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   Books and monographs: Maria Raquel Freire, *Conflict and Security in the Former Soviet Union: The Role of the Osce* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 45.

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   Chapters in books: Manuel Ennes Ferreira, "China in Angola: Just a Passion for Oil?", in Christopher Alden, Daniel Large and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira (eds.), *China Returns to Africa: A Rising Power and a Continent Embrace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 295-317.

   Articles in journals: Paulo Gorjão, "Japan's Foreign Policy and East Timor, 1975–2002" (*Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 5, September/October 2002), pp. 754-771.

   Articles in newspapers: Paulo Gorjão, "UN needs coherent strategy to exit from East Timor" (*Jakarta Post*, 19 May 2004), p. 25.
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Yemen: Land of Forgotten Battles

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The vicissitudes of time cannot be more revealing. Yemen is known as the homeland of Qahtan, the fount of all "true Arabs". Long before Christ, it was named "Arabia Felix" – Happy Arabia – by the Greeks and Romans, who became aware of the then riches of these lands thanks to trade in spices and coffee beans. Although Yemen has often been politically unstable throughout its history, old Yemeni civilizations such as Sheba, Himyar, Hadramawt and Ma'in achieved power and prosperity. The fascinating stories of queen of Sheba are but one example. With the passage of time and the uprooting of Yemenis for various reasons, civilizations in Yemen reverberated across its region, leaving indelible marks and historical influence as far as the lands of present-day Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq and Syria.

This has changed. Today, Yemen is the poorest country in the Arabian Peninsula. Its Human Development Index ranking in 2012 was 160 out 187 countries. It also makes the UN list of 48 least developed countries. In real terms, Yemen faces daunting security, political, economic and developmental challenges. Rival tribal, sectarian and political allegiances fragment the Yemeni society and state institutions, including the military and security apparatus. State resources are brazenly looted by a small clique of dominant tribal figures. State authority is generally weak, and mostly absent out of the capital and major urban centers. If you live in Yemen, you simply have no sense of security. Especially since the so-called youth revolution of February 2011, hardly a single day goes by without bloodshed. Notably, Yemenis are the most heavily armed population in the world after the Americans,[1] and they are inclined to mete out their own form of justice directly. Over and above, lack of rule of law and impunity further complicate matters, leaving little hope of improvement in the security situation.

The youth revolution of February 2011 has plunged Yemen into deeper chaos, which makes it a stiffer thorn in the back of the Arabian Peninsula and most directly across its long, porous borders with its biggest neighbor, Saudi Arabia. Yet, at best, Yemen is considered a secondary priority by regional and international powers, in comparison with the face-off in the Arabian Gulf, the war in Syria, the Palestinian cause and other flashpoints in the Middle East. Likewise, developments in Yemen are usually glossed over by regional and international media. No doubt, Yemen is worth more attention, not least given its significance as the most populous country in the Arabian Peninsula, its strategic location and sprawling coasts on Bab-el-Mandeb strait, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.

The main source of hope in Yemen today lies with the Gulf initiative that brokered peace in the country after the revolution of February 2011, with its subsequent national dialogue conference and extended transitional process. However, there is a host of internal, regional and international factors suggesting Yemen is heading toward continued chaos and, perhaps, disintegration. In particular, there are four heated battles that are likely to shape the future of Yemen. First, the violent rebellion in the south of the country. Second, the kindling war between Houthis on one side and al-Ahmar tribesmen, Muslim Brothers and Salafis on the other side. Third, the continuing war against Ansar al-Sharia, al-Qaeda's affiliate in the Arabian Peninsula. Fourth, the tug of war between the revolutionaries and the old regime.

Rebellion in the South

Public affairs in southern Yemen used to be more institution-driven, until the unity with the north in 1990, thanks to the legacy of a long British occupation in the south (1839 to 1967). And southerners are generally more progressive than their northern peers. The national liberation front that precipitated the end of the British occupation openly aligned with the defunct Soviet Union and controlled the state of South Yemen throughout its life. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the south voluntarily hurtled toward unity with the north in 1990. By 1994, fomenting grievances and frustration with the central government in Sana'a led to a short war to quell a rebellion in the south. In 1997, a host of southern groups launched the so-called Southern Movement, with demands ranging from rectifying the unity to immediate disengagement. Ultimately, the youth revolution of 2011 offered a historical window of opportunity for southerners to project their cause in the international arena.

The 2011 Gulf initiative acknowledged the legitimacy of the southern cause within the framework of united Yemen. However, it is clear today that public opinion in the south sharply tilts toward independence. This dilemma took center stage in the national dialogue conference that ended in late January 2014. Most of the key leaders of the Southern Movement rebuffed invitations to participate in the conference. Ultimately, the delegation of the south set its bottom line as a transitional two-region federal union with the north, leading to a referendum on self-determination. However, President Hadi – a southerner himself – worked out a dampened formula that ignored the demand for self-determination and relegated decision on the number of federal regions to subsequent deliberations. Later on, the committee on regions decided on a six-region federal union, with the southern governorates brought under two regions, Aden and the Eastern region. But this was only possible after sidelining two obstructive heads of the southern delegation. On the other side, a few days before the end of the conference, a letter signed by several influential southern leaders arrived at the UN Security Council. The letter rejected the conference's outcome on the southern cause and called for further negotiations on the issue, in the presence of foreign observers. Shortly afterward, the so-called Southern Resistance has declared an armed struggle against what it perceives as northern occupation, leading to a marked increase in violence throughout the south.

The eruption of wider violence in the south was no surprise, taking into consideration that there were several precursors. To cite only one, the government has given too little too late on long-standing demands by moderate southerners to address the grievances of those who suffered real-estate disappropriation or arbitrary dismissals after the 1994 war, perhaps due to lack of finance and the sophistication of the claims involved. In response, it seems that the strategy of some southern opposition leaders is to cause as much damage as possible to northern interests, so as to attract world attention and force Sana'a to reconsider the settlement of the southern cause. Indeed, over the last few months, southern militia launched unprecedented attacks against military targets and oil and gas facilities in the south. In contrast, a wiser approach could have been to dedicate more time to the southern cause, together with more effort to make deliberations more inclusive, while addressing upfront the grievances of southern citizens and investing in the unity through targeted policies, programs and projects that could bear fruit quickly.

Yet, another decisive factor in the southern cause is the policies of regional and international powers. While Iran is said to support the most radical separatist faction, that of former Deputy President Ali Salem al-Beidh, Iran's regional rival, Saudi Arabia, is vacillating between unionists and separatists. Other powers, including the United States, seem wary of the idea of partition in Yemen. Two main factors appear to raise concerns: the absence of a united southern front and the involvement of Iran. Indeed, southern Yemen suffers from political heterogeneity and tribal rivalries that threaten with further fragmentation in case of an independent southern state. In addition, the role of Iran, along with the support of its main proxy in Yemen, Houthis, to the Southern Movement, carries a threat to western strategic interests in the south, with its dominant position on Bab al-Mandeb strait and crucial maritime routes. Bereft of wider international support, radical southern factions seem all the more determined to change the equation through armed struggle.

War between Houthis and al-Ahmar Tribesmen

Zaydi-Shiites ruled most of northern Yemen for about eleven centuries. Their last dynasty infuriated the free world with its dark-ages-like despotism, until it was overthrown by revolutionary forces supported by Egypt in 1962. In the early 1990s, Houthis, a Zaydi sect close to the Iranian Twelver Shiism, rapidly penetrated traditional Zaydi areas to grow into a threat to the state. From 2004 through 2010, Houthi strongholds in the north endured six consecutive war rounds with the Yemeni state; Saudi Arabia joined in the last round. It was basically thanks to lavish Iranian support that Houthis persevered and maintained *de facto* control over most of these areas. Since the youth revolution of 2011, Houthis have been vigorously exploiting security vacuums and political impasses to further consolidate and expand their control in the north. Although they were not signatory to the Gulf initiative of 2011, Houthis were brought onboard in the transitional process. The rationale in

cess. The rationale in Sana'a for such a move was that "Yemen needs Houthis more than Houthis need Yemen".

Ambivalence, or rather purposeful ambiguity, is the key to understanding Houthi participation in the transitional process. Since the outset of the transitional process, Houthis actions take two parallel tracks. While they have a seat at the table, they continue to act like a state inside the state in areas under their control. There are also indications that they are building up their arsenal of advanced and heavy weaponry. In addition, they have been expanding their presence and proselytizing activities in areas as far southward as the capital Sana'a, where their famous slogan, "death to America, curse on Jews, victory for Islam", has become commonplace. Thus, it appears Houthis are exploiting the transitional process to help achieve an ambitious expansionist project in areas that were previously under Zaydi imamate control. But this is not only about historical ambitions. It is also a reaction to discrimination they suffer, especially from the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis. While Muslim Brothers, in particular, are increasingly penetrating political, civil-service and military hierarchies, Houthis are either excluded or unwilling to join. Ironically, only three years ago, these groups joined hands to topple the regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Now, they are not only at odds, they are at war.

In October 2013, war erupted between Houthis on one side and al-Ahmar tribesmen, Muslim Brothers and Salafis on the other side, after Houthis imposed a siege on Salafi Dar al-Hadith institute in Damaj in northern Yemen, with claims that it is a terrorist incubator. After more than three months of fierce confrontations, Houthis prevailed and a negotiated settlement forced Salafis to flee from the site, mostly to Sana'a. Notably, al-Qaeda's affiliate in the Arabian Peninsula, Ansar al-Sharia, acknowledged that it came across to fight against the Houthis briefly. The battlefield also widened to engulf most of the northern areas, before reaching the mountainous periphery of Sana'a. Sana'a also suffered assassinations, rocket attacks and bombings in connection with the war. A particularly important battle took place in early February 2014 in Imran governorate, birthplace of al-Ahmar leaders of Hashed tribe – the most influential Yemeni tribe –, where al-Ahmar-backed militia suffered a humiliating defeat and surrendered precious territory to Houthis. The ailing Yemeni state could only try to mediate an end. And while Iran stood firmly by Houthis, the sour relationship between the Saudi Arabian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood deprived it of traditional Saudi support. Hence, Houthis were poised for a sweeping victory.

The timing of the last war round risked undermining the transitional process. While Muslim Brothers have been in the driver's seat of this process from the outset, Houthis have shown more reluctance to cooperate after the war. For instance, they refused to sign on the final outcome document of the national dialogue conference. They also rejected the decision on the regional division of the future federal union. Notably, this decision joins Sa'ada, the main Houthi stronghold, and most other areas under Houthi military control, together with Sana'a, in one region, Azal. Probably, Houthis did not want the areas under

their control to be bundled with Sana'a in one federal region, to avoid related political constraints. There are also indications that Houthis wanted to have an access to the Red Sea in addition to the oil-reserve rich governorate of al-Jawf.

Fortunately, the war has subsided in recent weeks. But bitterness remains underneath the surface, and tensions are flaring around the city of Imran, capital of Imran governorate, with marked bigger involvement of the Yemeni armed forces against Houthis. Clearly, Houthis' ambitions seem unlimited. Thus, the potential for more war rounds is high, especially around Imran and Sana'a.

To defuse the peril, in addition to bolstering the transitional process at large, Houthis should be fully brought onboard as soon as possible. Specifically, they should be pressured to lay down arms, with a comprehensive disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration program to deal with their militia. In exchange, Houthis should be fully integrated in the political sphere, in accordance with their representative weight and rights and obligations as Yemeni citizens. At the same time, the Yemeni state needs to reestablish its authority across all Yemeni territory, including in areas under Houthi dominance.

War against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Ansar al-Sharia, or al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), represents one of the most ferocious affiliates of al-Qaeda worldwide. Notably, AQAP has shown remarkable resilience in the context of the global war on terror, in spite of relentless US drone attacks and field operations by Yemeni security forces. In addition, the group has expanded its presence from traditional hotbeds in southern Yemen to central and northern areas. Moreover, over the last few months, AQAP has delivered astounding blows to Yemeni security forces. In September 2013, its elements stormed the headquarters of the second Yemeni army command in Hadramawt, and were not forced out until three days later. In December 2013, it raided the headquarters of the Ministry of Defense in Sana'a, stayed in control of the conjoined military hospital and an adjacent administrative building for a few hours and carried out more than sixty random executions. In February 2014, it launched an attack that lead to the liberation of 29 prisoners from Sana'a central prison. Over and above, AQAP has markedly increased and escalated its attacks against Yemeni security elements, foreigners, state infrastructure and commercial facilities. In an overdue move, last April, Yemeni security forces have launched extended operations against AQAP camps in the southern governorates of Abyan and Shabwa. Official Yemeni sources speak highly of the results of these operations so far. However, a corollary damage of them is more severe shortage of electricity and fuel as well as further militarization of the capital, Sana'a.

Although the US and its western allies have largely reduced the capability of AQAP and al-Qaeda at large to conduct operations in the US and Europe, terrorism has in fact grown more potent in several areas of the Middle East and Africa. There are several reasons for this, including lack of state authority, receptive environments, mountainous topography, culture of violence, tribal nature and vested interests. In the Yemeni case in particular,

there are at least three other significant reasons. First, the double-edged effect of drone attacks, where innocent civilians at times fall victim, stokes sympathy with extremist agendas in host communities. Second, an increasingly lucrative business in Yemen today is kidnapping, and AQAP has accrued millions of US dollars over the last year in ransoms. Third, besides a heavily armed society, all major Yemeni political forces have paramilitary forces that are often deployed to settle political conflicts, which gives AQAP the opportunity to form vicious alliances of objectives.

Yemen pays a heavy toll for terrorism. Most of those hunted down by drones are Yemeni. In turn, reprisals mostly hit Yemeni ground forces. In economic terms, attacks on oil and gas pipelines, for instance, weigh heavily on the state budget. Official Yemeni sources estimate a loss of US$4.7 billion in the oil and gas sectors over the last three years. In addition, lack of security deprives Yemen of much needed investments and development projects, whereas Yemeni entrepreneurs themselves prefer to invest in neighboring countries and overseas. Moreover, UN and other development agencies find themselves often bogged down by security restrictions, with no consolation for the huge population in need of help.

At the regional level, Yemen has become famous for exporting terrorists and radical elements to countries across the region, especially to hotspots such as Syria, Iraq, Libya and Egypt. At the global level, threats to western interests emanating from Yemen continue to cause fear and incur heavy costs in counteracting measures. As a result, the world tends to look at Yemen only from the prism of terrorism. But to combat terrorism, Yemen needs more than drone attacks and logistical military support. Notably, the current Yemeni government has prepared a comprehensive antiterrorism strategy that provides a holistic approach to combat efforts, including in education, media and economic domains. Now the question is how best to help Yemen put this strategy into practice.

Tug of War between the Revolutionaries and the Old Regime

The 2011 initiative that ended the tenure of President Saleh is indeed a unique case of the so-called Arab Spring. Most importantly, this initiative prevented what was projected to be immense bloodshed, not least because of Yemen's heavily armed society. However, it delivered a deformed offspring that continues to haunt Yemen and its region today. While former President Saleh and his entourage were granted juridical immunity and given leeway to maintain their presence in political life, with Saleh still holding the powerful position of head of the General People's Congress Party (GPCP), the opposition was given a 50% share in the post-uprising national unity government. The initiative also maintained the parliament with GPCP majority. Remarkably, incumbent president Hadi was deputy to Saleh in the presidency of both the Yemeni state and the GPCP. Now that Hadi has the upper hand, he has markedly distanced himself from Saleh. Still, Hadi faces the dire challenge of having to handle a fierce tug of war between Saleh and his camp in the GPCP on one side, and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other side.

Clearly, the Muslim Brotherhood appears intent on doing everything possible to slowly but surely rise to the apex of power in Yemen. On the other hand, backed by significant public support, Saleh's group seeks some kind of reincarnation. While the Muslim Brotherhood has increasingly penetrated state institutions in an attempt to minimize the risk of a backlash scenario similar to what happened in Egypt, Saleh's group has adamantly opposed loosening its grip on power. The Yemeni society in general is sharply divided along this frontline, especially in northern areas. And in the midst of this duel, there is hardly any consideration of Yemeni national interests. Notably, this acrimonious rivalry has salient regional dimensions, with Qatar and Turkey said to support the Muslim Brotherhood, while Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait are said to support Saleh. In addition, the collapse of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt since July 2012 has significant implications on Yemen. Egypt is the core of the Arab world and the collapse of the Muslim Brotherhood there is widely reckoned as a historical turning point that has deprived the transnational political network of its most important bastion.

In a blow to the old regime, the Yemeni national dialogue conference endorsed a constitutional precursor preventing Saleh and his son Ahmed, a former special forces commander with presidential aspirations, from running for high-profile political positions, including the seat of the presidency, for two terms starting from the adoption of the anticipated new constitution. However, it remains to be seen if that precursor will take root in the new constitution. Consequently, as the constitutional process draws to an end, Yemen might well face a dangerous tipping point. Another blow to the old regime came from the UN Security Council on 26 February 2014, when it recognized that the transitional process requires turning the page from the former presidency and established a sanctions committee entrusted with a mandate to penalize whoever is found to be obstructing the transitional process or involved in violence. The rationale behind that move was to send a warning message to the old regime among others. However, this is a double-edged tool that has to be used prudently in view of the former regime's ability to retaliate.

Concluding Remarks

Yemen is historically and demographically the center of gravity in the Arabian Peninsula. It occupies a strategic swathe in the Middle East and it is center-stage for chaos and terror. Since the youth revolution of 2011, Yemen's political transitional process has depended on a fragile internal balance of powers and critical regional and international engagement. However, Yemen's internal conflicts seem irreconcilable and regional and international powers show a great deal of ambivalence about deeper engagement, with the exception of the security domain. Yet, the problems of Yemen go far beyond the transitional process. In fact, this process is only the *sine qua non* entry point to a maze of deep-rooted, convoluted problems that demand miraculous efforts from Yemeni, regional and international actors. In particular, the survival of Yemen as we know it today is in question given the current risk of disintegration driven by sectarian, nationalistic, ethnic

and other factors. In addition, the budding constitutional process and the UN sanctions mechanism could bring Yemen to the verge of the abyss, given the high stakes involved and the lethal capabilities of the concerned stakeholders.

While it is hard to foresee a change of attitude on the side of internal powers in the near future, regional and international powers have a vital role to play to bring Yemen to shore. In particular, Saudi Arabia is the main regional power in the Arabian Peninsula, is the biggest donor to Yemen and has plenty of means to influence its neighbor, including through powerful tribal leaders. However, the Saudi state and public alike tend to view Yemen and Yemenis as a threat to their model of prosperity. On the other hand, Yemenis tend to blame Saudi Arabia for their woes. Otherwise, Iran, the main rival of Saudi Arabia, has a powerful proxy in the north, Houthis, and an influential separatist ally in the south, al-Beidh. And Qatar, the rising regional player, is the most important sponsor of the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen and the region. Thus, it is of utmost importance that Saudi Arabia, Iran and Qatar come to compromise regarding their interests in Yemen. On a wider scale, the international community should consider deeper, more focused engagement in helping Yemenis face their political and developmental predicaments. In other words, the focus of the international community on security concerns emanating from Yemen needn't divert attention from helping Yemen address underlying problems.

(Endnote)

1 According to Yemen Armed Violence Assessment, a project developed by international, national and local actors in Yemen, www.yemen-ava.org.