to the creation of the Southern

Movement, which started off by demanding higher pensions for retired military personnel. The peaceful demonstrations were forcefully met by the regime and the demands from SM have today reached a call for secessionism. The Movement still mostly has a peaceful orientation, but a few violent incidents have occurred. The fact that diverse groups claim to represent the Southerners make it hard to define who is a member and not. The material also suggests that the Southern Movement has been targeted by the terrorism frame. Not least through the conflation of terrorism with threats against national unity and national security in the Specialized Criminal Court. The regime has reportedly re-named the movement “the Southern Al Qaida Movement” and during demonstrations in 2010, demonstrators themselves were reported protesting against how the regime targets them as terrorists.

Reflections on the re-framing of opposition as terrorism.

These conflicts can be concluded to stem mainly from a feeling of economic/political marginalization in the case of the SM, and mainly political/religious marginalization in the Houthi case. The protests from the SM have mostly been non-violent, whereas the Sa’ada wars were clashes between governmental forces and Zaydi tribesmen. According to the definition of ‘terrorism’, this term refers to violence or the threat of violence targeting non-combatants. Since both of these groups protests to the very large extent have been directed against the regime and its security forces, these conflicts should reasonably be kept out of the terrorism frame. Still, Houthis anti-US slogans and the fact that SM supporters are diffused in the same areas as AQ members might have facilitated the regime’s framing. In the case of the SM is also the support expressed from the former AQ member, Al-Fadhli, likely to contribute to the regime’s terrorism framing. At least, sure is that the Yemeni regime’s use of the term now is reported as rendering confusion about who is to be considered a terrorist and not.

According to the diverse definitions of terrorism, the ‘story’ of terrorism has been told with differing ingredients throughout time, depending on which ‘interpretative schema’, i.e. frame, the world is depicted through by the certain actor presenting the ‘story’. Considering the many definitions of ‘terrorism’, presenting something as such opens up for differing conceptualizations from this one term. By a “complementary process of naming and framing” (Schön et. al. 1994:26), different people might interpret differing issues as equally threatening, thus allowing for different issues to be pushed into one and the same frame to denote one and the same strategic action as solution. The Yemeni regime’s interpretative framing dynamics of the terrorism concept seem to validate this.

## 6.3 Reasons for the Yemeni Regime to Re-frame Opposition as Terrorism

As my material indicates, the Yemeni government has made several attempts to portray the struggles against the Houthis and SM as struggles against terrorism.

Not only is the definition of terrorism, in itself, extremely vague and open for multiple interpretations, but vague constitutions also allow for the regime to target different oppositional voices with “vaguely worded crimes against national security” (FIDH 2010:10). The GoY seems to be taking the opportunity that Buzan et al. suggests (1998:29) is often provided to power holders by the “national security” term. This way, the regime is exploiting the threat presented as ‘terrorism’ for the domestic purpose of avoiding to handle the Houthis and SM through “normal politics”. Despite how the terms national unity and national security are being used by the regime, the functional actors have announced unequivocal support for “the unity, security and stability” of the country. The FoY has also announced support for GoY:s struggle to counter “radicalisation” (GOV UK 2); an even more diffuse term than that of terrorism. To use wide frames, suggesting violent responses -or not properly defining responses- neither leads to the politicizing of threats. Rather, the uttering of such speeches risks widening the securitization moves instead of delimiting them.

Besides the **wide terrorism term** and the **vague constitutions**, there are some other contextual factors that are likely to have contributed to this re-framing of opposition as terrorism. Above all, the presence of the GWoT-efforts undertaken in the country, and the GoY:s acceptance of the general terrorism framing of AQ, makes Yemen a good location for attempts to re-frame opposition as terrorism. The rebellion/protests, and the violent responses from the regime, have increased during 2009-2010. Framing the Houthis and SM, in addition to AQ, as terrorists would, according to the theory of securitization, be a way for the regime to gain legitimacy for the violent measures. Such re-framing could also constitute a move “against a perceived national enemy”, which Phillips expects the regime to employ in order to increase its legitimacy, as its oil resources used to co-opt support diminish (2010:7). The GWoT has gained international legitimacy for undertaking harsh measures against threats presented as rising from terrorism in Yemen, i.e. AQ and its affiliates. Violent undertakings against any opposition in terms of “terrorism” is, consequently, likely to receive less protests than if they were framed simply as rebels, secessionists etc. Hence, we can put **the context of the GWoT, and attainment of legitimacy for its violent actions** to the incentives presented to the Yemeni regime.

Further incentives for the Yemeni regime to frame its opposition as terrorism are likely to have been induced by the governmental rationalities -based on a patronage system- in connection with the international CT-efforts. Diminishing oil resources weakens the regime’s ‘soft power’, thus requiring more coercive measures to silence perceived threats and remain in power. Adhering to the terrorism frame is not just likely to have contributed to less protest against the

violence undertaken. Also, that the regime now seems to have put more efforts into its counterterrorism efforts is likely to have contributed to **increased funds and military support** from international actors pursuing the GWoT. Especially considering the increase in amounts of these funds 2009-2010.

A securitization is considered accepted when “large enough a platform from which to take measures that would not have been possible without the discourse of existential threat” is available (Buzan et. al.:25). It is likely that only the terms national unity or national security would have allowed some amount of violent measures to pass by without significant protests. Not least considering also the Saudi securitization of the Houthi conflict.

The UN and the US do not consider the Houthis a terrorist group. There has however been little international emphasize from the functional actors, and the international community at large, to avoid a conflation being made between terrorists and the Houthis and the SM in practice.

The Yemeni regime’s securitization of the Houthis and SM as terrorists must to some extent be considered accepted since the re-framing attempts have been on-going mean whilst the violence against the Houthis and SM increased during 2009, without generating any significant protests. Also Amnesty, Victoria Clark and Letta Talyer (HRW) suggest that the protests against the framing of the Houthis and the SM as terrorists have not been sufficient to guarantee that other opponents than AQ have not been attacked by CT-measures during the current cooperation between the international CT-actors and the Yemeni regime. International actors emphasizing CT-measures above human rights concerns and constitutional rights are likely to work their ways further away from their pronounced goal of building “a strong foundation for tackling the underlying economic, social, political root causes of terrorism and extremism” (GOV UK 2). Supporting a semi-authoritarian to authoritarian regime with weaponry, and contributing to civilian deaths is rather likely to result in fuelling the grievances of those supporting extremist groups.

The international priority of national Yemeni unity seems to play well into the hands of Saleh’s perception of national security. However, this is taking place on the account of emphasizing politicization of the country’s internal conflicts.



## 7 Conclusion

This thesis has shown that, despite the lack of agreement between the general definition of terrorism as targeting non-combatants, and the governmental targets of the Houthis violent, and the Southern Movements mainly peaceful protests - both groups have been targeted by the Yemeni government's terrorism frame. The theory of securitization in itself only argues the attaining of legitimacy for violent means to be an incentive, which is also most likely to have been an incentive in this case. Through framing theory it has been distinguished that the terrorism term has very bendable qualities, subject to various interpretations, which has obviously been stretched by President Saleh to include also the opposition he perceive as a threat. The local and global context surrounding this case has provided further likely reasons for the Yemeni regime to employ the terrorism frame against the Houthis and Southern Movement. The GWoT which has been undertaken in the country since a few years back provided a fruitful stage for this re-framing attempt. By presenting its opposition with the terrorism frame, which is a generally accepted securitization in the GWoT-context, the regime would be able to increase its violent responses without being internationally condemned for committing crimes. Also the country's vague constitutions, with wide references to "national security", are used to prosecute opposition for crimes that include the terrorism term. The particularities of the patronage system also introduce the extraction of military and financial funds as a reason for the Yemeni government to choose this terrorism re-framing. The oil resources funding the system are officially running out. Considering the substantial support the regime is getting to pursue claimed AQ-allies, to be widening its use of the terrorism concept has likely made the Yemeni regime more persuasive in demonstrating its commitment to the GWoT, thus securing more funds. This re-framing has, however, not been openly accepted by the international actors. But in practice, violent measures against these oppositional groups have increased during these re-framing attempts. The support provided by the functional actors to the regime for counterterrorism purposes have according to the material been diverted to target also the Houthis and Southern Movement. The Yemeni regime's conflation of diverse oppositional groups with 'terrorists', thus suggests serious considerations for the close cooperation between the national and international CT-efforts being employed in Yemen. Through our securitization glasses it has been distinguished that the international actors involved in these dynamics -not least the functional actors- are contributing to the maintenance of this re-framing of opposition as terrorists. In this way, the political choice behind this acceptance is helping the Yemeni regime to avoid a politicization of these conflicts.

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