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Regional Balance and Strategic Implications

SAUDI ARABIA, YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC,
PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

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SAUDI ARABIA

1. The Political System

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy which is based on the Islamic law, the shari'a. Parliament, political parties or elections are unknown there. According to the shari'a the monarch is not only the temporal, but also the spiritual head, the Imam, of the faithful. Furthermore, the legitimation of the Saudi Arabian ruler is founded on the fact that he is recognized as the leader of all tribes, Shaykh al-Mashayikh.

The strict application of the shari'a implies that a constitution in its precise sense and a legislature can be dispensed with. Since the shari'a is a revealed, i.e. a divine law, and thus not alterable, no new laws can be enacted. Strictly speaking, the king does not dispose of legislative power.

A constitution is also superfluous because according to Islamic legal conception the Qur'an and the sunna which regulate all public affairs and the relationship between the ruler and his subjects, perform the function of a constitution.

Modern development, however, necessitated the legal settlement of some areas not covered by the shari'a. The king, for instance, issued commercial (1931), civil (1933) and labour (1969) statutes; but these are not considered as being equal to the shari'a.

In the course of modernization a decree on the formation of a Ministerial Council was issued immediately before the death of King Ibn Sa'ud in October 1953. A further decree of 1958 transferred far-reaching powers to the Ministerial Council which thus was upgraded to the actual power and decision-making centre. With this measure the first step towards a constitutional monarchy was taken, while the king had lost part of his absolute powers¹.

In contrast to his brother Sa'ud, Faisal also took over the office of the prime minister after his accession to the throne in 1964, as did his successor Khalid in 1975. By this means royal power was formally restored.

2. The Ruling Forces

Power in Saudi Arabia is almost exclusively exercised by the royal family whose number is estimated at several thousands. Actual power is concentrated on a small group, the so-called Family Council which comprises the most influential members of the royal family. The Family Council decides on the election of the successor to the throne which is one of its major functions, since there does not exist lineal descent.

The members of the royal family also hold the most important offices. Within the government out of 23 ministerial offices seven are filled by princes.

The royal house is not a homogeneous set, but split into different and partly rivalling groupings. The formation of groupings is to some extent due to the fact that Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, the founder of the kingdom, for political reasons married women of the leading tribes. The sons of the individual mothers who are full brothers among one another are connected with each other by closer ties than with their half-brothers and, therefore, are forming firmer power groupings, as for instance the "Sudairi Seven"². These seven so-called Sudairi brothers are regarded as the most influential group within the royal family.

The differences within the royal family which are argued out absolutely privately could, when the occasion arises, result in an open dispute. The succession to the throne and the foreign policy orientation might then be the actual points at issue.

Next to the royal family the spirituality (ulema) may be regarded

as the second most significant group in the state. The theologians and jurists see to the observance of the Islamic law, the shari'a, and therefore play an important role within the system. Since they hold nearly all juridical posts their influence can hardly be overestimated.

The supreme judges take care that the ruler governs according to the shari'a and that the introduction of new laws occurs in harmony with the shari'a. The sovereign can make important decisions only after having obtained a counsel's opinion (fatwa) from a lawyer. The paramount influence of the spirituality may be seen from the fact that the appointment of Faisal as king in 1964 was subject to a fatwa. The Council of the Supreme Theologians and Lawyers (ulama') headed by the grand mufti must give its consent to the designation of the successor to the throne. The fact that in Saudi Arabia politics is conducted in accordance with the religion and ulama' is a factor of stability. For this reason any comparisons with the events in Iran are inappropriate.

The third most influential group encompasses the tribal chiefs. Their power results from their position as leaders of the major tribes whose esteem and influence partly being equal to the tribe of the Sa'uds. The leading tribal chiefs also belong to the council which decides on the succession to the throne. Their influence is dwindling as the central power and Ministerial Council are strengthening their position. Furthermore, their waning influence can be attributed to the new division of the kingdom into provinces in 1963 and the establishment of Provincial Councils.

As a new power factor the army is pushing its way to the front.³ It is no doubt playing a decisive part in interior struggles

for power as may be seen from the mission of the National Guard in the deposition of King Sa'ud in 1964. Control over the armed forces enhances the influence of the group in question.

However, the armed forces also constitute an element of uncertainty as is disclosed by the attempts of insurrection in 1969⁴. The introduction of modern technology has involved the engagement of technicians and highly qualified personnel which led to the destruction of the former homogeneity of the armed forces which predominantly consisted of bedouins. In order to prevent the seizure of power by the armed forces two military bodies organizationally independent of each other were formed, the true armed forces and the National Guard, designed to control and neutralize one another in the case of an insurrection. Until now the Saudi army cannot match the forces of other Arab countries like Iraq, Syria or Egypt.

3. Foreign Policy

3.1 Saudi Arabia as a Politically Regulatory Power

A constant factor in Saudi Arabian foreign policy are the strong ties to the United States and the strictly pro-Western policy. The foundation for this line was already laid by Ibn Sa'ud at the beginning of the 1930s when, after granting ARAMCO the concession to drill for oil, a fruitful economic cooperation began. The meeting between Ibn Sa'ud and US President Roosevelt on an American battleship in spring 1945 initiated the close political collaboration.

With the advent of Egypt's preponderance within the progressive camp of the Arab world in the middle of the 1950s and with Nasser's claim to represent the true interests of the Arab people through his socialist and pro-Soviet policy, the pro-american policy of Saudi Arabia fell into the disrepute of serving imperialism, i.e. the enemies of the Arab nation.

The rivalry between Egypt and Saudi Arabia or Nasser and King Faisal, respectively, for hegemony in the Arab world after Egypt's disastrous defeat in the war of June 1967 was decided in favour of Faisal. The growing oil receipts consolidated the strong position of Saudi Arabia. The relatively positive outcome of the October war for the Arab side which first of all depended on the use of the "oil weapon" would not have been realizable without the support of Faisal.

The increase in oil receipts since October 1973 have helped Saudi Arabia gain a dominating influence not only among the Arab states, but also in the whole world. In the meantime the scope of Saudi foreign policy has narrowed again. The decrease of Iran's oil production after the Iranian revolution has impaired the strong position of Saudi Arabia because the demand for oil has exceeded the supply since then and Saudi Arabia now can no longer dictate the oil price within the OPEC bloc. The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel forced Saudi Arabia to a rapprochement towards the rejection front at the Baghdad conference in November 1978. For the first time the pro-American policy of long standing seems to be seriously doubted⁵.

A change in foreign policy could result in dangerous repercussions for the interior stability. A close cooperation with the progressive Iraq would strain the relations with the United States even more heavily and lead to severe tensions within the government of the country⁶.

3.2 Saudi Arabian Interests in the Yemen

The main objective of Saudi Arabian foreign policy is to ward off the potential dangers emanating from progressive regimes and ideologies like socialism and communism. As the Arabian peninsula is regarded as Saudi Arabia's sphere of influence, the revolutionary movements and progressive regimes on the

peninsula are watched with close attention.

In this connection the Yemen plays a paramount role. The revolution of 1962 which led to the fall of the Imam and the establishment of a progressive republican regime supported by Egypt already put Saudi Arabian government on the alert. Despite the strong support of the Royalist camp it could not be prevented that the Republic eventually prevailed. However, the termination of the civil war was only reached through the readmission of the Royalists to the government and parliament in San'a. These pro-Saudi forces have secured Riyadh a dominant influence in the Yemen.

While the development in the Northern Yemen could be influenced in favour of Saudi Arabia, the pro-Soviet Marxist regime in the Southern Yemen which had come to power after the withdrawal of the British and the granting of independence in November 1967, represented a grave menace. Attempts to overthrow the regime in Aden with the support of exiled Yemenis failed. The unsuccessful insurrection of Salim Rubai Ali in June 1978 in which foreign powers will most probably have been involved will have strengthened the position of the radical forces so far as to rule out a change of power within the near future.

As the Southern Yemen apparently tries to extend its influence in the Northern Yemen by means of the policy of unification, the immediate interest of Saudi Arabia must be directed towards preventing Aden from achieving control of the Northern Yemen⁷. If progressive forces assumed power in San'a this would have far-reaching consequences for the interior stability of Saudi Arabia. The large number of Yemeni migrant workers could easily develop into a "fifth column" endangering the economy and social stability.

3.3 Islam as a Decisive Force in Saudi Foreign Policy

Saudi Arabia's claim to a leading role in the Arab world, at least in the camp of the conservative states, is largely attributable to the fact that it actually occupies an exceptional position for the Muslims throughout the world on account of the holy places of Mecca and Medina on its territory and the organization of the annual pilgrimages.

What carries more weight, however, is that Saudi Arabia like no other country of the Islamic world is moulded by Islam and, in contrast to most other Islamic countries, sees to the strict observance of the shari'a. In his struggle against the growing influence of socialist and communist ideas in the Arab world, King Faisal deliberately employed Islam as a counterbalance⁸.

The endeavour of the third world countries to tread their own path independent of the Western-capitalistic and Eastern-socialist social orders has anew aroused the interest in Islam as an alternative to the alien ideologies. This trend of re-Islamization complies with Saudi foreign policy. Saudi Arabia has decisively contributed to the expansion of Islam, particularly in Africa, and its reanimation in the Islamic countries, as for instance in Pakistan. At the same time Saudi Arabia pursues in the third world under the banner of Islam a policy of containing Soviet influence. It is supporting countries which are trying to loosen their close connection with the Soviet Union, such as Somalia.

3.4 The Role of Economy in Saudi Foreign Policy

Since the rise of oil prices in 1973 Saudi Arabia has attained a foreign exchange position counting to the strongest among the financial powers in the world. Saudi Arabia's influence is based on the fact that it is able to exert considerable pressure

not only by curbing oil production but also by granting or withholding financial aid and loans.

Saudi Arabia is fully aware of its power. The oil boycott practiced during the October war has demonstrated the efficiency of the "oil weapon" and the readiness for its application. Since Saudi Arabian government did not hesitate to boycott even the United States it would the more be prepared to use it against the smaller states.

While the export of sufficient quantities of oil or its withholding serve as a means to bring pressure to bear on the Western industrial nations, the granting of financial aid and loans does particularly concern the smaller states in the area or the third world. The poorer countries of the third world, also including the states on the Red Sea, are hardly in a position to pay for essential imports without the help of foreign aid. Such states which urgently need financial aid from abroad can more easily be exposed to economic pressure and forced to politically good conduct than those which are relatively independent in financial respect. They can thus be kept in dependence.

Saudi Arabian foreign policy places greater emphasis on financial security than on ideological security through the Islam.

It may even be maintained that Saudi Arabia owes its political success in Africa and Asia first of all to its financial power. This statement is no less true for Saudi Arabian policy relating to the states on the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. The dominating influence of Saudi Arabia in the Northern Yemen would not have been conceivable without the financial grants and credits. Yemeni dependence on Saudi Arabia has grown so strong meanwhile that the budget and the current five-year plan, too, cannot be financed without the help of Saudi Arabia.

The heavy financial engagement of Saudi Arabia in the Yemen reveals its high interest in the interior and exterior orientation of the country. The readiness to pay for the American supply of arms valued at about US\$ 400 million in connection with border fighting with the Southern Yemen stresses this interest.

The reasons for the strong commitment in the Northern Yemen have already been referred to. Via the Northern Yemen, Saudi Arabia indirectly focuses its attention also on the Southern Yemen. Attempts to exercise controlling influence on the political orientation and economic situation by means of financial support have failed, however. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in spring 1977 there have apparently been talks on the granting of loans and on the construction of a crude pipeline from Saudi Arabia to the Indian Ocean. No doubt efforts were made to support the more moderate forces around President Salim Rubai Ali. After his fall in June 1978 all hope of gaining influence through economic aid had to be abandoned.

In contrast to the Southern Yemen, Saudi Arabia met with success in Somalia and managed to induce President Siad Barre to change fronts. Considerable grants on behalf of Saudi Arabia have of course contributed to this decision, but they have hardly turned the balance. The reconquest of Ogaden and the Soviet refusal for support on account of that policy might have been the true reason for Somalia's departure from the Soviet Union.

The differing results of Saudi Arabian policy in these three cases show that financial grants alone do not guarantee political success. Saudi Arabia can hope for a success of its policy in such countries where the governing power has not finally decided on its line of foreign policy or where there are forces strong enough to bring about a change of policy, if supported accordingly from abroad.

YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC

1. The Political System

Until September 1962 the Yemen was an absolute monarchy ruled by the Zaidi Imam who was the spiritual and temporal head in one person. In its political, social and economic development the country was decisively framed by the Imam Yahya (1904-48) who after the retreat of the Turks at the end of the first world war tried to turn the Yemen into a unitary and centralistic state.

After the revolution of September 26, 1962, a Republican regime was established under the leadership of Colonel Sallal. For the first time the Yemen obtained a constitution⁹. The social and economic policy of the new regime was guided by the socialism of Nasser who protected the state from the Royalists by sending an Egyptian expeditionary force. The long and extremely bloody civil war, however, prevented the implementation of fundamental reforms. Even after the withdrawal of the Egyptian troops as a result of Egypt's defeat in the war of June 1967, none of the two civil war parties was able to bring about a decision in its favour. Therefore, the Royalists and republicans entered into a compromise which terminated the war.

As a consequence of the agreement between the two civil war parties, the Royalist-oriented politicians and tribal chiefs returned to Sana'a and joined the government and the Consultative Council, the parliament, in 1970. Although the Republic was preserved, politics, after the leftist forces had already been excluded from government in 1967, was to an even greater degree controlled by the conservative elements.

Parliament in which the tribal chiefs possessed the majority of seats became the actual instrument of power of the tribes which thus were in a position to guide the policy of the central government in their sense. To a certain extent the conditions prevailing during the time before the revolution were restored, the only difference being the abolition of the Imamate which was replaced by the Republican system. This, in fact, was the very goal pursued by many opponents under the rule of the Imam.

2. Socio-political Determinants of Instability

Yemeni society bears some characteristic features which have been firmly established for centuries and have not yet lost their validity. The revolution, however, called the traditional order of values in question, but it did not succeed in rooting them out. Only in recent times, affected by economic influences, a more fundamental change can be perceived.

The population is divided into a Zaidi and a Shafi'i part¹⁰. While the tribes of the central plateau and the North belong to the Zaidi sect, the other parts of the population in the South and South-west pertain to the Shafi'i sect. Until the revolution the Zaidi tribes out of whose midst the Imam would be elected, dominated the other population parts. The Imam was the spiritual and temporal head of the Zaidis. The extension of his authority to the Shafi'i population has never been accepted by these. After the revolution this sharp difference has been removed, but the representatives of the Zaidi tribes of the North are still predominating in the state.

Through the revolution the privileges of the former aristocracy of the Saiyids who derived their privileges from their supposed descent from the prophet's family and who stood out

from the remaining population like a caste, have been considerably curtailed. Certain offices in the state like that of the Imam were reserved only to the Saiyids. By the equality of all citizens before the law, the Saiyids de jure lost their former prerogatives, but they are still held in high respect by large parts of the population¹¹.

A prominent characteristic of Yemeni society are the tribes whose members consider themselves as pure-blood Arabs and who, according to their descent, feel themselves superior to the remaining layers of the populations. Yemeni tribesmen are mostly sedentary and live in villages or village-like towns where they are engaged in farming.

Within the tribal territory there is a marked difference between the actual members of a tribe and those dependent upon them. The social characteristics of the underprivileged status are: lack of pure-blood descent (asil), nonadmissibility to military service and deprivation of voting rights¹². Certain trades like masonry, joinery and blacksmithing are reserved to the members of a tribe, while other trades which are despised by the tribesmen like that of a butcher, tanner, potter or barber would be performed by the dependents.

The tribes form relatively independent territories which they try to maintain against the central power, formerly the Imam, at the present time the central government in San'a. The loyalty of the individual members of a tribe first of all applies to the tribe. A national consciousness in the European sense does not exist. Therefore, the central government can rely on the support of the tribes only to an extent which does not harm their own interest. Basically the relation between the central government and the tribes is charac-

terized by rivalry and opposite interests.¹³ Thanks to the numerous warriors worthy to bear arms, the large tribal confederations are so strong that they are almost independent of the government. Until the present time the authority of the government is being questioned by the tribes.

On account of economic influences and changes the position of the tribes has undergone some alterations. Their independence has mainly been based on their economic self-sufficiency now being increasingly endangered by the consumption habits imported from abroad. The tribes are able to buy commodities which cannot be produced domestically like arms, ammunition, radio receivers and refrigerators only if they are in the possession of cash. Therefore, they have begun to intensify the cultivation of cash crops like qat. The resulting reduction in the production of wheat and further essentials, on the other hand, made the tribes dependent upon food imports mostly effected by the government. The growing dependence on food or direct financial grants from the government impairs the autonomy of the tribes. The central government can exert pressure on the tribes and keep them in dependence by granting or withholding financial or food assignments. In the long run the tribes will therefore fall into increasing economic and thus political dependence of the government.

3. The Interior Forces: The Central Government Between Tribal Interests and Demands of Progressive Groups for Reforms

The basic political problem in the Yemen is the antagonism between the central power on the one hand and the interests of the Zaidi tribes on the other hand. The Imam Yahya already sought in vain to solve this problem. However, he benefited by the fact that according to his position as an Imam, the

Zaidi tribes recognized him both as temporal and spiritual head and he thus enjoyed a high degree of authority and natural legitimacy.

Since the revolution and the abolition of monarchy the central government has been lacking this prerequisite. As the representatives of the tribes which in the majority fought on the side of the Imam have regained power in 1970, this traditional antagonism between the tribes and the central power again determines the interior situation.

President Iryani confined himself to bringing about a conciliation between the different interest groups by making compromises. This policy was first of all to the advantage of the tribes. The progressive forces in the country which had lost influence since the fall of Sallal in 1967 and even more so since the compromise between the Royalists and Republicans, were not satisfied with this development. The powerlessness of the central government did not only prevent any progress in the social and economic fields, but did also favour corruption and nepotism in state administration and finance. The public revenue was not invested in the urgently needed modernization of infrastructure, education and health, but was largely channelled to the tribes in order to make them refrain from interference with the government.

al-Hamdi who with the support of the military had assumed power in June 1974 tried to remedy the grievances. Up to a certain degree he represented the interests of the progressive groups in the country, the Nasserites, Socialists and Ba'thists as well as the liberal-minded circles. The prerequisite for the realization of the socio-political demands made by these groups was the strengthening of the central

power and the curtailing of tribal power. al-Hamdi seems to have pursued this goal with precedence.

With al-Hamdi for the first time since the revolution of 1962 the military seized power again. The army was the true support of the government. However, it was not independent of the ruling forces in society, but was its very image. The leading positions within the armed forces were filled with representatives of the major tribes. Therefore, the government could dispose of the armed forces only to a limited extent. al-Hamdi who had been carried to power by the prominent representatives of the tribes in the army now attempted to get rid of these officers by removing them from their positions and replacing them by progressive officers¹⁴. His intention was to develop the army to his actual power instrument with whose help he hoped to reach his aim of consolidating central power and suppressing tribal influence. At first he seemed to be successful with this method. But soon this policy inevitably drove al-Hamdi into conflict with the powerful tribal chiefs. The deposition of Sinan Abu Luhum, the tribal chief of the Bakil confederation, from his post as a governor of Hudaida as well as the dissolution of the Consultative Council and the resulting limitation of the influence of the first chief of the Hashid confederation, Abdallah al-Ahmar, as a chairman of the Consultative Council were definite measures in this direction.

By discriminating the most powerful men in the state, al-Hamdi had incurred their enmity and thus initiated his fall in October 1977¹⁵. al-Hamdi's failure can be attributed not least to the fact that he did not belong to a major tribe and accordingly had no dynastic power to support him in a critical phase. On the other hand, an exposed representative of just these

tribes, who would exert the influence necessary for the implementation of such measures, cannot be expected to pursue a policy of strengthening the central power which inevitably would be contrary to the interests of the tribes. Until now the army has not been in a position to pursue a policy against tribal interests.

The recovery of tribal influence since the death of al-Hamdi under his successor al-Ghashmi and in an even greater degree under the presidency of Salih since June 1978 has simultaneously increased the dissatisfaction of the forces opposing the regime and caused their solidarization. Particularly serious consequences have arisen from pushing al-Hamdi's followers into opposition which now was essentially strengthened and which represents a continual challenge and threat for the present government.

In 1978 the Ba'thists, Nasserites, Marxists and the followers of the former president al-Hamdi united in the National Democratic Front¹⁶. The dangerousness of this Front lies in its obviously close connections with the government in Aden with whom it harmonizes its strategy, as can be seen from the presence of representatives of the National Democratic Front at the party congress of the Yemen Socialist Party in Aden in October 1978.

The unimpaired strength of the tribes and the resultant weakness of the central government constitute a fundamental barrier to the country's development into a modern state. The economic boom of the last few years attributable to the relatively high incomes of the migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states urges the government to increase its activity in the socio-political field. The migrant workers who come into con-

tact with foreign customs take new ideas to their home country and together with the growing urban industrial proletariat and poor peasants demand more rights and an increased social commitment of the government, thus supporting the oppositional groups in the country.

In the long run the antagonism between the tribes and the central government will result in a decision in favour of the government. Considering the present distribution of power, one must reckon with further violent disputes which do not point to a consolidation of conditions in the foreseeable future. If the central government is to maintain itself against the tribes, it will be forced to unite with the liberal and progressive forces. It is therefore most probable that the progressive forces will succeed in extending their influence in the future.

4. External Orientation

In his endeavour to restore the Yemen within its historical boundaries, the Imam Yahya had found himself hindered in his expansionist drive. In the North King Abd al-Aziz of Saudi Arabia who also pursued an expansionist policy with the aim of uniting large parts of the Arabian peninsula, prevented the annexion of the provinces of Jizan, Asir and Najran which Yahya considered as belonging to the Yemen.

In the South the British colonial power thwarted the Imam's intention to conquer Aden and the adjacent regions. While the Imam came to an agreement with Saudi Arabia with whom the relationship developed in a peaceful way during the following years, the relationship with the British colonial power in the South turned out less favourable. Frequent frontier violations strained the relations between both sides.

These two neighbouring powers have influenced the foreign

policy, and to a great extent also the domestic policy of the Yemen until the present time. With the fall of the Imam in 1962 and the interference of foreign powers also other states became involved with Yemeni affairs. While the Royalists were supported by Saudi Arabia, the Republican regime was backed by Egypt which now gained an overriding influence in the Yemen. The engagement of Egypt and Saudi Arabia did not happen purely by accident, but was the result of the rivalry between King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and President Nasser of Egypt. Faisal feared that Nasser might attack him from the South via the Yemen. Saudi Arabian interests in the Yemen were not only restricted to the struggle against the Republican regime which it considered to be atheistic, they also included the repulsion of Egypt. In this way the Yemen was for the first time drawn into international conflicts.

Egypt's defeat in the war of June 1967 also made the position of Egyptian troops in the Yemen untenable. After Nasser and Faisal had agreed upon withholding their support from the respective sides in autumn 1967, the Egyptian troops withdrew until the beginning of 1968. When in spring 1970 the civil war definitely came to an end and the Royalists, after having entered into a compromise with the Republicans, returned to San'a and were admitted to the government and parliament, Saudi Arabia, with the help of the Royalist-oriented tribes, was able to gain paramount influence.

Since that time Saudi Arabia has exerted a dominating influence in the Yemen. But its position is not unchallenged. Since 1967 when the British granted independence to their colony and delegated power to the National Liberation Front, the Yemen has again been exposed to the pressure from the South. After its seizure of power in 1969, the left-extremist

Marxist wing in Aden took pains to extend its influence to the North as well. The compromise between the Republicans and Royalists of spring 1970 was condemned by the Southern Yemeni government as a betrayal to the revolution of 1962. Since then the relations between the two states have deteriorated drastically.

The relations with the two neighbouring countries are characterized by other factors, too. The friendly relationship with Saudi Arabia is not least a result of the close economic ties and the employment of more than one million migrant workers in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states whose remittances contribute to the positive balance of payment of the Yemen¹⁷. A severe strain on San'a's relations with the Saudi government would possibly impair the economic ties as well which the government in San'a would hardly be able to cope with.

The financial grants and loans from Saudi Arabia which are of course a means of exercising influence, also bind the Yemen to Saudi Arabia and cannot be given up without incurring serious economic difficulties¹⁸.

The relations with the Southern Yemen, on the other hand, are strained by the large number of refugees from the South. These are not only hostile to the Southern Yemen, but also unite in militant liberation fronts aiming at the overthrow of the regime in Aden. On account of their border violations and acts of sabotage they represent a constant element of unrest and danger.

The disagreement between the Northern and the Southern Yemen is also a result of the opposite ideological orientation, i.e. the one-sided orientation of the Southern Yemeni government towards Marxism-Leninism. The traditional leading classes in the North who in the case of a victory of the ideology propagated by Aden would have to reckon with the loss of their political influence, are the natural enemies of the political system in the Southern Yemen. It is also for this reason that

they seek the support of the powerful neighbour in the North to whom they are connected not only for financial but also for ideological reasons.

A similar attitude is displayed by the Northern Yemen in the international sphere. It definitely counts itself to the Western camp and pursues a clearly pro-American policy. In recent times the Americans have recognized the growing importance of the Yemen for the security of Saudi Arabia and the oil supply and have acted accordingly.

The interior opposition which cooperates with the Southern Yemen sees one of its major goals in the abolition of Saudi predominance in the Yemen. A victory of the leftist opposition would also result in a change of foreign policy. Most probably the Yemen would then terminate the current one-sided orientation towards the West and assume a neutral attitude, if not a pro-Communist, in the case of a close collaboration with the Southern Yemen.

5. The Unity of the Yemen - Tactical or Strategic Goal

The unity of the two Yemens, of the Northern and the Southern Yemen, is an important factor in Yemeni policy. The Imam Yahya already laid claim to the Southern Yemen occupied by Britain. After attaining independence the way was paved for a unification of the two Yemens. But now the National Liberation Front which had come to power rejected a unification with the Northern Yemen since, according to its view, the Northern Yemen had betrayed the revolution of 1962 by the deposition of Sallal and the progressive forces in 1967. When in spring 1970 the Republicans and Royalists entered into a compromise the relations deteriorated even more. A unification of both Yemens hardly seemed to be still within reach. Nevertheless a treaty

on the unification of the Yemen was concluded in 1972 after it had come to armed conflicts on the common border. The treaty, however, remained without consequences. It was al-Hamdi who again took the initiative in the question of unification. He apparently expected a strengthening of his own power from a unification with the Southern Yemen which could have enabled him to decide the struggle with the tribes in favour of the central government. Furthermore, the heavier weight of a unified Yemen would have increased al-Hamdi's independence of Saudi Arabia. His assassination immediately before his planned visit to Aden might also be seen in connection with his policy towards the Southern Yemen. The union of the Yemen which in principle is supported by the whole Yemeni people thus cannot be regarded as a merely national problem of the unification of two states. In the North the unification would help the progressive forces to gain predominance and force the conservative tribes onto the defensive against the central government. A unified Yemen would not only weaken the influence of Saudi Arabia, but also - much to the anxiety of the government in Riyadh - establish a progressive regime at its Southern flank which by the many migrant workers in Saudi Arabia would exert a considerable influence and thus could endanger the existence of monarchy. Consequently Saudi Arabia cannot be interested in a unification of the Yemens.

President Salih's policy concerning the unification with the Southern Yemen which led to the conclusion of a treaty with Isma'il, the head of state of South Yemen, in April 1979 therefore does not appear quite clear.

In the event of a unification, provided Salih does not seek it only for tactical reasons, the government seems to expect a repulsion of the radical Marxist forces in the

Southern Yemen and an extension of Northern Yemeni influence in the South. In this connection the consideration that the more than six million Northern Yemenis might easily dominate the 1.7 million Southern Yemenis could have played a certain role. However, it is more probable that, if the event arises, the strictly organized cadres and militias of the South would impose their policy upon the poorly organized forces in the North.

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

1. The Domestic Situation

1.1 Power Consolidation of the National Front

On November 30th, 1967, the Southern Yemen became independent after 128 years of British colonial rule. The British delegated power to the National Liberation Front (NLF) which had consistently fought against colonial rule and eliminated other rivalling resistance groups like FLOSY.

Under the leadership of Qahtan ash-Sha'bi the government headed for a moderate socialism encompassing the nationalization of large estates, of sizable domestic and foreign economic enterprises and of banking and insurance institutions.

These measures proved too moderate for the leftist wing of the Party. Under the lead of Abd al-Fattah Isma'il it assumed power in June 1969 and announced its intention for a consequent continuation of the national democratic revolution of scientific socialism. Gradually the socialist transformation of the state, economy and society was initiated. The primary objective was the destruction of the state machinery and its supporting social and political forces. The property of the local bourgeoisie and the big landowners was confiscated. The tribal chiefs, as far as they had not fled or were killed during the civil war, were deprived of power.

The people were to be mobilized with the help of the mass organizations such as the trade unions, youth and women federations and cooperative movements. The trade unions which had already played an important part under British rule, but had been infiltrated by FLOSY, were purged.

Finally, also the armed forces were thoroughly purged since they had passed through the British school, especially the officers, and were therefore considered as little reliable. As a counterweight to the army, the People's Militia consisting of workers, peasants and students was created. By means of a steady indoctrination the armed forces were to be re-educated politically. While the armed forces are put under the command of the President, the People's Militia is directly assigned to the Party leadership. The People's Militia is regarded as absolutely dependable as was proved by the unsuccessful putsch of Salim Rubai Ali in 1978.

The radical transformation of the state along socialist lines and the close ties to the Soviet Union were opposed by President Salim Rubai Ali. Ali had the support of the armed forces and the tribes in the fifth and sixth governorates and enjoyed a relatively strong position. He seems to have hindered Isma'il in implementing his radical political aims. Within the Party, however, he does not seem to have had controlling influence. On June 25th, 1978, he attempted to seize power by a coup d'état, but he failed and was shot dead.

With the fall of Ali the opposition within the Party appears to have been silenced and the position of Isma'il and the Marxist group in the Party threatened for the near future. The tribes no longer constituting a powerful factor and the traditional leadership being deprived of its authority, the Yemeni Socialist Party represents the unquestioned political force in the country today and is able to realize its aims without hindrance. After Isma'il had been elected Secretary General of the newly formed Yemeni Socialist Party in October and President of State in December 1978, he combined the most important offices in the state.

1.2 The Political System

According to the constitution adopted in 1970 the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), as the country has been called since 1971, is a people's democracy whose authority originates with the working class. Power in the state is exercised by the revolutionary party, the National Liberation Front, which was renamed in October 1978 into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). The state and the government are organized according to the principles of democratic centralism. The supreme constitutional and legislative body is the Higher People's Council (HPC) comprising 111 members. Out of its midst the eleven-men Presidential Council (PC) inclusive of its chairman who practically performs the function of the head of state, is elected. The PC, itself forming part of the HPC and being responsible to it, constitutes the actual power centre of the state. It nominates the prime minister and the ministers, enacts laws after the HPC's approval and represents the state towards foreign countries.

1.3 The Role of the Party

The most important instrument in the implementation of political goals is the unity party which has developed from a rather nationalistically-oriented resistance movement in colonial times into a Marxist unity party. Already at the fourth party congress in March 1968, the Marxist wing of the NLF succeeded in gaining the majority, but it was only in June 1969 that it assumed power in the state.

In October 1975 the ruling NLF had merged with two smaller progressive parties: the People's Vanguard, which had connections with the Ba'th Party and the People's Democratic Union,

the Communist party of South Yemen. The new united national front was named "United Political Organization National Front"(UPONF).

The UPONF united all progressive forces which was of utmost importance in view of the relatively narrow base of the NLF in the population and the threat for the regime emanating from foreign powers. The real aim was the amalgamation of these three parties into one. However, a moderate wing within the NLF, headed by President Salim Rubai Ali, opposed this scheme. Only after his elimination in June 1978 the way was open to converting the UPONF into the Yemeni Socialist Party in October 1978.

The YSP is the only officially authorized party. It is supported by the workers, peasants, petty bourgeois and revolutionary intelligentsia and considers itself as a vanguard in the transformation of the state, economy and society into a socialist order on the basis of Marxism-Leninism¹⁹.

The ideological foundation of the YSP, in accordance with the UPONF and the NLF, is Marxism-Leninism or scientific socialism as it is called in the official terminology. The principles of the Party and its internal organization are based on democratic centralism, collective leadership, continual purge from all non-revolutionary elements, prohibition of group formation, open discussion, criticism and self-criticism²⁰.

2. Aspects of the Economic and Social Policy

The policy of socialization pursued by the government of the NLF caused the traders and small entrepreneurs to leave the country. Through the withdrawal of the British and the slowing down of the port activities resulting from the clos-

ure of the Suez Canal after the war of June, 1967, many workers had lost employment. Some 80 000 skilled and unskilled workers left the country. As a consequence, economic activity and the revenue of the state declined sharply. It took the country a long time to recover. The PDRY, as well as the Northern Yemen, counts among the poorest countries of the world.

Most evident are the government's achievements in the social field. The building of hospitals and medical stations, also in rural areas, considerably helped improve medical care. It cannot be denied that thanks to the income policy the living standard of the poorest rose and extreme poverty was relieved. The supply of the population with commodities of vital necessity is ensured.

Greatest endeavours have been undertaken on the educational sector, too. In the current five-year plan (1975-79) 10 per cent of total investments are earmarked for education. While in 1967 90 per cent of the population still were illiterates, illiteracy shall almost be rooted out by the end of the five-year plan²¹.

The success on the social sector constitutes an asset for the government that does not fail to have effect on the population. Of even greater importance is the fact that the population of the Northern Yemen, too, at least in the Southern parts of the country where relations with the Southern Yemen are closer, anyhow, have recognized the advantages of the educational system and health service as well as of other achievements in the social field. For the sake of Southern Yemeni unification policy this factor must not be underrated.

3. Foreign Policy Orientation

3.1 The Basic Ideological Orientation: Proletarian Internationalism

The consistent application of Marxism-Leninism in Southern Yemeni politics is most obvious in foreign policy. The principles of Southern Yemeni foreign policy are the proletarian internationalism and the international solidarity which concretely means the cooperation with the Socialist camp, especially with the Soviet Union and liberation movements throughout the world²².

According to Isma'il these principles shall be applied consistently without admitting any concessions. His unyielding attitude seems to have been one of the reasons for the antagonism between the two wings within the party headed by Isma'il and Salim Rubai Ali, respectively²³. In this respect the elimination of Ali signifies that Southern Yemeni politics will run on straighter lines in future. In order to understand Southern Yemeni foreign policy correctly, these principles must duly be taken into consideration. They are the key to the appreciation of Aden's foreign policy which fundamentally differs from that pursued by the other Arab nations.

3.2 The Special Position of the Southern Yemen in the Arab Region

The principle of proletarian internationalism implies that the internationalistic class-related interests have priority over national interests. This means that in case of doubt the Southern Yemen will decide in favour of the allied classes and, if necessary, make a stand against the Arab interests. The class interests rank higher than Arab inter-

ests. In this the Southern Yemen differs fundamentally from all other progressive Arab states, particularly from those based on the Ba'th ideology like Syria and Iraq. These states value the national Arab interests highest, in case of doubt they plead the Arab cause.

The relations of the Southern Yemen with its Arab neighbours are likewise characterized by this basic ideological attitude. Relatively friendly relations are being maintained with the progressive states, especially Iraq, Syria, Algeria and Libya. However, the relationship with these nations is by no means unmarred, as is disclosed by the deterioration of relations with Iraq in spring 1979. There exists, for example, disagreement in the question of relations with Somalia or Eritrea. Iraq and Syria clearly side with Eritrea and Somalia because these, as Arab nations, are threatened by a non-Arab power and therefore must be supported. Furthermore, Iraq blames the Southern Yemen for having brought the Ba'th party into line with the YSP by their amalgamation. On the other hand, the Southern Yemen criticizes the pursuit of the Communist Party in Iraq.

While the connections with the progressive states are developing relatively favourably, the relations with the conservative and pro-Western countries encounter certain difficulties. In principle, cooperation with these states is based on peaceful co-existence, respect of national sovereignty and non-interference with domestic affairs, provided that the opposite side also observes these principles.²⁴

The relationship with Saudi Arabia is to be considered under this aspect, too. The establishment of diplomatic relations in March 1978 seemed to mark a turning point in

the relationship between both countries. As a matter of fact, however, this rapprochement was attributable to the strengthened position of President Salim Rubai Ali who favoured a foreign policy opening towards the conservative oil producing countries on the Arabian Peninsula. This policy was also based on economic aspects. The hoped-for credits which were urgently needed for the Southern Yemeni economy could only be obtained by a more moderate policy towards these states.

Isma'il on the other hand rejected such a policy. He feared that large credits in particular might lead to economic dependence and a renewal of colonialism. Moreover, he saw the threat of a possible loosening of the close ties to the Soviet Union which Ali actually tried to achieve since he refused to accept too one-sided a dependence upon the Soviet Union and rather sought the support of the People's Republic of China.

Ali's elimination in June 1978 has set an end to the experiment of a rapprochement to the conservative states of the Arab world, after the relations with Saudi Arabia had already cooled down and its financial aid stopped on account of the Southern Yemeni engagement in Ethiopia.

3.3 The Southern Yemeni Role on the Horn of Africa

The special role which the Southern Yemen plays on the Horn of Africa and which collides with the interests of Arab politics can be understood only when taking the basic principles of foreign policy into consideration. For years the Southern Yemeni government had supported the Eritrea Front in its struggle for independence of Ethiopia. However, when the government of Mengistu Haile Mariam changed over to the side of the Soviet Union and established a "progressive" regime, the Southern Yemeni leadership also changed sides.²⁵ As class.

class interests are rated superior to national interests, the Ethiopian regime was backed now, because it represented a more progressive stage of development and, which was even more important, because it was an ally of the Soviet Union. The attitude towards Somalia can be explained similarly.

On account of its attitude in the war between Ethiopia and the Eritrea Front, the Southern Yemeni government became increasingly isolated from the Arab world which condemned this point of view as a betrayal of the Arab cause.

The fact that Aden, despite sharp criticism from the Arab camp and particularly from the progressive Ba'th Parties in Syria and Iraq, has not deviated from its course, reveals the reliability of the PDRY as an ally of the Soviet Union. While Iraq and Syria which also maintain friendly relations with the Soviet Union eventually pursue their own interests, if necessary even against the Soviet Union, as disclosed by recent developments in Iraqi-Soviet relations, the PDRY strictly adheres to the principles of proletarian internationalism. The Southern Yemeni reliability is of the utmost consequence for the strategical aims of the Soviet Union in the area. In addition to the fact that, together with Ethiopia and the PDRY, it controls the important straits of Bab al-Mandab through which a large part of the oil deliveries from the Gulf to Europe are shipped, it can also plan the consolidation and expansion of its influence in the area on a long-term basis. The PDRY is excellently suited as a starting point for a possible extension of Soviet influence on the Arabian peninsula and the Gulf states which are of chief strategical importance in view of their oil reserves.

3.4 The Significance of Yemeni Unification in Aden's Foreign Policy Planning

The question of Yemeni unification plays a central part in Aden's foreign policy. The inhabitants of the South are just as much in favour of the unity as the people of the North are. However, Isma'il has repeatedly pointed out that the unification can be effected only in accordance with the foreign policy principles, which implies that he does not strive for unity simply for the sake of unity but that he would accept it only within the framework of a "democratic" all-Yemen. In his view, unification would involve the extension of the Southern Yemeni political order to the North as well.

For the Southern Yemeni government the realization of this aim is subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions, like the continuation or completion of the national democratic revolution which started in 1962 but was betrayed later, especially after the return of the Royalists in 1970. As would be expected, the Southern Yemeni regime, in harmony with its principles, supports the progressive forces in the North in order to help a democratic government come to power. The cooperation with the progressive forces united in the National Democratic Front indirectly enables the Southern Yemen, via the devious way of the unification, to work for the extension of its own political system to the North. This explains the high interest of the South in a unification with the North. The party congress of the YSP in October 1978 states the unity of the Yemen as one of the chief strategical aims of the party's policy.

The expansion of the Southern Yemeni political influence to the Northern Yemen would have far-reaching consequences for

the political development on the Arabian peninsula. The Northern Yemen could be the starting point for infiltrating the Northern neighbour, Saudi Arabia. Migrant labour might play a significant role in this connection.

The Importance of the Three Neighbouring States on the Arabian Peninsula for the Security and Stability of the Red Sea Area

The security and stability of the Red Sea area is directly connected with the stability of the individual states belonging to the area. While the nations on the African side of the Red Sea, namely Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia (inclusive of Eritrea), Djibouti and Somalia, are extremely heterogeneous, the three states on the Arabian peninsula are forming a relatively homogeneous bloc, since Saudi Arabia, North Yemen and South Yemen in some respect constitute a uniform structure as concerns their ethnic composition, their language, religion and culture, though there are certain differences between the all-Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

This uniformity, however, is being jeopardized by Southern Yemeni politics. By means of the initiated transformation of the economy, state and society on the basis of scientific socialism, the government of the Southern Yemen has introduced a novel social system differing fundamentally from the traditional order in North Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The mere existence of this system represents a challenge both for the Northern Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Even though the said system has not yet proved its superiority to the traditional systems, it has effected the establishment of a militant regime in the EDRY on the basis of a strictly organized party which, on its part, is seeking the contact to the masses. The regime's resolution to spread its social system to the adjacent area represents the true danger for the two neighbouring countries. The alliance between the PDRY and the Eastern world power - a logical consequence of the social orientation - lends the expansionist drive of this state a

strategical dimension.

In contrast to the PDRY, Saudi Arabia's policy aims at consolidating the traditional social order on the ideological foundation of Islam and at simultaneously achieving a close cooperation with the leading power in the West. Saudi Arabia, too, is attempting to export its "ideology", that is to say Islam.

In addition to the opposite political systems in Saudi Arabia and the PDRY, extremely militant and extremist representatives of both systems are opposed to each other. The diametrically opposed social systems and ideologies represent a potential source of conflict and danger to be taken extraordinarily seriously.

A particular characteristic of this latent conflict is the situation of the Northern Yemen as a buffer state between the two countries. This peculiarity of the Northern Yemen concerning the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the PDRY is only due to its extremely unstable condition both in respect to the interior situation and the exterior ties. It is true, the traditional social system, namely the tribal system, is still determining interior affairs in the Northern Yemen, but it is not the decisive factor in the transformation already underway into a modern national state with a strong central government.

Since the revolution of 1962 other forces have come to the fore and, encouraged by the example of the Southern Yemen, are trying to bring about a change of present structures. The internal antagonism is also reflected by the foreign policy orientation. While the ruling classes orientate themselves by Saudi Arabia and feel themselves connected with it

and thus also with the West, the opposing progressive forces tend to the PDRY.

The domestic instability of the Northern Yemen is not least a consequence of the Saudi-Southern Yemeni conflict and the efforts of both states to influence the political development of the Yemen in their respective directions. Although Saudi Arabia is in a strong position and exercises a controlling influence, not least thanks to its enormous financial aid, the PDRY is persistently trying to repress Saudi ascendancy. In this respect the striving for unity of all Yemenis supports the intentions of the PDRY. A unification of the Yemen would undoubtedly strengthen Southern Yemeni influence to the disadvantage of Saudi Arabia.

The ideological antagonism between Saudi Arabia and the PDRY and the endeavours of both countries to exert influence on the Northern Yemen have put the three states on the east side of the Red Sea in a condition of utmost instability. This instability will last as long as the conflict will not be decided in favour of one of the two parties. In this, the outcome of the conflict in the Yemen (North) will be of the greatest consequence for the development on the Arabian peninsula. A compromise between the two social orders seems to be the most probable result of this evolution. A victory of the true Marxist system in the PDRY is as unlikely as the retention in its present form of the social and political orders existing in the Northern Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

The three states on the Arabian peninsula as a whole constitute a zone of conflict also affecting the Red Sea area, which, on its part, leads to an interactive relation. In this connection the development in Ethiopia plays a decisive

part. Both the Ethiopian and the Southern Yemeni systems support each other mutually and thus extend the conflict potential emanating from them. If these two states succeed in further strengthening their position, unrest in this area will most probably increase in the future. Since especially after the elimination of Salim Rubai Ali in June 1978 and the consolidation of authority a change of power is unlikely to happen, an expansion of the influence of the Marxist pro-Eastern states in this area must be reckoned with.

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