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Importing the Revolution: Institutional change and the Egyptian presence in Yemen 1962-1967[1]

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Abstract

Between 1962 and 1967, Egypt launched a large-scale military intervention to support the government of the newly formed Yemen Arab Republic. Some 70,000 Egyptian military personnel and hundreds of civilian advisors were deployed with the stated aim to 'modernize Yemeni institutions' and 'bring Yemen out of the Middle Ages.' This article tells the story of this significant top-down and externally-driven transformation, focusing on changes in the military and formal government administration in the Yemen Arab Republic and drawing on hitherto unavailable Egyptian archival material. Highlighting both the significant ambiguity in the Egyptian state-building project itself, as well as the unintended consequences that ensued as Egyptian plans collided with existing power structures; it traces the impact of Egyptian intervention on new state institutions, their modes of functioning, and the articulation of these 'modern' institutions, particularly the military and new central ministries, with established tribal and village-based power structures.

1. Introduction

On the night of 26 September 1962, a column of T-34 tanks trundled through the streets of Sana‘a and surrounded the palace of the new Imam of Yemen, Muḥammad al-Badr,[2] who had succeeded his father Imam ’Aḥmad (r.1948-62) only one week earlier. Opening fire shortly before midnight, the Yemeni Free Officers announced the '26 September Revolution' on Radio Sana‘a and declared the formation of a new state: the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).

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[1] Special thanks go to Christopher Cramer, Charles Tripp, Gerasimos Tsourapas and two anonymous reviewers for invaluable comments and feedback.

[2] Transcription of Arabic terms follows IJMES. However, commonly transliterated terms and names of people and places are rendered without diacritical marks and/or according to commonly-used spellings for ease of reading (e.g. Imam not ’Imām, Sana‘a not Ṣan‘ā’, Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser not Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir, etc.).

Drawing on support from a domestic coalition of military officers, ‘Aden-based traders and trade-unionists, reformist Imamate officials, and tribal leaders the Imam had antagonised, the revolution was also supported by ‘Abd al-Nasser’s Egypt, which had encouraged plots against the Imam and supported opposition to his rule since the 1950s.[3] Once the formation of the YAR had been declared, Egypt rapidly deployed troops and experts to Yemen.

Within little more than a week after the overthrow of the Imam, 3,000 Egyptian soldiers had arrived in Yemen. After three months, there were 15,000, flanked by growing numbers of civilian advisors. One year after the Imam was overthrown, some 50,000 Egyptian soldiers and 300 civilian advisors were in Yemen, that is one Egyptian soldier for every 100 Yemenis and one advisor for every 10 Yemeni civil servants.[4] The Egyptian military presence continued to grow to reach 70,000 soldiers and an extensive intelligence apparatus by the summer of 1965, supported by up to 400 civilian advisors, including managers, experts and teachers, before it ended in the autumn of 1967, after Egypt’s defeat in the Six-Day War. Between 1962 and 1967, Egyptian experts in Yemen were engaged in everything from building and running ministries and hospitals, to teaching students, from overseeing road construction, to reconfiguring local administration.[5] They explicitly touted Egyptian models—within a short time, Egyptian officers trained thousands of Yemeni volunteer soldiers and conscripts according to Egyptian manuals, teachers introduced the Egyptian

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[3] Owen Sirrs, *A History of the Egyptian Intelligence Service. A History of the Mukhabarat 1910-2009* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 22; Fatḥī al-Dīb. *’Abd al-Nāṣir wa Ḥarakat al-Taḥarur al-Yamanī* (Cairo: Dār al-Mustaqbal al-’Arabī lil-Nashr, 1998).

[4] Yemen’s estimated population was 5 million, civil service rolls were between 2,000-4,000 in 1963, though numbers differ: PAAA, AV Neues Amt 12337, IBRD report: The economic development of the Yemen Arab Republic, 1970, 1, Annex 1: 3-4; Mohamed El-Azzazi, *Die Entwicklung der Arabischen Republik Jemen: Sozio-politische Grundlagen der Administration* (Tübingen: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1978), 119–21.

[5] Edgar O’Ballance, *The War in the Yemen* (London: Faber, 1971), 66.

curriculum in schools, and experts re-organised ministries according to the organigrammes of their Egyptian counterparts.

Surprisingly little has been written about this significant top-down and externally-driven transformation, perhaps the most dramatic of Egypt's extensive efforts at promoting revolution and regime-change across the Arab world during the Nasserist era. Despite the unparalleled scope of the Egyptian deployment in Yemen, the commanding importance of Egyptian officers and secondees in Yemeni politics, and the centrality of the Yemen debacle for Egyptian regional and domestic politics of the 1960s, "little research has been conducted on seconded Egyptians' involvement in Yemen throughout this period."[6] This is true both of Egyptian historiography, which, when it has discussed the Egyptian presence in Yemen, has generally focused on military issues and Saudi-Egyptian summit diplomacy,[7] and of writing on Yemen itself.[8] To address this relative blind-spot, the chapter draws on hitherto

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[6] Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Nasser's Educators and Agitators across Al-Watan Al-'Arabi: Tracing the Foreign Policy Importance of Egyptian Regional Migration," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2016), 338. One notable exception is: El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*.

[7] 'Aḥmad Yūsuf 'Aḥmad, *Al-Dawr al-Maṣrī fī al-Yaman: 1962-1967* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Maṣriyyah al-'Āmah lil-Kitāb, 1981); 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Bayḍanī, *Maṣr wa Thawrat al-Yaman* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1993); A Dawisha, "Intervention in the Yemen: An Analysis of Egyptian Perceptions and Policies," *The Middle East Journal* 29, no. 1 (1975): 47–63; Ali A. Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy in the Arab World. Intervention in Yemen 1962-1967 Case Study* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1983); Saeed Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen: 1962-1970* (Boulder: Westview, 1986). A partial recent exception is Ferris well-researched *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2012), despite its strong focus on military history.

[8] What treatments there are tend to largely dismiss the Egyptian-led statebuilding of the 1960s: John Peterson, *Yemen: The Search for a Modern State* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 137; John Peterson, "Nation Building and National Development in the Two Yemens," in *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background*, ed. B. R. Pridham (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1984), 85–101; Robert Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic: The Politics of Development 1962-1986* (Croom Helm: Westview, 1987). Others gloss over specific institutional changes and their impact, e.g. Mohammed Zabarah, *Yemen: Traditionalism vs. Modernity* (New York: Praeger, 1982); or take a legalistic and hagiographic view of the same process: Ahmed al-Abiadh, "Modernisation of Government Institutions 1962-9," in *Contemporary Yemen*, 147–53; Maḥmūd 'Adil 'Aḥmad, *Dhikrayāt Ḥarb Al-Yaman 1962-1967* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-'Ikhwah, 1992); Mohammed Zabarah, "The Yemeni Revolution of 1962 Seen as a Social Revolution," in *Contemporary Yemen*, 76–84; Muḥammad 'Ibrahīm al- Ḥalwah, "Al-Tahdith al-Siyasī fī al-Yaman al-Shamālī," in *Thawrat 26*

unexplored documents from the Egyptian National Archives (ENA). As recently as 2012, Jesse Ferris identified "the closure of the relevant Egyptian archives to researchers," as a major obstacle;[9] and the consulted documents provide a far more granular perspective on Egypt's presence in Yemen than hitherto available.[10] The chapter also draws on interviews, memoirs, journalistic accounts of the war, and other archival material.[11]

The chapter proceeds in three sections. In section two, it lays-out the models and interests at play in Egyptian state-building[12] in Yemen. It highlights the simultaneous existence in Egyptian plans of ostensibly neutral, technocratic and developmentalist objectives, with a desire for political control and to recoup sunk costs. Section three then examines the impact of the Egyptian intervention on the YAR military, while section four explores its impact on public administration. Both sections three and four highlight the ways in which (contradictory) Egyptian plans collided in practice with existing, Imamate-era, military and administrative institutions and power structures in Yemen and trace how this collision shaped the emerging institutions in decisive ways. The result was a politically activist officer corps heading a weak military closely interwoven with tribal lines of identification, on the one

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Sibtimbir: Dirasāt wa Shahadāt lil-Tārīkh: Al-Kitāb al-Thānī (Sana'a: Markaz al-Dirasāt wa al-Buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1987), 95–129.

[9] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 17.

[10] Nonetheless, records of the Egyptian presidency and military appear to remain off-limits to researchers and not all relevant papers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appear accessible.

[11] In particular, the chapter draws on German archival material. The Federal Republic of Germany was, with Italy, the only Western country to have diplomats present in Yemen throughout the civil war period.

[12] The term state-building is something of an anachronism for a process contemporary participants conceptualised as 'modernisation' (compare section 2). However, the project clearly exhibited the characteristics of what has been called state-building since the end of the Cold War: an externally-led effort to export a model of Weberian statehood with a strong emphasis on central institutions. Using the state-building label may also help to unearth a largely missing genealogy of contemporary state-building in colonial and post-colonial 'modernisation.' David Chandler, *International Statebuilding: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 143-145.

hand, and a public administration structured around external rents and their allocation on the other. As such, the chapter argues that although the outcomes did not resemble the blueprints, this period of contested top-down change decisively shaped Yemeni institutions in ways not adequately reflected in current scholarship.

2. State-Building and the Egyptian Model on offer

Before going further, it is worth exploring, briefly, the 'model' that Egyptian state-building exported and how it was shaped by the regional and domestic context in which both its 'export' from Egypt and its 'import' to Yemen took place. The discussion highlights that the reforms spearheaded by the Egyptian military and civilian presence were animated by a particular vision for Yemen, shaped by historically contingent and contested discourses about the functions of states and the boundaries between 'state' and 'society.'[13] The Egyptian project in the YAR was coded both in technocratic terms as a universalist modernising project and in terms of the Nasserist political lexicon as a progressive political endeavour 'against imperialism and reaction.' At the same time, Egyptian policy towards Yemen developed ad-hoc in response to conflict within the Egyptian regime, mission creep, and increasing fiscal pressures. The Egyptian model on offer exhibited contradictory elements: it was both an ideological vision for Yemen as well as a self-interested hegemony—a project for strengthening the Yemeni military and keeping it under control, for creating strong, autonomous institutions and preventing their independence.

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[13] On 20th century imaginations of the state more generally see: Bob Jessop, "Bringing the State Back In (Yet Again): Reviews, Revisions, Rejections, and Redirections," *International Review of Sociology* 11, no. 2 (2001): 149–73; Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). These understandings of the state inform the subsequent discussion.

For the most part, the Egyptian papers frame state-building in Yemen as a technocratic and universalist undertaking: Egyptian experts were charged by their government with combating 'ignorance and backwardness,' "raising the level of administration in Yemen,"[14] developing strong institutions, and taking "Yemen out of the Middle Ages."[15] In a context where rival Cold War blocs advanced competing, but structurally similar versions of modernization theory, central planning, and 'high modernism' as the preferred modes of development,[16] Egyptian experts offered modernity in the ostensibly neutral guise of armies with ranks and uniforms that marched in step, and centralised bureaucracies that followed procedures and produced statistics. In line with these aims, it is clear from the Egyptian archives that the Foreign Ministry took care in selecting secondees with specific required skills, qualifications, and experience.[17]

Yet, the modernity on offer was recognisably Egyptian, since "Nasser envisioned a Yemeni state that would be controlled from Cairo and would mirror the United Arab Republic in many aspects from its constitution to the format of its postal stamps."[18] In this sense, elements of the Egyptian project coded as political tracked domestic Egyptian and regional conflicts or touched upon points of contention between rival Cold War blocs. Nasser's attempts domestically to eliminate an autonomous bourgeoisie and the creation of the Arab

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[14] ENA, 0078-044113, 19.08.1966.

[15] ENA, 0078-044109, 21.10.1967.

[16] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[17] E.g. ENA, 0078-044112, no date. This vision fit the aspirations of leading Yemeni republicans, for whom 'Aden and Cairo were common foils for critiques of Yemeni 'backwardness.' E.g. Mohsin Alaini, *50 Years in Shifting Sands: Personal Experience in the Building of a Modern State in Yemen*, ed. Ghassan Ghosn, trans. Hassan al-Haifi (Beirut: Dar an-Nahar, 2004), 22, 33.

[18] Asher A. Orkaby, "The International History of the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1968" (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University 2014), 11.

Socialist Union in parallel to the state bureaucracy, were echoed in inconsistently-pursued policies against traditional elites in Yemen[19] and a brief and unsuccessful attempt to create a single party under President al-Sallāl.[20] Egyptian nationalisation policies were echoed in the creation of joint Egyptian-Yemeni public enterprises, dominated by their Egyptian parent companies.[21] Yet, although Egyptian officials in Yemen, from Nasser down, consistently appealed to Arab nationalism and the struggle against 'imperialism and reaction,'[22] and the goal of driving the British from 'Aden enjoyed widespread support in north Yemen,[23] the Egyptians were never able to establish a monopoly on the language of Arab nationalism. The Egyptian documents highlight a persistent fear that the Ba'thists and Qawmiyin were ideologically ascendant and plotting against them.[24]

Other Egyptian policies in Yemen appear animated by more prosaic concerns. The hope of defusing internal disagreements between Nasser and 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amer[25] and of compensating on the international stage for the ignominious break-up of the United Arab

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[19] On Republican attitudes towards the sādah and civil war era policies against sayyid families see: Gabriele Vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory and Morality in Yemen. Ruling Families in Transition* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2005), esp. 58-61; see also footnote 80 below.

[20] 'Aḥmad, *Dhikrayāt*, 359–60.

[21] Leading Yemeni republicans rejected statist economic policies: Robert Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic* (Boulder: Westview, 1978), 237. In this sense, Lisa Wedeen's aside that the Egyptian intervention was arguably the strongest influence not only on state institutions but on expectations of what the state is and should be perhaps needs qualification: *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 179.

[22] Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy*, 89. In this, it fit with the broader Egyptian policy of secondment as a tool of foreign policy. Tsourapas, "Nasser's Educators," 328, 330; Sheikha Misnad, *The Development of Modern Education in the Gulf* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), 91.

[23] Compare the stories related by British mercenaries in: Orkaby, *The International History*, 272.

[24] I.a. ENA 0078-044111 29.08.1968.

[25] Muḥammad Farīd Hajjāj, *Ziyārah bil 'Amr 'ilā Mamlakat Bilqīs: Maṣr wa Thawrat al-Yaman 'aām 1962-1967* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 2014), esp. 98-102; Saïd Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 190. According to Andrew McGregor, 'Amer envisioned Yemen as his own military fiefdom: *A Military History of Modern Egypt: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Ramadan War* (Westport and London: Praeger Security International, 2006), 261.

Republic (UAR) of September 1961,[26] appear to have played an important role in the decision to intervene. Once the intervention was under-way, fears that a coup, like that which put an end to the UAR, might occur in Yemen, likewise appear to have influenced Egyptian policies.[27] From the initial imposition of ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Bayḍani as vice-president—a figure so close to Anwar al-Sadat, he was still denying rumours he was his brother in law 40 years later[28]—to the importance placed on control of Yemeni politicians, the military and new civilian institutions, the Egyptian state-building project was as much about preventing an embarrassing Yemeni escape from the Egyptian bear-hug as about exporting ‘modernity’ in the guise of Egyptian organisational forms and revolutionary ideology. Finally, Egyptian domestic economic difficulties also meant that tensions between securing the revolution at home and diverting resources to Yemen loomed large for the Egyptian leadership,[29] finding expression in policies vacillating between developmentalist initiatives to build hospitals and schools and the hard-nosed imposition of Egyptian monopolies and an undervalued exchange rate designed to squeeze money from the Yemen adventure.

The following two sections explore how these contradictory elements in Egyptian blueprints interacted with existing power structures in Yemen. Each explores, in turn, the extent to

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[26] According to the Egyptian ambassador to Yemen, Egyptian “interest in Yemen started after the break with Syria in 1961” ENA, 0078-044109, 08.10.1967. Compare also: James Janikowski, *Nasser’s Egypt, Arab Nationalism and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 178; Hajjāj, *Ziyārah,* 88–145; Gregory Gause, *Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence*, Columbia UP (New York, 1990), 59.

[27] Few studies explore the connections between Egyptian policy in Syria and Yemen, though comparisons, fears and lessons appear to have been implicitly present. Rahmy, *The Egyptian Policy*, 93–110.

[28] ’Abd al-Raḥman al- Bayḍanī, Thawrat al-Yaman wa Dawr Maṣr kamā yarahu al-Bayḍanī, 16 July 2001, http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/centurywitness/2005/1/10/ثورة-اليمن-ودور-مصر-كما-يراه-البيضاني-ح2; Alaini, *Shifting Sands*, 50–51.

[29] Orkaby, *The International History*, 243.

which the 'official' technocratic plans for Yemeni modernisation were implemented, before turning to their more complex outcomes and institutional legacies.

3. Egyptian intervention and the development of the YAR military

Egyptian-Yemeni military cooperation pre-dated the Egyptian intervention. Imam 'Aḥmad and his father, Imam Yahyā (r.1918-48), had both repeatedly sought outside expertise to modernise the military, including from former Ottoman officers and Iraqi and Egyptian military missions, fearing threats to their rule from domestic competitors, Saudi Arabia in the North, and Britain in the South. At the same time, the Imams recognised the potential for instability emanating from such missions: Iraqi-trained officers had played an important role in the 1948 coup against Imam Yahyā[30] and although Imam 'Aḥmad invited an Egyptian military mission to Yemen in 1954, he shut it down in 1955. He—or rather his son, Crown Prince Muḥammad—invited a second mission in 1957, but again cut off cooperation in 1959, when the Imam believed it to have been implicated in unrest in the military.[31]

As a result, the impact of these missions was limited and localised in specific units. Overall, the Imamate military until 1962 remained organised along the lines Imam Yahyā had instituted post -independence, drawing on Ottoman military organisation and with blurred lines between tribal and royal troops. It appears that the Yemeni military consisted of a standing army (*jaysh al-nidhāmī*) of 20,000 soldiers, reserves (*jaysh al-difāʿī*) of 30,000, a large tribal militia (*jaysh al-barānī*), and additional special guards for the Imam, princes and

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[30] Robert Burrowes, "The Famous Forty and Their Companions: North Yemen's First-Generation Modernists and Educational Emigrants," *Middle East Journal 59* 59, no. 1 (2005): 81–97; Orkaby, *The International History*, 51–58; compare also: J. Leigh Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement, 1935-1962* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1987).

[31] On military missions: Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement, 1935-1962*, 222–23; Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 31; Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 20; Khaled Fattah, "A Political History of Civil-Military Relations in Yemen," *Alternative Politics*, 2010, 25–47.

governors numbering another 5,000 soldiers.[32] Yet, these numbers may be misleading, as poor records and an absence of statistics mean that there is uncertainty about the size and structure of the military on the eve of the revolution.[33] Moreover, the Imam's military had only about 400 officers with formal military training in the early 1960s and much of the army was spread across the country in small units engaged in tax-collection and policing.[34] Finally, the military fractured in the first months of the 1962 civil war. For example, most members of the *jaysh al-difāʿī* appear to have deserted and returned to their tribes, while units of the *nidhāmī* army stationed north and east of Sanaʿa largely joined the royalists.[35] By most accounts, this left between 4,000 and 7,000 soldiers in the early republican military.[36]

3.1 Modernising the military…

After the overthrow of the Imam, the Egyptians invested heavily in the Republican military. Large-scale organisational restructuring along Egyptian lines, training by Egyptian officers, and new Egyptian-supplied uniforms and equipment clearly reflect an effort to remake the Yemeni military according to an Egyptian blueprint and to 'yemenise' the conflict, thus reducing the cost in lives and treasure of the Egyptian intervention. Yet, these policies were tempered by fears of losing political control to an army too powerful or independent to manage effectively.

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[32] Hajjāj, *Ziyārah,* 60; 'Aḥmad, *Al-Dawr al-Maṣrī*, 194; Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 107–129, 255.

[33] Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[34] El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 115.

[35] Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 238, 248–55.

[36] Ibid., 221; O'Ballance, *The War in the Yemen*, 199. But compare German claims of 30,000 soldiers in 1963: PAAA, B36 46, 21.01.1963.

In theory—though highly unevenly in practice—the Republican state introduced mandatory military service and regularised recruitment, with a system of training that differentiated between enlisted men and officers and between different functions.[37] Three months after the overthrow of the Imam, in December 1962, the Egyptians also built a new military academy, which remained for a decade or more, the “largest and most exclusive building in Sana‘a.” By the time the Egyptian military retreated in the autumn of 1967, around 10,000 Yemenis had gone through some form of Egyptian-led military training and most of the elite Yemeni paratrooper and commando units had completed training in Egypt.[38]

The UAR also provided direct support to Yemeni military procurement and wages. According to figures from the Egyptian archives, Egyptian loans and grants to the YAR military amounted to some 100 million Yemeni riyals across the five years.[39] Based on likely estimates for state income and expenditure, this Egyptian support accounts for about half of all Yemeni government expenditure over this period and for well over 90% of the defence budget.[40] Egyptian budget support for the military allowed a large increase of soldiers’ salaries immediately after the overthrow of the Imam, and improvements in enlisted men’s standard of living[41]—but also led to growing divisions between military officials, who were paid regularly, and civilian bureaucrats, who were not.[42] In addition, the Egyptians, who at

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[37] Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 254.

[38] El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 115.

[39] ENA, 0078-044109, no date.

[40] PAAA, AV Neues Amt 12337, IBRD report, 31. The annual budget available to the chief of staff in 1965 appears to have been approximately YR 6 million. Personal interviews with Ḥamūd Baydar, Amman, Jordan, May 2016.

[41] Dana Adams Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War* (London: Bodley Head, 1968), 80.

[42] Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 221–22.

this point controlled most communication by Arab governments with the Soviet Union, facilitated Soviet support for Yemen.[43]

Although tracing the Egyptian-led expansion of the Yemeni military is made difficult by the absence of a clear baseline, discussed above, its growth in size and responsibilities during the period of Egyptian intervention is clear, though hardly rapid. Starting from somewhere between 4,000 and 7,000 soldiers in 1962, the republican military grew to about 7,000 soldiers by the beginning of 1965 and reached just under 10,000 soldiers by mid-1967.[44] Initially deployed only in guard duties, the Yemeni military began being used in combat after summer 1964, and was provided with Egyptian air support and weapons.[45] According to the German embassy in Ta'iz, writing in mid-1964:

> The republican military is making noticeable gains in its composition as well as its training and numbers. The units that have now returned from training in Egypt are elite troops and, in combination with some of the units trained in Yemen, promise to form the backbone of the army.[46]

In addition, the military gained new unit and rank structures based on the Egyptian model, with much greater differentials in pay between officers and enlisted men than under the Imamate.[47] Marching in Egyptian uniforms and carrying Egyptian supplies, while presenting

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[43] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 72. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict*, 67.

[44] Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh*, 237, 241. But compare different figures p. 227. See also: O'Ballance, *The War in the Yemen*, 199; Claude Deffarge and Gordian Troeller, *Yémen 62-69: De la révolution sauvage à la trêve des guerriers* (Paris: Laffont, 1969), 60; Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1965: Ministers, Mercenaries and Mandarins* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 20–21; Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement, 1935-1962*, 222–23; Mohamed Said El Attar, *Le Sous-Dévelopment Economique et Social du Yémen: Perspectives de la Révolution Yéménite* (Algiers: Editions Tiers-monde., 1964), 81–82.

[45] Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 249.

[46] PAAA, B130 2205A: 08.07.1964. By contrast, British mercenaries dismissed YAR forces as "fourth rate in all departments." Duff Hart-Davis, *The War That Never Was: The True Story of the Men Who Fought Britain's Most Secret Battle* (London: Random House, 2011), 56.

[47] Compare wages in: Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 254 and 112-120.

Soviet weapons supplied via the UAR,[48] the republican military was in important ways an Egyptian creation. And while the Imam's army possessed only the first outlines of a professional officer corps, the Egyptians left behind an officer corps flush with new prestige, technical skills, status, and political aspirations,[49] whose political influence was reflected, not least, in the quasi-autonomous status the military gained during this time.[50]

3.2 …and its impact

Despite these changes, growth did not meet plans formulated by Yemeni politicians or the requirements of the war effort, and the expansion of the Yemeni military outlined above, at most from 4,000 to slightly less than 10,000 troops over the course of five years, was hardly impressive given the resources dedicated to the purpose. Indeed, as the Egyptians prepared to leave Yemen, the Egyptian ambassador, ʻAbd al-Raḥman 'Aḥmad Ṣalāḥ, noted: "After five years […] we did not succeed in making the Yemenis able to defend themselves."[51] As highlighted in section two, this was not merely a question of poor implementation, but may have been the Egyptian 'model' on offer: political control of the military loomed large in concerns of the Egyptian command. Tensions within the Egyptian state-building project and the interaction between Egyptian plans and pre-existing power-centres in Yemen shaped the military that emerged and its position within Yemeni politics.

In a context where the Egyptian military presence seemed to guarantee the safety of the Republic against the Royalists, Yemeni political leaders and particularly President al-Sallāl

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[48] Ibid., 251.

[49] O'Ballance, *The War in the Yemen*, 199; Jones, *Britain and the Yemen*, 20–21; Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement, 1935-1962*, 222–23, 233; El Attar, *Sous-Dévelopment*, 81–82.

[50] Compare e.g. the privileged status of the military budget: Alaini, *Shifting Sands*, 203.

[51] ENA, 0078-044109, 08.10.1962.

(r.1962-7) often appear more invested in coup-proofing the armed forces than turning them into an effective fighting force. Surrounded by Egyptian troops and consistently agitating for a larger Egyptian role in Yemen, al- Sallāl appears to have paid lip-service only to the technocratic project of military growth and professionalization. Instead, he channelled support to his special guard, which grew to some 3,000 troops, or between half and a third of the regular military, provided widely-quoted figures on its size during this period are accurate.[52] In addition, al-Sallāl spearheaded major purges of the officer corps, particularly in October 1966, when the dismissal of more than 40 officers on 6 October marked the opening gambit in a month of mass arrests, dismissals and executions.[53] During this time, al-Sallāl transferred authority for public order policing to the Egyptians, and Egyptian troops made more than 2,000 arrests and suspended as many as 200 officers in the last week of October 1966 alone.[54] The October arrests themselves were the culmination of a several month standoff between President al-Sallāl and the Republican Council members ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-’Iryānī, ’Aḥmad Nu‘mān, and Ḥassan al-‘Amrī, which began when Egyptian troops secured the return of the embattled al-Sallāl to Yemen in July against the express wishes of al-’Iryānī, Nu‘mān, and al-‘Amrī; and ended with their imprisonment along with other leading Yemeni politicians.[55]

As the Egyptian military’s involvement in al-Sallāl’s return in summer 1966 and the arrests of October 1966 illustrate, concerns about coup-proofing the military, keeping it weak and

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[52] Nājī, *al-Tārīkh,* 222–43; PAAA, B 12 1060, 29.10.1962.

[53] PAAA, B36 244, 16.10.1966.

[54] Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 283–84; Nājī, *al-Tārīkh,* 234–35; Uzi Rabi, *Yemen: Revolution, Civil War and Unification* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 48.

[55] PAAA, B36 244, 19.10.1966, 13.11.1966.

divided if necessary, not only animated elements of the Yemeni leadership, but Egyptian thinking as well. Well before tensions between President al-Sallāl and other leading republicans came to a head in the second half of 1966, the Egyptian command had taken measures to limit the size and independence of the Yemeni military. When ’Aḥmad Nu‘mān’s appointment as Prime Minister in April 1965 raised the spectre of greater republican independence, the Egyptian command refused disbursement of funds that had been earmarked for the expansion of the Yemeni army and turned down a joint Soviet–East German offer to train and supply the Yemeni military and increase its strength to 18,000.[56]

While controlling the growth of the military, Egyptian intelligence kept a very close watch on Yemeni officers—perhaps drawing lessons from its experience with the UAR—and sought to create a politicised and pro-Egyptian body. When the the Egyptian command disagreed with decisions of the Yemeni government, Egyptian military advisors agitated for Yemeni officers to oppose the measures in question.[57] In at least one instance, an Egyptian took direct control of YAR forces in support of one Yemeni government faction against another.[58] Egyptian experts also encouraged officers to view themselves as the vanguard of Arab nationalism and modernisation[59] and Egyptian changes to the local administration, discussed in the next section, promoted officers to positions of civilian responsibility. More broadly, their military

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[56] Nājī, *al-Tārīkh,* 232–33.

[57] Alaini, *Shifting Sands*, 114.

[58] Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 234.

[59] This had been true of at least some Yemeni officers educated by Egyptians since 1956: Kevin Rosser, “Education, Revolt, and Reform in Yemen: The ‘Famous Forty’ Mission of 1947” (M. Phil dissertation, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University, 1998), 49; Orkaby, *The International History*, 91.

expertise at a time of war strengthened officers' hand vis-à-vis civilian politicians.[60] Officers were a privileged target of Egyptian training and funding and were well-represented in cabinet roles throughout the war.

Finally, the Egyptian military model interacted with political and tribal divisions in Yemen. Specific resentment of tribal lines of divisions colours the general lament of the state of the Yemeni military in this report by the Egyptian embassy in Ta'iz:

> The soldiers don't have the discipline or military precision to implement attacks and the orders of their leaders, and most of them are stationed in their local areas [*bilād*] or tribes. The officers receive the salaries of the soldiers. What is more, they take payment from the tribes… [The soldiers] flee from the units and sell ammunition, equipment, and weapons for their own gain.[61]

As the above quote suggests, many recruits in the new Yemeni military came from tribes, particularly the minor tribes around Sana'a[62] and tribesmen in the military repeatedly responded to calls for mobilisation from their tribe, sometimes abandoning their military unit to fight in tribal conflicts or opting out of battles, which would have pitted them against members of their own tribe.[63] Moreover, many officers came from sheikhly families and headed military units composed of members of their tribe—often stationed in their region of origin. Control of such units from Sana'a was tenuous. As the memoirs of 'Abd Allah al-'Aḥmar, paramount sheikh of the Ḥāshid confederation during this time, make clear,

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[60] Personal interview with Muḥsin al-'Aynī, Cairo, May 2016.

[61] ENA, 0078-044109, 08.10.1968.

[62] Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 149. Compare also: Fritz Sitte, *Brennpunkt Jemen* (Vienna: Verlag Kremayr & Scheriau, 1973), 23–25.

[63] Personal interview with Ḥamūd Baydar, Amman, May 2016. Of course, tribes were not monolithic and individual proclivities and the demands of family, sub-tribe, tribe, and confederation could and did contradict each other. Compare: 'Abd Allah al-'Aḥmar, *Mudhakirāt al-Shaykh 'Abd Allah Bin Ḥussayn al-Aḥmar: Qaḍāyā wa Mawāqif,* 2nd ed. (Sana'a: al-Afāq lil-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 2008), 84, 89. On desertions during the civil war see Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 249; Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, 149.

operations by officers like Colonel Mujāhid ’Abu Shawārib were commanded from Khamr in Ḥāshid, rather than Sana‘a.[64] Similarly, the forces directly commanded by Ḥussayn al-Dafa‘ī, the Minister of Defence from 1963-1966, consisted largely of members of his Dhū Muḥammad tribe, while the tribal militias of al-Ḥadā’ and al-Siḥār tribes were commanded by Major Muḥammad ‘Abd Allah and Colonel ‘Abd Allah Ḥussaynī—both of them officers in the regular army.[65]

These cross-connections and alliances, together with fears over royalist infiltration,[66] contributed to Egyptian distrust of the Yemeni military. According to an Egyptian officer interviewed in early 1965: “we can never trust the Yemenis who come to fight on our side… [T]hey’re always likely to turn their fire suddenly against us.”[67] Consequently, Egyptian staff officers in charge of Yemeni units limited the amounts and types of weapons they distributed to their troops[68] and the Egyptian command did not trust Yemeni units with information, complicating attempts at joint operations. In particular after the Khamr conference of 1965 and during the Egyptian withdrawal in 1967, Egyptian forces retreated from positions without notifying their republican allies, so that Yemeni units awoke to find that Egyptian garrisons had disappeared and previously defended positions were now vulnerable.[69]

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[64] ’Aḥmar, *Mudhakirāt*, 91-92.

[65] Nājī, *al-Tārīkh,* 256–58.

[66] ENA, 0078-044109, 08.10.1968; Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 224; Ferris, *Nasser’s Gamble*, 175.

[67] George de Carvalho, “Yemen’s Desert Fox,” *Life Magazine,* February 19, 1965: 103. Compare also: Hajjāj, *Ziyārah,* 319.

[68] PAAA, B36 45, 18.10.1963; Robert Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 334–36.

[69] Alaini, *Shifting Sands*, 109–11.

Tribal lines and divisions lay behind not just Egyptian distrust of the regular military, but also behind the decision to bypass the military completely and deal with the tribes directly. In the context of the immediate requirements of wartime, buying temporary tribal support, intelligence, and acquiescence to operations proved far easier than growing a fickle and unreliable central military. The Egyptian command launched a Tribal Affairs Office, which began attempts to buy off tribes and established direct relationships between the Egyptian command and tribal leaders, eventually embedding intelligence operatives with key tribes.[70] The Egyptians significantly increased the financial resources devoted to these efforts after 1964, with the Egyptian embassy eventually commenting on the 'fantastic' tribal stipends of up to YR 200,000 per month it was paying.[71]

Moreover, because Yemeni republican commanders likewise granted sheikhs funds as recruiters and commanders of the auxiliary 'Popular Forces,' a substantial fraction of Egyptian payments to the Yemeni military may have made its way to the tribes on top of the direct Egyptian payments.[72] This flow of money and weapons, combined with a similar flow of gold and arms from Saudi Arabia and the royalists, meant that many tribes' military capabilities eventually outstripped those of the regular army, reversing the centralisation of

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[70] 'Aḥmad, *Dhikrayāt,* 530–32; Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 182, 188; Paul Dresch, "The Tribal Factor in the Yemeni Crisis," in *The Yemeni War of 1994: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Jamal al-Suwaidi (London: Saqi Books, 1995), 43.

[71] ENA, 0078-044109, 8.10.1967; 0078-044111, 29.08.1968. According to Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 244, payments reached a total cost of 60 million GBP. See also: Jones, *Britain and the Yemen*, 155. On the civil war and the tribes more broadly see: Paul Dresch, "Tribal Relations and Political History in Upper Yemen," in *Contemporary Yemen*, 275; Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); and Joshua Rogers, "The Making of the Tribal Republic: North Yemen's Tribes and Central Authority during the Civil War 1962-1970," *British Yemeni Society Journal* 24 (2016): 12–18.

[72] These payments, of up to YR 30 per person for individual missions, were equivalent to a soldier's monthly salary. Yemeni commanders also provided weapons and stipends for tribal leaders. Personal interviews with Ḥamūd Baydar, Amman, Jordan, May 2016.

Imams Yahyā and ’Aḥmad.[73] In light of the growing resources at their disposal, alliances with tribal leaders and their militias became more and more important for successful military operations, particularly after Egyptian withdrawal left the Republican military facing the Royalists alone. As a consequence, and particularly in light of internal divisions within the officers’ corps,[74] officers with tribal connections became indispensable for the functioning of the military.

4. Egyptian state-building and the development of the YAR administration

Turning to the state-building legacy in the area of civilian administration, the Egyptians led a concerted push to replace the highly personalised administration of the Imam with bureaucratic structures, rapidly growing the number and ‘capacity’ of civil servants, and expanding the role of the state in the economy. Yet, these plans collided with existing institutions and a wartime situation that provided ready external rents, made working at the centre easier than in the insecure peripheries, and provided incentives for Egyptian troops and commanders to bypass the new institutions the advisors were creating. As a result, the outcomes hardly resembled the blueprints. Nonetheless, the existence of new civilian administrative bodies and the mould they were created in cast a long shadow, shaping a centralised public administration structured around foreign aid, loosely connected to local power brokers through its ability to distribute funds.

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[73] Rogers, “Making of the Tribal Republic,” esp. 12-13.

[74] e.g. ENA, 0078-044111, 29.08.1968.

4.1 New administrative blueprints…

Within weeks of the overthrow of the Imam, the new republican government invited an Egyptian mission to oversee the administrative reform of the state.[75] This initial mission and various ad-hoc additions were followed by a formal cooperation agreement between the UAR and the YAR in July 1963. Authorising up to 400 seconded Egyptian civilian experts, the agreement permitted cooperation in a wide range of areas from administration, over agriculture, religious endowments, security, and justice, to education, health and infrastructure. The UAR committed EGP 3 million annually for projects, additional salaries, and expenses for seconded experts until the 1964/65 fiscal year, when the budget was reduced to EGP 2 million until the Egyptian withdrawal.[76]

Between 1962 and 1967, Egyptian experts oversaw the building, both in physical and organisational terms, of some two-dozen ministries and other government agencies. Within six months of the Imam's overthrow, they helped to found ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, Health, Tribal Affairs, Interior, Justice, Agriculture, Finance, Economy, Labour, and Information. More administrative bodies were added later, joined by a currency board, a development bank and a Yemeni central bank.[77] To house these bodies, whose blueprints, hierarchies, and procedures were largely imported wholesale from Egypt, Egyptian engineers built "whole streets" of modern concrete and plaster block buildings.[78]

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[75] El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 118.

[76] ENA, 0078-044113, 11.09.1966.

[77] ENA, 0078-044113 11.09.1966; 0078-044111, 29.08.1968; El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 119; Kiren A Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997), 227.

[78] Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 81. See also: ENA, 0078-044113, 11.09.1966; 12.06.1967; 'Aḥmad, *Dhikrayāt,* 357.

Some sort of re-structuring of the government would doubtlessly have taken place without the Egyptian presence, but neither would it have occurred at the pace and to the extent that it did, nor would the models have been quite as recognisably Egyptian. In contrast to the slow growth of the military, the Yemeni bureaucracy expanded dramatically during the Egyptian intervention. From about 2,000-4,000 civil servants under the Imamate, most of whom were engaged in collecting taxes and many of whom did not find a place in the new bureaucracy, the number of civil servants roughly doubled to 6,000 within the first year of the YAR's existence and continued to expand to 12,500 in 1967 and 13,500 at the end of the civil war. During the initial period of growth in the first year after the overthrow of the Imam, officials' pay tripled.[79] On a more local level, Egyptian experts likewise oversaw an ambitious reform process, spearheading the restructuring of local administration in Yemen. Replacing the Ottoman *liwā'* (province) system with a system of governorates, modelled on the Egyptian one, the new local administration was designed to re-draw the balance of local power between the *sādah*, *quḍāh* and other traditional officials on the one hand and 'modern' elements, like the military, on the other.[80]

Egyptian experts were not above taking an active role in decision making and shaping the constitutional order to fit plans formulated in Cairo. The German embassy notes, for instance, that Egyptian advisors played a decisive role in drafting the Yemeni constitution of 28 April 1964, highlighting in particular their role in ensuring that, contrary to the wishes of Nu'mān, al-'Iryānī, and their allies, who were seeking to enshrine more collegiate forms of leadership,

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[79] PAAA 12337, IBRD report, Annex 1, 3-4; El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 119–21; Deffarge and Troeller, *Yémen 62-69*, 29, 94.

[80] ENA, 0078-044113, 11.09.1966. Sādah (sing. sayyid) and quḍāh (sing. qāḍī) formed the religiously-educated mainstay of the Imamate administrative elite. Sādah trace their descent to the Prophet Muḥammad, while quḍāh were learned 'commoners,' who acted as judges.

the constitution featured a strong presidency under the Egyptians' preferred strongman, 'Abd Allah al-Sallāl.[81] Egyptian advisers also wielded enormous power in ministries day to day. According to the German embassy in Yemen, they were "present and influential in all government bodies and public institutions,"[82] while the former Yemeni Prime Minister, Muḥsin al-'Aynī, remembers that his colleagues generally deferred to advice provided by Egyptian advisors, the most important of whom sat in the office of the ministers themselves.[83]

When Yemeni politicians sought a measure of independence, the Egyptian command was less than thrilled. As al-'Aynī details in his memoirs, from early 1965 onwards, Yemeni ministers were beginning to ignore Egyptian advisors and act on their own authority, moved advisors outside of Minister's offices, and attempted to keep Soviet equipment used to construct Sana'a airport rather than give it to the Egyptians.[84] In response, the Egyptian command contemplated Egyptian advisors' taking full executive powers in all Yemeni ministries. Following a prolonged standoff, they imprisoned most of the government instead, holding a score of former Yemeni ministers, including the former Prime Minister, in Egyptian jails, and hundreds of influential political figures in gaol in Yemen between October 1966 and the Egyptian withdrawal in late 1967.[85] Concomitantly, Egyptian advisors, military commanders and the intelligence forces became more and more involved in the minutiae of Yemeni

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[81] PAAA, B36 115, 02.05.1964.

[82] PAAA, B36 196, 08.02.1965

[83] Alaini, *Shifting Sands*; Personal interview with Muḥsin al-'Aynī, Cairo, May 2016. Schmidt relates the story of a young Yemeni civil servant who resented the Egyptians because of his dislike of his boss, an Egyptian advisor: *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 82.

[84] Alaini, *Shifting Sands*, 112, 113.

[85] PAAA, B36 244, 19.10.1966, 10.11.1967.

politics—down to controlling the appointment of local officials and lower-ranking officers.[86] In the final days of 1966, the German embassy in Taʿiz noted pointedly that it seemed as though President al-Sallāl was "no longer allowed even to breathe without Egyptian permission."[87]

Economic policy likewise had undertones of political control and mercantilist gain. The artificially low Egyptian-set exchange rate between Yemeni riyals and Egyptian pounds allowed the Egyptian government to recoup expenses from the republican state.[88] Similarly, Egyptian state-owned enterprises controlled most foreign direct investment in Yemen and were behind the creation of a number of joint-stock companies, in which the Yemeni partners held 51%. Closely affiliated with the Egyptian parent, these joint Yemeni-Egyptian companies included the Yemen Foreign Trade Company, Yemen Petroleum Company, Yemeni National Tobacco and Matches Company, Yemen Pharmaceutical Company and the Yemen Bank for Reconstruction and Development.[89] Yet, despite their near-monopolies on cigarettes, cement, steel, pharmaceuticals, and other goods, the Yemeni market was not particularly lucrative for Egyptian state-owned enterprises. Although Egyptian exports to Yemen grew thirty-fold between 1963 and 1967 to a total value of EGP 3 million per year, the Egyptian embassy estimated that Egyptian profits from trade with Yemen reached only

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[86] Nājī, a*l-Tārīkh,* 230.

[87] PAAA, B36 245, 10.12.1966.

[88] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 199.

[89] ENA, 0078-044110, 18.09.1969, no date, and 0078-044111, 29.09.1968. See also: Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic*, 25 and PAAA, AV Neues Amt 1719, 26.04.1965.

approximately 150,000 Pounds Sterling (ca. EGP 180,000) per year, "equivalent to the expenses of a couple of days [of military operations]."[90]

4.2 … and their outcomes

It is clear that the proliferation of new ministries was bewildering for new and old civil servants and the ministers who were supposed to be running them, let alone for citizens trying to engage with them.[91] New bodies interacted with existing, traditional institutions in Yemen and the wartime context. As a result, many of the new Egyptian-inspired procedures were observed in the breach: A UNDP assessment of Yemeni institutions conducted immediately after the end of the civil war in 1971 concluded that: "administration is personal and individual rather than institutional," complained that "the organisation structure [of ministries] is not appropriate," and criticised "duplication of functions, overlapping and conflicts of jurisdiction" between and within institutions.[92] At the same time, the mould these new institutions had been created in and the existence of new administrative bodies with buildings, staff, and budgets had a real and enduring impact on how politics was conducted in Yemen, with a dramatic influence on taxation, allocation, and how the political centre interacted with localities.

The total expenditure of the Yemeni government rose dramatically during the Egyptian intervention, largely funded by the UAR. Papers from the Egyptian archives discuss a variety of loans, import credits and other forms of financial aid, including loans and grants of YR 100 million for the Yemeni military, at least EGP 10 million (ca. YR 30 million at 1968

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[90] ENA, 0078-044109, 08.10.1967.

[91] El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 121, 141.

[92] UNDP Yemen Arab Republic Information Paper No 15, 1971, 35; quoted in: Ibid., 121.

exchange rates)[93] for civilian experts, as well as assorted loans to cover Yemeni imports from Egypt, the printing of Yemeni banknotes in Cairo, development projects, and other expenses.[94] Large parts of these newly available funds went to the salaries of officers, soldiers and, to a lesser extent, new civil servants.[95] Loans and grants from the USSR, People's Republic of China, the USA, the Federal Republic of Germany and other donors likewise filled government coffers. However, unlike Egyptian budget support, much of these funds were earmarked for specific projects and hence could not be used to cover regular government expenditure. Nonetheless, thanks to these investments in infrastructure, capital expenditure by the Yemeni government rose from next to nothing in 1961 to nearly half of all total new investment by the mid-1960s.[96]

From the Egyptian perspective, reliance on Egyptian funding, though a fiscal drain, was a powerful political tool of control. Egypt cut-off funds for the new Nu'mān government in June 1965 to pressure it to re-think its more independent course, and Nasser allegedly blocked Kuwaiti funding that would have made up for the shortfall.[97] Similarly in 1967, Egypt froze its programme of loans to "all Yemeni ministries, associations, bodies and companies," when President al-Sallāl refused to cooperate with the provisions of the Khartoum Agreement that regulated Egyptian withdrawal in 1967.[98]

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[93] ENA, 0078-044111, no date.

[94] ENA, 0078-044109, no date, 09.01.1968; 0078-044113, 11.09.1966.

[95] In 1963, the German embassy noted that the YAR fiscal crisis was brought on by increases to the size and number of salaries: PAAA, B36 46, 21.01.1963.

[96] Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth*, 124–25.

[97] Alaini, *Shifting Sands*, 113.

[98] ENA, 0078-044109, 05.10.1967.

Although subject to political interruptions, the scale of this external funding, largely absent prior to the 'September revolution,'[99] reoriented the YAR bureaucracy's functions: while taxation petered out, ministries gained influence through allocation of these external rents and became focal points for lobbying and influencing to determine where hospitals, schools, or roads were built.[100] The powerful vested interests this generated are evident, not least, in the unsuccessful attempts by Yemeni governments to limit expenditure after the Egyptians' withdrawal.[101]

Of course, in allocating funds and determining the location of new infrastructure, the new bureaucracies did not function in the ways intended by advisors and civil servants did not follow the procedures imported from Egypt.[102] Employees who owed their recruitment to tribe or region were very much representatives of these groups—traditional connections and hierarchies mattered far more than bureaucratic function.[103] But new ministries meant more than just the continuation of traditional forms in new guises and modern buildings, especially since much of the money available for investment came in the form of foreign loans and aid. Navigating forms, drawing up plans, and finding technocratic justifications for investments became important parts of the political game.

A further corollary of the availability of external funds was that, despite the dramatic expansion of the government apparatus, the YAR lacked strong incentives to expand, or even

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[99] Aside from two road loans worth $30 million, Yemen's public debt of at least $170 million in 1970 was contracted after 1962. PAAA, AV Neues Amt 12337, IBRD report, i, iv.

[100] Schmidt, *Yemen: The Unknown War*, 286–87. However, it appears that as much as 2/3 of the YAR budget was channelled through Egyptian systems: PAAA, AV Neues Amt 12337, IBRD report, 28.

[101] PAAA, B36 469, 02.02.1970.

[102] El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 120–21.

[103] Ibid., 165–66.

continue, the Imamate's taxation, which was notoriously high.[104] Though new taxes were officially adopted on the Egyptian model, and Egyptian experts were tasked with establishing a national budget, efforts to collect taxes faltered. The new republican government turned tax collection over to officials at the local level. By all accounts, this system was "wide open to abuse."[105] There were almost no penalties for evasion and by the end of the civil war as little as 5% of agricultural taxes, one of the mainstays of Imamate era government income, were actually being collected.[106] The wartime absence of taxation became the new normal. Instead, the generation of government revenues became primarily about securing foreign aid. In the context of this political economy, the Egyptian-designed central institutions were concerned with accessing foreign funding and connected to the regions primarily by distributing money. An overview of government plans for the coming year provided upon request of the German embassy in Yemen by the Prime Minister, Ḥassan al-ʻAmrī, in early 1966, is instructive in this regard: it consists entirely of a list of foreign-funded projects.[107]

If the new administration was centralised and hardly present in many of Yemen's regions, this was also closely connected to the war: the relative ease of building institutions in the safety of Sanaʻa or Taʻiz, or implementing development projects far from the front lines in 'Ibb or al-Mukhā, as opposed to areas with active fighting. Although Egyptian experts designed a new local administration system for Yemen, modelled on the Egyptian,[108] the reform has generally been considered a failure. Even shortly after the end of the civil war,

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[104] Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic*, 201; Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, 47.

[105] Thomas Gerholm, *Market, Mosque and Mafraj: Social Inequality in a Yemeni Town*, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, Vol. 5 (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1977), 77.

[106] El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 31; Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth*, 200.

[107] PAAA, B36 244.

[108] ENA, 0078-044113, 11.09.1966.

governorate-level institutions existed as stipulated only in Sana‘a, Hudaydah and Ta‘iz. In other areas, self-administration was managed by tribes, Imamate-era officials,[109] or the increasingly ubiquitous Local Development Associations,[110] without governorate or even district-level bodies. In the few places where governorate-level structures were created, they were dominated by tribal leaders and traditional notables, rather than the ‘modernising’ forces the reform intended to empower.[111]

Yet, as in the case of other Egyptian reform efforts, to leave it at that would be to miss an important part of the story, because new institutions did fundamentally affect the way in which local administration functioned, contributing to the formation of neo-patrimonial centre-periphery relations and the tribal-military condominium. The funds suddenly available at the centre meant that tribal leadership became about securing funding for infrastructure or stipends from the Egyptian Tribal Affairs office, the royalists, or the republican government. Although this dynamic went largely into abeyance as oil-boom fuelled remittances provided a decentralised source of external funds in the 1970s, it would be re-activated in the 1980s.[112] Highly centralised ministries created on the Egyptian model negotiated international

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[109] On Imamate-era local administration see: Manfred Wenner, *Modern Yemen. 1918-1966* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1967), 61–66; ’Aḥmad Bin Daghar, *al-Yaman taḥt Ḥukm al-’Imam ’Aḥmad 1948-1962* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 2005), esp. 94-127; Messick, *The Calligraphic State*.

[110] Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen : The Political Economy of Activism in Modern Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998); Brinkley Messick, *Transactions in Ibb: Economy and Society in a Yemeni Highland Town* (Ann Arbour: University Microfilms International (facsimile of unpublished PhD manuscript), 1978); John Cohen et al., “Development from Below: Local Development Associations in the Yemen Arab Republic,” *World Development* 9, no. 11/12 (1981): 1039–61.

[111] Charles Francis Swagman, *Development and Change in Highland Yemen* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 112; El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 152; Compare also the description of administration in Razih in: Shelagh Weir, *A Tribal Order. Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen* (London: British Museum Press, 2007).

[112] Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth*, 28–36.

development projects and loans with external donors and relied for implementation and disbursement on local allies, generally tribal leaders.

One of the few aspects of the local government reform that was more widely implemented was the provision that the military commander of each governorate be a serving officer. These military commanders in many cases represented the most powerful actor in the governorate as the war drew to a close.[113] They were partially able to take over the role of Egyptian military commanders, who, in some areas, had acted as de-facto governors[114] and wielded a great deal of power over discretionary spending on 'hearts and minds' projects, such as wells and roads, during the later war years.[115] Inserting the military directly into administration at the local level was to have significant longer-term effects, since with increased control over local administration, trade routes and transport infrastructure, military officers, in alliance with local tribal leaders, gained access to smuggling and independent sources of income.[116]

5. Conclusion

Egyptian state-building in Yemen has been described as "megalomanic,"[117] "more hindered than helped by the fact that the new state was largely built and staffed by Egyptians," and as resulting in institutions that were "empty shells existing in name only." [118] Indeed, as we have

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[113] El-Azzazi, *Entwicklung*, 148.

[114] Alexei Vassiliev, *King Faisal of Saudi Arabia: Personality, Faith and Times* (London: Saqi Books, 2012), 291.

[115] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 185; Peter Somerville-Large, *Tribes and Tribulations: A Journey through Republican Yemen* (London: Robert Hale, 1967), 111.

[116] Michael Knights, "The Military Role in Yemen's Protests: Civil-Military Relations in the Tribal Republic," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2013): 261–88.

[117] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble*, 182.

[118] Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Yemen*, 437–44; Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic*, 25.

seen, Egyptian state-building was hardly an unqualified success in terms of the technocratic project that was the dominant way its activities were described and justified. Yet, to dismiss the project as a failure, misses its significant impact. In the interplay between the contradictory state-building aims of the Egyptian project and the unforeseen consequences that emerged as plans encountered local resistance and adaptation, military and civilian institutions emerged, whose specific ways of functioning structured Yemeni politics at least until unification in 1990.

In terms of the emerging Yemeni military, the Egyptian intervention was central to a significant gain in social standing and political influence for officers. Its impact on the size and effectiveness of the military itself was more ambiguous, but it appears to have played a role in limiting its growth and ability to operate independently, creating a politically activist officer corps at the head of a weak, divided and politicised military reliant on tribal allies. In this sense, the intervention and developments during the civil war appear to have helped push military officers to the forefront of Yemeni politics and may represent a first important step towards the formation of what Paul Dresch later termed the "tribal-military-commercial complex"[119]—though that formation owes much also to specific developments under President ʻAli Abd Allah Saleh.

Similarly, the existence of new civilian administrative bodies and the mould they were created in cast a long shadow. Although new institutions did not fulfil the goals formulated for them by Egyptian experts, the new bureaucracies controlled allocation of growing funds and as such became a central focal point for lobbying and influencing. Ministries emerged as important instruments of patronage and the privileged interface between local power brokers

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[119] Dresch, "The Tribal Factor," 34.

and international sources of funding. As a result of the civil war and the centralised Egyptian state-building project, representatives of the central state largely disappeared from the local level—potentially providing the space for the flowering of Local Development Associations during the later war years and the 1970s, but also, perhaps, prefiguring the disconnects and allocation-led strategies of centralisation and control analysed by students of President Saleh's Yemen and his politics of co-option and patronage.[120]

[120] E.g. Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth*; Sarah Phillips, *Yemen and the Politics of Permanent Crisis,* (New York: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011); Ginny Hill, Yemen Endures: Civil War, Saudi Adventurism and the Future of Arabia, (London: Hurst, 2017).

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