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Tears at the Gate of Grief

The Disarticulation of Yemen

and

Colonial Objectives in the Red Sea

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Abstract

This thesis examines Yemen's historical, economic, and geopolitical disarticulation and underdevelopment. Utilizing a world-systems analytical framework, the study explores Yemen's interactions with colonial powers, the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and foreign aid, and the influence of regional and global powers, particularly the United States and Saudi Arabia. The analysis highlights how Yemen's strategic significance manifested in its immediate adjacency to the Red Sea, has made it a focal point for international power struggles, resulting in deliberate efforts to keep the country politically and economically unstable. The thesis covers Yemen's major political events from the 1960s to the present, including the revolutions of the 1960s and the rise of the Ansarallah movement. By synthesizing historical, economic, and geopolitical perspectives, this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Yemen's underdevelopment and how it ultimately relates to colonial strategies to ensure a foothold in the Red Sea. The research methodology includes a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary data sources to uncover strategies maintaining Yemen's underdeveloped status and explores potential pathways for autonomous development. Finally, the thesis argues that the ongoing Red Sea Crisis is deeply rooted in these historical dynamics and the continuous struggle for control over this vital maritime route. By highlighting the intersections of global and regional power struggles, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of Yemen's complex path to underdevelopment and its implications for contemporary geopolitical tensions in the Red Sea.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Yemeni Ansarallah Movement, also known as the Houthis, have declared their active involvement in the conflict against Israel since October 19th, 2023. They have aligned themselves with Palestinian militant factions, predominantly Hamas, following Hamas' aggressive "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" on October 7th. Ansarallah's actions have included launching ballistic missiles towards the southern Israeli city of Eilat(Ehab and Tolba 2024), seizing at least one commercial ship in the Red Sea(The Guardian 2023), and carrying out numerous Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile (ASBM) and drone attacks on both commercial and military vessels, with ASBM's being deployed by the Ansarallah in a combat scenario for the first time in history(Epstein n.d.).

While the United States and the United Kingdom have made efforts to portray the Red Sea Crisis as entirely detached from the Israel-Gaza conflict (Hardman 2024), and repeatedly stressed the vitality of the Red Sea as an important economic artery whose safety ought to be maintained by force in light of the recent crisis(A. Lenderking 2024), there has been a concerted effort over many years to portray the Ansarallah movement as a political current entirely detached from Yemen's socioeconomic fabric and material history, often omitting any form of discussion or research into the historical contextualization by framing the group as a mere appendage of a perceived Iranian expansionist agenda(S. G. Jones et al. 2021). I argue, as I hope the following research will be able to elucidate, that Yemen's colonial and post-colonial history lies at the very heart of recent antagonisms in the Red Sea and the strategically important Bab Al-Mandab Strait, translated to English as "*The Gate of Grief*". Yemen's geographical positioning on the world map has been a source of much debate and much frustration by superpowers such as the US and the UK, given the exact tremendous importance that is often granted to the Red Sea as an artery that helps keep the global economy afloat. Historical colonial ambitions in Yemen have long been solely contingent on the country's geographical adjacency to the Red Sea, with warring powers over hundreds of years clashing for power, influence and control in pursuit of a grander economic strategy that has little to do with Yemen in of itself, and everything to do with securing a hegemonic position of power over the region entirely. The Red Sea has always been highly important for the sustainment of any global economic framework, and today, roughly 12% of all global trade and 30% of global container traffic passes through this crucially-important waterway on a yearly basis(Van Dalen, Ndhlovu, and Gopaldas n.d.).

Chapter 2: Research Objectives and Research Question

This paper focuses on the disarticulation and underdevelopment of Yemen, spread out across four separate themes derived from the paper's theoretical framework, in an effort to broaden the general understanding of the current conflict as well as the currently-unfolding crisis in the Red Sea, and to which degree the underdevelopment has both been entirely deliberate and as a means for certain powers to obtain a hegemony position in the region. The paper aims to provide an answer to the following research question:

“In what ways have current and former colonial powers, such as the US and UK, played a role in the economic disarticulation and underdevelopment of Yemen, and how does this relate to the ongoing Red Sea Crisis?”

Chapter 3: Structural Framework

The structure of this thesis unfolds as follows: Chapter 4 delves into the historical background of Yemen from the 1960s to the present, covering key events such as the rise of the Ansarallah, Cold War strategies, various revolutions, Saleh's rise to power, and the country's unification. Chapter 5 introduces the theoretical framework, drawing on World Systems Theory, Peripheral Capitalism, and the concept of the Military Merchant Class. These theories underpin the subsequent analysis. Chapter 6 details the methodology and operationalization, explaining the use of a case study approach and the integration of both primary and secondary data sources. It highlights the challenges faced in data collection due to limited access to primary data. Chapter 7 explains the research method, emphasizing a qualitative analysis that combines various types of data to fulfill the research objectives. It discusses the use of document analysis to uncover foreign strategies and their impact on Yemen's development. Chapter 8 presents the analysis, structured into four themes based on Samir Amin's work: Historical Colonial Interactions, Economic Dependence and Peripheral Capitalism, Structural Characteristics of Underdevelopment, and Strategies and Prospects for Autonomous Development. Each theme examines various aspects of Yemen's economic and political conditions in relation to its colonial past and present influences. Finally, Chapter 9 consists of a conclusion synthesizing the findings.

Chapter 4: Historical background

To grasp the rationale behind the heightened involvement of Ansarallah in the Red Sea in relation to the war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza, and to delineate the geostrategic significance of this maritime domain, it is imperative to cultivate a foundational comprehension of Yemen's historical trajectory since the 1960s. The interplay of events from 1962 onwards underscores an intricate nexus, wherein supposedly divergent ideological paradigms, shifting political dynamics, and recurrent conflicts converge. At the center of it all is a clear anti-colonial framework, wherein the destiny of the Red Sea emerges as a focal point of geopolitical contention.

The Ansarallah's Rise to Power

The Ansarallah, whose origins will be further elaborated upon in this chapter, seized control of the Yemeni capital Sana'a in September 2014, becoming the de-facto rulers of the country (Ehab and Tolba 2024). The ousted administration, which was installed by the Saudi kingdom after the 2011 Arab Spring protests and the resignation of long-time ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh, was not only deeply unpopular, but also regarded as having been forcefully installed to power as a result of a deal brokered by the Saudi-dominated Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that would see former president Saleh step down in return for political immunity (Boone and Raghavan 2011). While the international community denounced the takeover as an illegitimate coup, supporters of the movement hailed it as a popular armed revolution (Blumi 2021). Upon assuming power in 2012, interim president Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi initiated a series of stringent IMF-backed austerity measures, including the reduction of fuel subsidies and the privatization of state-owned enterprises, which had been proposed during Saleh's presidency but were not fully implemented until Hadi's tenure (Blumi 2018a).

Following months of internal political negotiations, overseen by the then-UN special envoy to Yemen Jamal Benomar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia decided (haphazardly in retrospect) to bomb Yemen to reinstate the ousted Hadi presidency. Jamal Benomar recalled in a Newsweek article in 2021 that the negotiations had resulted in an agreed interpolitical framework including arrangements for the executive and legislature (Benomar 2021). Bombs started falling on Yemen just two days later, and Benomar was forced to resign.

Dr. Isa Blumi contends that the Ansarallah emerged as the armed vanguard of the popular protest movement and now effectively govern approximately 80% of Yemen's

population (Blumi 2021), it became imperative from a political standpoint to expose the wrongdoings of the preceding two regimes based on the idea that Yemen's ills were not the fault of the Yemeni people, but the fault of destructive machinations guided by strings ultimately leading back to Riyadh, London and Washington. Numerous exposés were released by the Ansarallah-loyal Yemeni Armed Forces and its Morale Guidance Department, the media and political wing of the Army institution, dealing with a number of critically-important subjects, where a grand conspiracy could be argued to have taken place (bin 'Ammār 2021), fundamentally designed to weaken Yemen such that the country would pose no discernible threat to Saudi and American geopolitical interests in the country and the wider Red Sea region.

Cold War Strategy and Contested Seas

Weakening Yemen to make the Red Sea more accessible to global economic powers has arguably been the driving force behind colonial aspirations in Yemen and indeed in the wider region, an understanding of the country which the Ansarallah adopted early on through the course of its history. The fate of the Red Sea, should Yemen become in any way, shape or form militarily capable, has been of tremendous concern to the United States and the United Kingdom since the height of the Cold War and up until today. More specifically however is concern given to the fate of the strategically important strait known as Bab Al-Mandab, Arabic for "Gate of Grief". The Bab Al-Mandab Strait separates Yemen from Djibouti and Asia from Africa, being the sole gateway between the highly-contested Red Sea and the greater Indian Ocean (Al Ashwal 2021). Indeed, the Red Sea has been contested since the dawn of mankind, with every power from the Romans to the British trying their way at conquest and colonization to seize control of highly important trade routes.

US Cold War strategy towards the Red Sea hinged on four key factors: (1) ensuring the economic security of the West, (2) maintaining stability and regional security in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, (3) averting the possibility of a Soviet blockade of Western oil routes, and (4) ensuring unrestricted access to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean for Israeli and Israeli-bound vessels (Schwab 1978). There is not much to suggest that these factors and primary objectives have at all changed, only America's primary foes have shifted from the Soviet Union to Iran, Russia and China.

The revolutions of '62-'63

Yemen has endured numerous challenges and a protracted state of conflict since the 1990s. The foundational and pervasive issues that have molded Yemen's contemporary landscape can be traced back to the 1960s, when republican forces and royalists clashed in the northern territories subsequent to a coup d'état that ousted the monarchy in 1962. A year later, the southern parts of Yemen, at the time a British colony, witnessed its own anti-colonial uprising against British rule, culminating in a violent armed struggle that eventually led to the expulsion of British forces from Yemen in 1967.

With the monarchy expelled in the North and the colonialists pushed out of the South, Yemen seemed ready to embark upon a long, arduous road to become a self-sufficient, stable and prosperous country. However, that would never happen. As early as 1970, the Saudi-aligned conservative republicans succeeded in pushing out the leftist republican officers from power in the North in return for a shared cabinet with former royalist functionaries that would receive a guaranteed diplomatic recognition by the Saudi government. Juxtaposed to the steadily abysmal situation in the North, in the South, the Marxist wing of the National Liberation Front, which had won South Yemen's independence against British colonial rule, took power in a bloodless coup in 1969 and turned South Yemen into the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the only Marxist-Leninist state in the entire Arab world.

By 1970, Yemen had bifurcated into two distinct political entities governed by divergent ideological orientations, yet both sharing the common aspiration of eventual national reunification. National reunification became the pivotal political issue that set Yemen on a collision course not only with the Saudi monarchy but also with the United States and the United Kingdom. It was believed that national reunification would serve as the pathway to enduring peace, prosperity, and socioeconomic development. However, for Saudi Arabia, the US, and the UK, a unified Yemen likely meant a socialist Yemen with the potential to challenge or hinder US strategic interests in the region. The perceived threat from traditional conservative forces in Yemen, primarily aligned with Saudi Arabia, became more evident post-1968, following the conclusion of the royalist siege of the North Yemeni capital, Sana'a. Progressive republican forces, influenced by Socialist and Arab Nationalist ideals of the National Liberation Front, which had seized power in South Yemen a year earlier, clashed directly with tribalist conservative Republican forces led by Al-Eriyani, then the penultimate head of state in North Yemen, who had risen to power in a coup that removed the previous Republican leader, Abdullah Al-Sallal (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a). The leftist republicans,

many of whom were graduates of prestigious academic institutions in locations like Cairo and Damascus, aimed to steer the young Republic towards the left and to firmly align it with regional Nationalist and Socialist powers. The task of defending Sana'a against the conservative royalist forces was largely, exclusively, vested with the young leftist republicans in the Commando and Paratroop Brigade(Robert D. Burrowes 2016a).

In August 1968, the leftist republicans and the Eriyani-backed conservative forces collided, resulting in a three-day battle ending in defeat for the leftists. Numerous leftist republican officers fled to neighboring South Yemen during a significant purge, which also involved the banning of trade unions. Additionally, the "Revolutionary Democratic Party," formed by the leftist republican faction as a unified political entity, was prohibited, along with left-aligned peasant leagues and the PRF, a leftist citizen militia that aided republican forces in defending Sana'a(Robert D. Burrowes 2016a). For North Yemen, the purge of the leftist republican faction meant that the conservative consolidation of absolute power was now possible. The conclusion of the North Yemeni Civil War in 1970 culminated in a political settlement between conservative Republicans and Royalist factions, a development widely regarded among Yemeni scholars as pivotal in solidifying Saudi influence over Yemeni governance. It was only after the 1970 Royal-Republican compromise that Saudi Arabia recognized the Yemen Arab Republic(Robert D. Burrowes 2016a).

President Eryani was overthrown and exiled on June 13th 1974 by Ibrahim Al-Hamdi, a colonel in the Armed Forces and a firebrand modernist reformer. Although of Zaydi upper class background, Al-Hamdi sought to turn the ship for the better of his country through numerous reforms that would, in effect, steer the country away from the many feudal-tribalist centers of power into one strong, cohesive and unified state that would be able to cater to the needs of the people (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a). In addition to instituting infrastructure projects, expanding agriculture and democratizing it, implementing political reforms, and strengthening the unitary state, President Hamdi's most significant decision was intentionally sidelining tribalist forces from state power through deliberate and calculated means. Ibrahim Al-Hamdi largely perceived the tribes (and their hold on power) as the main gateway from which Saudi Arabia would be able to steer Yemen in a preferable socioeconomic and political direction. Saudi influence in Yemen had become especially atrocious under Al-Eryani's foregoing regime, and Hamdi's rise to power immediately limited, if not entirely crumbled, the power over Yemen that Saudi Arabia once wielded (Blumi 2018a).

A Saudi Conspiracy

As Hamdi's modernization agenda gained momentum in North Yemen, so did the apprehensions by the Saudi monarchy. Hamdi's efforts to expedite national unification seemed to be the turning point where Saudi Arabia could no longer remain passive. Being a left-leaning republican, Hamdi had long envisioned resuming discussions on Yemeni unification with his Communist counterparts in the South. However, what was even more concerning for the Saudis was Hamdi's intention to provide what Dr. Burrowes refers to as "some breathing space" for the perceived independence of the Yemen Arab Republic, along with aspiring to claim leadership over the Red Sea (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a). Ibrahim Al-Hamdi shared a positive and personal rapport with his counterpart in the southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Salem Rubai Ali. Both leaders expressed a desire to unite their respective countries into a single polity based on clear left-leaning social and political principles.

The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the south experienced what one could argue less internal turmoil than its northern neighbor. It had a shared revolutionary history with the North, such as intermingling and cross-coordination between unionized revolutionaries in the South and Republican officers in the North, and volunteers from both sides joining each other in what was then perceived as a shared struggle against colonial tyranny and medieval feudal conditions. The People of South Yemen ignited their own struggle on the 14th of October 1963, and spearheaded by the left-leaning National Liberation Front, would later gain its independence on November 30th 1967 following the departure of the last contingency of colonial British forces (F. Halliday 1974). In the 1970s, both North & South Yemen were pursuing policies that to varying degrees, were both largely left-wing, with the PDRY pursuing a Marxist-Leninist political line for the state, and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the North pursuing an Arab Nationalist and socialist line inspired by the policies and ideology of Egyptian revolutionary leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. The two heads of state of both Yemeni nation-states quickly managed to find common ground, as they both shared a deeply-held aversion to foreign rule and interference, namely by Saudi Arabia, which at the time had a much tighter grip on the internal politics of the YAR as opposed to the PDRY, which the Saudi kingdom perceived as an existential threat, not just to itself as a state institution, but to the policies Saudi Arabia was pursuing in the region at large (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a).

Death of Hamdi and the NDF

The unification that Hamdi had envisioned never happened. Ibrahim Al-Hamdi was murdered under fundamentally mysterious circumstances on the 11th of October 1977, on the eve of what would have been a scheduled visit to South Yemen to meet his counterpart (Gasim 2017). Telegram cables from the US embassy in the North Yemeni capital Sana'a gives us a clearer picture of what had taken place. Just one week before his assassination, Hamdi had apparently called off negotiations with the Saudis and influential Saudi-backed Yemeni tribal leader Abdullah Ibn Husayn Al-Ahmar due to the former's continuous intervention in the internal affairs of his country (J. Scotese 1977). Another telegram sent from the embassy to the Secretary of State on September 21st 1977 indicates that the Saudis had grown increasingly weary of increased rapprochement between Al-Hamdi's government and the Soviet Union over a potential deal that would secure lucrative MiG fighter jets to the North Yemeni Air Force. These prelude events in the relationship between North Yemen and Saudi Arabia indicates with high degrees of likelihood that the Saudi kingdom was implicated in Hamdi's murder, although the actual act of the killing itself was likely orchestrated by officers within the Yemeni military acting according to their own desires as well (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a).

To replace Hamdi as chief of the Command Council was Hamdi's Deputy Commander in Chief and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Ahmad Husayn Al-Ghashmi. Al-Ghashmi was widely unpopular upon his immediate rise to power, with many people blaming him for the killing of Al-Hamdi. Al-Ghashmi's primary task was to restore calm in the troubled nation, but also to convince the international community that despite a grave and tragic incident, all was well (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a). But all was not well. During Hamdi's brief 3-year tenure, the progressive forces that had taken part in the initial civil war against royalist forces from 1962 – 1970, and who were later sidelined by right-leaning republicans in favour of Saudi national recognition, joined together in 1976 to form what would be known as the National Democratic Front (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a). Comprised of six progressive political parties, the NDF was an underground rebel movement of socialist inclination fighting for the unification of Yemen under a socialist-oriented system of governance. During Hamdi's tenure, the NDF and its precursors remained calm and saw in Hamdi a potential ally for their own cause. Indeed, Hamdi's crackdown on tribalist centers of power in North Yemen's hinterlands and the dislodgement from Saudi political dominance received much appraisal by the NDF (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a).

Saleh's Rise to Power

With the demise of Ibrahim Al-Hamdi, the National Democratic Front (NDF) found itself bereft of a potential state ally. Subsequently, Al-Ghashmi, who succeeded Al-Hamdi in the immediate aftermath of the latter's assassination, succumbed to a similar fate a mere eight months later in a suitcase bombing attack. This succession of events led to the ascension of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who subsequently became Yemen's longest-serving President. However, Saleh's ideological stance did not align with the objectives of the NDF. In order to maintain relevance within the fiercely contested and polarized political milieu, the NDF sought alliances beyond national borders. Notably, the demise of Al-Ghashmi was closely followed by the assassination of Salim Rubai Ali, the incumbent president of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). This event precipitated the elevation of Abdul Fattah Ismail as the principal figurehead of Marxist South Yemen. Fortunately for the NDF, Ismail espoused a more assertive stance toward the propagation of Marxist ideology, advocating for the support of progressive revolutionary movements combatting authoritarian regimes across the Arabian Peninsula. With Saleh tightening the strings of his newfound authority, the NDF declares an open war in 1980 across YAR's southern provinces bordering the PDRY (R.D. Burrowes 2010). Just a year earlier, the United States provided the YAR with military financial assistance against what it perceived to be the "Soviet-backed" threat of the NDF (R.D. Burrowes 2010), thus transforming a seemingly innocuous civil war into yet another grand playing field of the Cold War.

The United States Government and its Saudi allies were horrified by the increase in scale and scope of all-out fighting. For Saudi Arabia, it was an absolute imperative to strengthen Saleh's new and shaky regime to maintain the YAR as a buffer state separating Saudi Arabia and Communist PDRY (CIA 1982). In order to do so, the Saudi Kingdom allied itself with powerful tribal confederations in North Yemen to form what would become known as the "Islamic Front", an Islamist umbrella militia that would later come to form the basis of Yemen's Islamist, Muslim Brotherhood-aligned opposition well into the 1990s (Robert D. Burrowes 2016a). The 'civil war' eventually dies out in 1983, with the Saleh regime and the Islamic Front emerging as the penultimate victors. There had been intermittent negotiations between Saleh and the NDF as the war raged (R.D. Burrowes 2010), with the latter demanding an end to Saudi economic dependence and a national land reform akin to that of the southern PDRY (Golovkaya 1994). Saleh's stranglehold on power is maintained, but so is

Saudi Arabia's economic and political influence which would otherwise have been threatened.

Unification and lost promises

The road to unification was rocky. In 1986 the PDRY experienced its worst form of internal violence since 1969. Tensions had been rising within the ruling Yemeni Socialist Party the previous year in an internal power struggle between Ali Nasir and Abdul Fattah Ismail, who had earlier went into self-imposed exile in Moscow for "health reasons"(Fred Halliday 1990). The disagreement on key government positions eventually broke out into open fighting by January 1986, with thousands of party members, soldiers of the Armed Forces and People's militias killed(Fred Halliday 1990). Key members of Abdul Fattah Ismail's leftist faction in the YSP were murdered, although sources dispute the exact circumstances surrounding Ismail's own fate. Following the crisis, the YSP was able to gradually reconstitute itself, but now maintained a much weaker position internally, as well as a ruined national economy that would largely prove detrimental to resurrect(Fred Halliday 1990). Ali Nasir was ousted following the violence, with Ali Salem Al-Beidh, a member of Ismail's faction within the YSP, assuming power of the now-weakened Marxist state. The gradual decline of Soviet financial aid to the PDRY was also a crucial factor that inevitably led to the resurrection of unification talks with the North, as there now was a clear financial incentive to unify, dominating otherwise ideological goals of unification. National unity is finally achieve on May 22nd 1990, following two years of intense negotiations between the former separate polities(Dunbar 1992). The agreement stipulated that the former president of the Yemen Arab Republic, Ali Abdullah Saleh, would retain the presidency of the now-unified republic, whereas Ali Salem Al-Beidh, head of state of the PDRY, would become the country's new prime minister(Dunbar 1992). In this arrangement, it was assumed that an equilibrium between what used to be antagonistic forces would be maintained, and that through this division of power, the entirety of Yemen would feel, at least on paper, represented within the echelons of the new state apparatus(Dunbar 1992).

In 1993 the first democratic elections take place in the new and young unified republic(Inter-Parliamentary Union 1993). A total of 301 seats in the unified and newly-established joint House of Representatives were up for grabs, with Saleh's General People's Congress and Al-Beidh Yemeni Socialist Party expected to be the primary contestants in the election(Inter-Parliamentary Union 1993). With a 90% voter turnout, a tie was widely expected between the two primary contestants, but as history would have it, that was far from

being the case. Once the election had taken place and the ballots had been counted, the Yemeni Socialist Party was practically sidelined by the newcomer “Yemeni Alliance for Reform”, also known as the Al-Islah Party(Inter-Parliamentary Union 1993). The Yemeni Socialist Party suspected a rigged and flawed democratic process, which would later turn out to be their demise. Saleh’s grip on power was further cemented, and with the supposed participation of the Islah Party, a grand purge of Yemen’s socialist movement was instituted in the immediate wake of the election(Parodi, Rexford, and Van Wie Davis 1994). Socialists and trade unionists were assassinated and purged from the state institutions, forcing Ali Salem Al-Beidh to seek refuge in Aden(Parodi, Rexford, and Van Wie Davis 1994). The unrest quickly turned into a full-scale conventional civil war by May 1994, and entirely predicated on the lie propagated by Saleh himself, that southern MiG fighter jets had launched airstrikes on a northern military base, despite the fact that the fighter jets were conducting a routine military exercise prepared for beforehand(Parodi, Rexford, and Van Wie Davis 1994). Unexpectedly for the passive observer, Ali Salem Al-Beidh found an unexpected ally in the Saudi kingdom, which as I have delineated previously, maintained an ambiguous two-track policy towards Yemen. To Saudi Arabia, it was imperative that Yemen did not become a prosperous united country, and not one based on a radical progressive ideology that would threaten Saudi Arabia’s hegemonical position across the Peninsula. For that reason, the Saudi kingdom funded Northern troops with arms and money, while paying lip service to Southern secessionist ambitions(Parodi, Rexford, and Van Wie Davis 1994).

The war eventually comes to an end by the summer of 1994, but in lieu of what many had hoped would become a democratic republic on the peninsula prior to the war, was now a republic without any shred of democracy. Saleh’s GPC party had merged ranks with the Saudi-backed Islah Party to create a system that was only independent in name, but in reality deeply intertwined with Saudi political and economic ambitions(Parodi, Rexford, and Van Wie Davis 1994). Much to Saudi Arabia’s delight, while Yemen may have become a united republic outwardly, the country was deeply divided internally.

Hussein Al-Houthi and the Believing Youth

Hussein Badruddin Al-Houthi, a native to Yemen’s Saadah region, ran for the elections in 1993. A year prior he co-founded the Al-Haq Party, a Zaidi religious party whose aim was to electorally challenge the conservative Saudi-backed Al-Islah Party at the ballot box(Al-Jazeera Arabic 2004). The Yemeni Socialist Party supported the establishment of the Al-Haq Party in the understanding that a rival to Al-Islah would be beneficial to their cause as

well(Al-Jazeera Arabic 2004). Hussein Al-Houthi ran in the elections of 1993, telling his electoral district: *"I do not promise you anything, but I promise you that I will not represent you in falsehood"*(al-Maḥbashī 2022). He eventually won one of the two seats granted to the Al-Haq Party in 1993 and was officially sworn in that same year. As a parliamentarian, Al-Houthi had a key role as member of the parliamentarian reconciliation committee, trying to bridge the gap between Al-Beidh and Saleh before an impending catastrophe. Al-Houthi strongly objected to Saleh's increasingly antagonistic tone towards the South, and sided politically with the Socialist Party against a war he considered fundamentally unjust and unfair(al-Maḥbashī 2022).

As the war eventually came to an end, the Saleh regime decided to shift focus towards Al-Houthi and his family, and on June 16th, 1994, the Saleh regime launched a military campaign in Al-Houthi's home district Maran for the purpose of his arrest. While the military was unable to arrest Al-Houthi himself, they did manage to arrest members of his family to be held without trial for more than a year, as well as destroying the personal abode of Al-Houthi himself(al-Maḥbashī 2022). For Al-Houthi, these moves solidified his belief that the Saleh regime was fundamentally unjust and corrupt and had a lasting impact on his political engagements. As a result, he did not seek reelection in 1997, instead turning towards religious communal initiatives in his home region under the name "The Believing Youth"(al-Maḥbashī 2022).

What started as a non-violent religious initiative became increasingly political and antagonistic in the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York, and the so-called "Global War on Terror" that followed in its immediate aftermath. On January 17th, 2002, Hussein Al-Houthi launched the "Cry in the Face of the Arrogant", the infamous slogan that would become the official identifier of Hussein Al-Houthi's new movement, reading: *"Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse upon the Jews, Victory to Islam"*(Winter 2011). Serving as the group's primary commitment device to rally opposition against Saleh's alliance with the United States, the slogan would often be chanted during Friday prayers or spray-painted on walls across the country by the movement's supporters. One such event occurred in January of 2003, where President Saleh made a quick stop in the Saadah region en route to Mecca for the compulsory pilgrimage. While attending Friday prayers at a local mosque, the congregants suddenly burst out in fiery chants, forcing Saleh to order the arrest of at least 600 people in the mosque(Winter 2011). On June 18, 2004, Yemeni security forces arrested more than 600 people for chanting that same slogan at the Great Mosque in Yemen's capital

Sana'a. Not long after, the Saleh regime issued an immediate arrest warrant on Hussein Al-Houthi, with the military sent to Saadah region for his arrest(Winter 2011). This proved to be fatal, as three soldiers of the Yemeni Army were ambushed and killed, prompting Saleh to announce a bombing campaign on the region entirely – thus starting what would become the first out of 6 wars in the region(Winter 2011). Hussein Al-Houthi was killed in September of 2004 in Marran province, and to curb the movement's supporters, the government decided to plaster the image of his dead body on billboards in the local area(Winter 2011). Hussein's younger brother, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, would assume the role as the movement's leader in lieu of Hussein(Winter 2011).

The conflicts between the government and the "Houthi" movement (a term largely disputed by the group itself) continues well throughout the 2000s, but reaches a critical point during the 6th and final war between August 2009 and February 2010 with the direct participation of the Saudi military(Winter 2011). Operation "Scorched Earth", as it was called, was primarily a Saudi bombing campaign meant to dislodge the rebels from their highland fortress in the mountainous Marran district of Saadah region(Henderson 2009). The wars and the Saudi offensive was likewise designed to detach what was perceived to be "Iranian support" for the rebels, although neither Saleh's government, the US Government nor Saudi Arabia had any concrete evidence that Iran was funding and 'directing' the movement(Winter 2011). The 6th round of conflict becomes the deadliest, especially for the civilian population, with more than 250,000 people internally displaced by the conflict(Winter 2011).

Chapter 5: Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how, and in what ways, colonial and regional powers have methodically and deliberately kept Yemen in a state of underdevelopment, and how that may be able to explain current and ongoing tensions in the Red Sea. This thesis will be utilizing a world-systems theoretical approach, first developed by Emmanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s, and later expanded upon by French-Egyptian Marxist theoretician Samir Amin in his magnum opus "Unequal Development" from 1973. The paper will likewise be drawing upon the works of Dr. Ali Kadri, whose works on accumulation through destruction have contributed to a broader understanding of the innate crisis-ridden nature of the global capitalist economic system.

World Systems Theory

The World-systems analysis framework has its origins in the early 1970s as a renewed perspective on the realities of the world in which we live. Although many of the concepts that make up world-systems analysis have been around for a considerable amount of time, the world-systems framework is a renewed application of those concepts(Wallerstein 2004). At its core, the world-systems framework largely serves as a replacement for the standard unit of analysis which is the state, as world-systems analysts and proponents of the theory contend that the current economic system is fundamentally global, i.e. the world-systems framework spoke of – and critiqued – globalization before ‘globalization’ was even a popularized word in English(Wallerstein 2004). Arguably the most important point introduced by the theory is the tripartite global division of labor, whereby the world is divided between the core, the semi-periphery and the periphery. Between all three exists unequal exchange, with the core (hence its name) serving as the centerpiece of the global capitalist economy(Wallerstein 2004). The core states (such as the US, UK, the EU as a single polity) are the most technologically advanced with highly-industrialized economies, the semi-peripheral are of a lesser economic standing, being both exploited by the core while in itself serving as a core to the peripheral states, which are the least industrialized, least developed and the most exploited(Wallerstein 2004). The theory is nothing but entirely applicable to analyzing Yemen as a case-study, given that the country over a long period of time has been forced into a state of perpetual underdevelopment and economic disarticulation, not just by the core states (US and UK chiefly), but by the regional semi-periphery such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The degree to which Saudi Arabia can be described as semi-peripheral only may be disputed given that its oil-dominated economy is highly valuable and important to sustaining the economies of the core and their military institutions(Spalding 2023). Another highly important theme in the world-systems analytical approach is the notion of a “longue durée”. Derived from Braudel’s theoretical works, the term highlights the importance of looking at phenomena over long periods of time rather than the assumption that any given phenomenon is fixed in time and place(Wallerstein 2004). An analysis of Yemen, a country that has evidently gone through much calamity since the 1960s, should make use of the longue durée approach since many of the events that have transpired over the years remain inherently connected with a common thread.

Peripheral Capitalism

Egyptian-French Marxian economist Samir Amin has expanded upon Wallerstein's World-Systems theory in ways that would be wrong not to include in an analysis of Yemen's underdevelopment and disarticulation. Firstly, Amin synthesizes and introduces the theoretical concept of peripheral capitalism, arguing that its formation has been inherently different from that of core capitalism. Amin argues that the unequal trade relations between core capitalist states and precapitalist peripheral states have caused certain retrogressions in production in the latter aforementioned, without there being a viable or sustainable means of alternative (S. Amin 1976). The transition from a subsistence economy into a commodity economy has thus been to the abject detriment of the periphery; the introduction of a commodity economy in the periphery largely hinged on this very disarticulation of society, since the social structures were naturally antagonistic towards commodity exchange (such as the communal spirit of a local society proclaiming all people owners and tillers of the land), which naturally makes the inherent competitive nature of capitalism unachievable (S. Amin 1976). The erosion of the village thus ensured the introduction of capitalism to the periphery, often maintained through the use of colonial violence to "stimulate monetarization of the primitive economy" as Amin puts it (S. Amin 1976). The simple idea is that the introduction of capitalism to the periphery, and the establishment of a certain unique peripheral commodity economy is entirely determined by the central capitalism, since the periphery contained a surplus value rate far exceeding that of the core, making the extraction of superprofits possible through unequal exchange (S. Amin 1976).

As I highlight in the forthcoming analysis, Yemen's production output was never of major interest or importance to colonial empires such as the UK; Yemen's importance hinged strictly on its adjacency to the Red Sea, which has historically been highly crucial for the current global economy as well as the economies of prior empires. How, then, is Amin's theory of peripheral capitalism applicable to Yemen? I argue that in lieu of certain types of commodities that would have otherwise enabled a hegemonic power to extract and exploit in pursuit of profit, it is the country's geostrategic positioning that becomes, in itself, the commodity – that Yemen ought to be controlled and dependent on peripheral and central hegemony to ensure profits through the commercialization of the Red Sea. The disarticulation of Yemeni society and the replacement of indigenous cooperative subsistence economy with a peripheral commodity economy has ensured the country's total dependence on central

capitalism to remain just barely afloat. In turn, the core gets certain strategic benefits over the country itself, and by extension the Red Sea region.

Military Merchant Class & War as a Commodity

Dr. Ali Kadri from the London School of Economics described an additional phenomenon which I consider highly important for the analysis of Yemen as a case study. Kadri describes that in the Arab world, the army was usually the sole driver of national development in the immediate post-colonial years, together with broad sections of the working classes & national bourgeoisie, but as the peripheral states became integrated into the world economy, often by the deliberate erosion of the peripheral pre-capitalist societies, the military metamorphosized into a class of its own whose purpose was no longer to bolster and facilitate development, but to prevent it – the dismantling of the state itself(Kadri 2016). Kadri further argues that this new merchant class sustains itself through the perpetual chaos and anarchy in the Arab World that is, often, facilitated by the world core of the global capitalist economy – such as wars of intervention, bombing campaigns, Iraq, Syria, Somalia and Yemen in particular(Kadri 2016). The incentive to bring peace, fraternity and most importantly development is thus diminished, because the war becomes a commodity to be traded itself, a commodity to which the international financial class is able to derive profits from in the form of certain geostrategic benefits(Kadri 2016), be it oil in Iraq or the security of the Red Sea near Yemen.

Through this theoretical understanding of the Arab World in relation to the World-Systems analytical framework, the assumption arises that central capitalism have long held a fundamental interest in not just facilitating unrest in Yemen, but to maintain the unrest altogether, like colonial Britain playing off feudal sheikhdoms in the hinterlands against each other to maintain the security of its prime Aden colony, or the IMF (as an appendage of the US-dominated global capitalist economy) forcing crippling austerity measures on the country despite knowledge that they could generate national discontent and uproar. In that respect, the United States arguably had a vested interest in keeping a corrupt kleptocrat in the seat of power in Yemen that could assist in the fomentation of national instability, maintaining the perpetual disarticulation of the state, of the society and of the economy, to ensure that America's economic interests in the region at large would not be sufficiently threatened.

Chapter 6: Methodology and Operationalization

This study adopts a case study methodology in its research design, presenting a valuable approach for delving deeply into specific phenomena amidst real-world events (Ebneyamini and Moghadam 2018). Through this method, I aim to achieve a comprehensive understanding of Yemen's historical trajectory, the disarticulation and underdevelopment of Yemen, and exploring how these factors may be able to describe the underlying foundations behind the Red Sea crisis. The research timeline spans from the 1960s to the present day, encompassing pivotal events such as the revolutions of '62 and '63, the NLF rebellion in the North, the 1994 civil war, leading up to Ansarallah's assumption of state power in 2014 and developments that continue until present day. This temporal scope enables me to capture crucial historical and economic developments, analyze contemporary dynamics, and provide an updated analysis as the crisis in the region continues to unfold and develop.

Employing the case study approach allows for a nuanced examination of Yemen's distinctive historical, economic, and sociopolitical circumstances. This method sheds light on the country's position and role within the global capitalist system, as well as the interests of regional and international powers in Yemen. By adopting this methodology, the study aims to conduct a thorough investigation capable of uncovering subtleties and complexities often overlooked by broader cross-country analyses. The case study approach allows me to utilize and examine a wide range of material that would enable me to gain a broader understanding of foreign strategies (both political and economic) vis-à-vis Yemen, Saudi sociopolitical and economic influence, the role of the American hegemon, various Bretton Woods institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, and how all of these have conjointly contributed to the abysmal economic state Yemen has found itself in for decades, but also inadvertently contributed to the growing popular resentment to the very global capitalist paradigm.

For the research to appear as clear as possible, it could be said that the dependent variable (y) remains the disarticulation and underdevelopment of Yemen, whereas I intend to uncover the independent variable(s) (x), that is, the specific ways and means deployed to accelerate and maintain said underdevelopment. In this case, a set of provisional arguments (hypotheses) will determine the independent variable(s).



Provisional Argument

I have developed two assumptions to direct the thesis based on preliminary research and the thesis objectives. I will seek to either prove or disprove the following:

1. *The United States has strategically maintained Yemen's underdevelopment to secure access and control over vital maritime routes and resources in the region. By keeping Yemen politically and economically unstable, the U.S. can exert influence over the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait, a critical chokepoint for global oil shipments, and thus secure the entire Red Sea.*
2. *Rejection of colonial underdevelopment, hegemony and exploitation can explain Ansarallah's ongoing operations in the Red Sea and the movement's general antagonistic attitude towards US policy.*

My research is transparently predicated on the presumption that there have been very meticulous and deliberate attempts by the United States and its regional allies to forcefully integrate Yemen into the global capitalist economy, despite the fact that decades of underdevelopment and more than 100 years of colonial rule had left an indelible mark on the country's socioeconomic progress with little to no upwards mobility, turning Yemen into a poor, underdeveloped peripheral country for the core to exploit. It is also predicated on the presumption that the Red Sea constitutes an important artery to keep the capitalist economy flowing, and that in the event Yemen would become militarily or otherwise politically and economically self-sufficient and autonomous, it could pose a substantial threat to the quote-unquote "free flow of commerce" through the Red Sea. I argue that there are telltale signs proving a long-time concerted effort on part of the US and its allies, in particular Saudi Arabia, to keep Yemen in a state of perpetual poverty such that it would pose no serious threat to the Red Sea and US strategic interests in the region. However, this systematic conspiracy has also garnered strong opposition inside Yemen, and created a circular effect whereby what must not happen (public discontent, rebellion, rise of an overtly antagonistically anti-imperialist regime) has happened, and that this political and economic conspiracy has done the exact opposite of what was supposedly intended.

The analysis part is divided into 4 overarching themes, which will be explained at the beginning of the chapter. These themes are derived chiefly from Samir Amin's scholarly work and aims to create a holistic picture of Yemen's underdevelopment and the strategies countries like the US, Saudi Arabia and Colonial Britain may have had in keeping the country

disarticulated and underdeveloped. The last theme concerns autonomous strategies for development and helps to elucidate the possibility of economic prosperity outside the neo-liberal global capitalist framework, and the feasibility of Yemeni development not predicated on loans and an inherently unequal trade relationship.

The foregoing background chapter is important to the overall thesis, because it helps give the reader an understanding of some of the most crucial events that have taken place since the country gained its independence from direct colonial dominion. The 4 analytical themes differ from the background chapter in that they focus on specific events and policies that the background chapter does not, which is to say, the background chapter serves to give the reader an overall understanding of the surface-level developments in Yemen, while the analysis focuses on the causes and policies that have caused said developments.

Chapter 7: Research Method

Data collection

This thesis analysis employs a qualitative methodology that integrates primary and secondary data sources to fulfill the research objectives based on a document analysis method. Qualitative data utilized in this thesis encompass policy documents, previously classified information from bodies such as the CIA, documents from the IMF as well as leaked documents likely still classified, news articles, reports, publications from international organizations, official statements or press releases, and scholarly articles, all accessible electronically. Policy documents will elucidate the official objectives, such as those of the United States and its various institutional appendages such as the IMF, towards the region at large and Yemen in particular. The current & previously classified information will shed light on the deliberations made for internal review, which is likely to diverge from public state narratives. Reports, be they political or economic, will assist in painting a larger, more intricate picture of the situation in clearer detail.

It should be noted that much of the empirical data used in the analysis is based on secondary data rather than primary data. The reason being is that I have been very limited as far as data collection goes, and any more fulfilling analysis would likely benefit from access to certain archives and libraries containing historical primary data surrounding the country's political and economic trajectory of the past 6 decades. Yemen remains, in my opinion, a criminally understudied country within transatlantic academia, which has resulted in the

scholarly literature not being as extensive as it could have been. Were I given more time and had this been the product of direct field work, I believe I would have been able to utilize more extensive primary data to unravel Yemen's economic disarticulation in a more concrete way than what I have been able to produce for this thesis. I would have liked to be able to investigate deeper into events such as the direct circumstances surrounding the murder of North Yemeni President Ibrahim Al-Hamdi, but a Freedom of Information request at the British Archives, which I filed 2 years ago, has been pending ever since as the files remain classified under a specific British law that prevents archival documents from being released in the event that doing so could jeopardize UK relations with a foreign country. It highlights and underscores, I would say, the *longue durée* approach to historiography and why that remains so critical in any holistic analysis. It should also be noted that some of the data that I have collected and utilized are originally in the Arab language. While I do comprehend some Arabic, my level of proficiency is not high enough to translate these sources on my own. For that reason, I have seen it necessary to conduct a simple machine translation of the texts by use of AI technology so that they would be possible to utilize for the analysis. Most of the titles of the Arabic-language sources have been romanized according to the ALA-LC standard, and the bibliography will reflect as such.

Chapter 8: Analysis

The following analysis will be based on the theories developed by French-Egyptian economist and world-systems analyst Samir Amin. Through Samir Amin's work, especially his widely regarded magnum opus "Unequal Development", a set of four themes has been derived. Each theme will aim to explore and analyze Yemen's past and present economic and political conditions with regards to the country's encounter with past and present colonial powers. The themes are as follows:

1. Historical Colonial Interactions:

Within this theme, I aim to examine and explore Yemen's historic interactions with colonial powers. I will be explaining the methods and policies employed by these historic colonial powers for the sake of maintaining their foothold and power in the country, as well as political and strategic considerations these colonial powers had in seeking a dominion on the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula.

2. Economic Dependence and Peripheral Capitalism:

Within this theme, I will be analyzing how external economic pressures and dependencies limit Yemen's ability to develop an autonomous and sustainable economy. Yemen's economy is heavily influenced by its peripheral position in the global economy. The country's dependence on foreign aid, IMF loans and limited export commodities reflects its economic vulnerability.

3. Structural Characteristics of Underdevelopment:

Within this theme, I will be analyzing the structural characteristics for Yemen's persistent poverty and economic stagnation. Structural characteristics of underdevelopment may include (but is not limited to) extreme unevenness, i.e. the disparity in productivity and income distribution, disarticulation of production, unequal international specialization, rise and strengthening of a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, and the blocking of autocentric growth.

4. Strategies and Prospects for Autonomous Development:

Within this theme, I aim to analyze and examine potential strategies for autonomous development in Yemen. I will be evaluating Yemen's potential pathways to achieve

self-sustained growth. Additionally, I will be examining to what degree these alternative strategies have been able to reduce the country's reliance on external aid, and how they may have enhanced local capacities to foster a more resilient and self-reliant economy.

8.1. Historical Colonial Interactions:

For the analysis to be in any way meaningful, we must firstly delineate which countries can be considered “powers”, that is, countries that maintain a colonial or semi-colonial unequal relationship with Yemen, both historically as well as presently.

Ottoman Empire: A colonial power with a historically vested interest in conquering Yemen. Ottoman expeditions began in the early 16th century, and up until the early 20th century, tried on and off to gain a foothold in the northern part of the country. Ottoman-Yemeni interactions are for the most part multifaceted, and the Ottoman Empire never managed to gain any strong foothold, having been beaten by and driven away by North Yemen's Zaidi Imam rulers.

United Kingdom: South Yemen's historical colonial ruler. Held sway over much of the Peninsula up until the late 1960s. Controlled much of South Yemen directly under its colonial dominion and maintained significant influence over North Yemen's Imamate monarchy. The United Kingdom was forced to leave South Yemen in November of 1967 after its colonial dominion fell apart in a bitter struggle with the National Liberation Front.

Yemen's interaction with colonial powers much depend on which Yemeni nation-state one decides to focus on, i.e. either North Yemen or South Yemen, since the interactions, and arguably the post-colonial outcomes, differ in very significant ways. Although there's a noticeable difference, the colonial interactions of both North & South Yemen merge together where common cause (and for the colonial powers, common concerns) begin to intertwine. In describing British colonialism in Yemen, I will be mostly focusing on South Yemen, given it was there the colonial experience was more entrenched and direct than in the North.

Ottoman Colonialism

What was known as the “Mutawakilite Kingdom of Yemen” became officially independent from Ottoman colonial rule in 1918 with the fall of the Ottoman Empire(Said 2019). North Yemen’s interactions with Ottoman colonialism have been one of bloody antagonism spanning various, but often limited periods, meaning that Ottoman colonial rule was never continuous from its first cementation and until its eventual and final demise. The Ottoman justification for its first conquest of Yemeni territory, specifically Aden, in 1538, was to establish an operations base that would grant the Ottomans the strategical upper hand in combatting Portuguese settlements on India’s west coast(Kour and Kour 1980; Said 2019). From Aden, the Ottoman Admiral Sulayman Pasha moved further north along Yemen’s Red Sea coast and overtook every major trade hub one by one, until finally capturing the Yemeni capital Sana’a and subjecting the entirety of Yemen to Ottoman colonial rule(Kour and Kour 1980). There exist no documents detailing any sort of exploitative surplus extraction from Yemen by the Ottoman colonial rulers, and its limited engagement with Yemen may thus be of squarely strategic and military importance. The Ottoman Empire needed a military outpost from which it would be able to compete, at first, with Portuguese colonial ambitions in the region and through the greater Indian Ocean. The Ottoman Empire’s engagement with Yemen is also, arguably, limited to the era commonly known as “Old Imperialism” spanning the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, where the chief objective of the imperial powers at the time was to secure and facilitate vitally important trade routes for the shipping of much-needed goods and raw materials to the European continent(Wiles 1974). While exploitative, the imperialism of the old age took shape with the emergence of the mercantilist era whereby nations (for the most part large colonial powers) sought to maximize export and minimize import in the belief that the world’s wealth remained static, that is, the idea that the wealth of the world was in limited supply, in particular resources such as gold and silver, and that the accumulation of said wealth implied a zero-sum game whereby one nation’s gain equaled another’s loss(Wiles 1974).

British Colonialism

In 1839, the British East India Company (EIC) finally settles on Aden after having “circled the area like a bird of prey” according to Arab authors(Farah 1998). Initially, the EIC needed a new coal depot strategically placed along its trade routes to India, and eventually settled on Aden as the best possible location. The scope of the EIC’s ambitions, however, changed rather quickly, and the capture of Aden now meant the British Empire had gained

vitality important access to Yemeni coffee (of which it would be able to export), trading possibilities along the Red Sea and military strategic benefits given Yemen's geographic placement(Farah 1998). Having conquered Yemen's south around the same time the Ottomans possessed the north, the two colonial powers entered into an agreement in 1904 to categorically demarcate from whence the line separating the two colonial possessions were to be drawn. This agreement largely sets the stage for the decades-long separation of the Yemeni homeland(Said 2019), which will come to have significant political and economic repercussions further down the line.

British colonial exploitation of Yemen, like the Ottoman colonialism that preceded it, was never about extracting surplus value in the form of certain materials needed by the British Empire, which can be argued was the case with other, more richer post-colonial nation-states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, where their major oil resource was needed to not only boost colonial expansionism, but assist the industrial capitalist development of said colonial powers. In Yemen, however, the exploitation cemented itself in more social and political means rather than squarely economic, although the economic aspect (such as Britain maintaining direct control over Aden as a strategically important hub at the crossroads of major trade routes) certainly plays a bigger, overarching role. As Samir Amin correctly points out, Yemen's productive forces were never developed enough to make it possible for a class to arise that could engage in independent nation-building(S. Amin 1976), a fact the British colonial authorities were presumably highly aware of.

South Yemen, roughly by the time the British had settled on Aden, had split up into numerous small, independent states and sultanates, which the British colonial authorities exploited to their own benefit(F. Halliday 1974). Halliday explains further: A total absence of any kind of raw material extraction and planting of cash crops (as I highlighted previously), no significant European settlerism, and no establishment of markets from which the colonial authorities could extract wealth. British colonial exploitation cemented itself in the way in which it emboldened feudal tribalist leaders in the many quasi-independent statelets surrounding the Aden colony, primarily by means of money and firearms bribery. These leaders had to toe British dictate and command at all times, otherwise the money and the guns would be withheld(F. Halliday 1974). What this meant for the average Yemeni citizen, of which most belong to the landless peasant class, was the strengthening of feudal and overall regressive socioeconomic conditions in the countryside, in which the incentive for development was completely absent(F. Halliday 1974).

British colonial policy of divide and conquer only helped exacerbate and sharpen the contradictions present in Yemeni society. The contradictions between native and settler, peasant and landlord, landless and feudal sultan. The Aden Colony, established in 1937, was the only part of South Yemen at the time directly governed by the British Empire, and in fact the only sliver of Arab land to have ever been directly ruled as such. Beyond the Aden Colony was the “hinterlands”, officially known as the Western and Eastern Protectorates subject to what the British called “in-direct rule”(F. Halliday 1974). This in turn meant that the Aden Colony was the only part of South Yemen that could be considered developed past the country’s dominant feudal conditions, and thus the only part of South Yemen with an urban proletariat(F. Halliday 1974). The British colonial authorities may have been aware that their Aden Colony would not be able to last without the resemblance of growing internal opposition, especially since a wave of anti-imperialist movements began to sweep across much of the underdeveloped peripheral world in the immediate wake of the Second World War, especially in places like Africa and in Indochina. To mitigate the potentiality of internal antagonisms, the British decided to establish the so-called “Federation of South Arabia” in 1959, with the Aden colony formally incorporated into the federation in early 1963(Joseph 2022). The move enraged the growing nationalist currents developing in cosmopolitan Aden, as well as much of the progressive Arab world like Nasserist Egypt, and even the United Nations. The Federation of South Arabia was widely deemed an artificial colonial creation with no national agency, and an attempt by the colonial authorities to embolden and strengthen its foothold on the region(Joseph 2022). The integration of the Aden Colony into the new Federation may have been decided upon to curtail internal dissent following North Yemen’s republican revolution of September 26th, 1962, which overthrew the Mutawakilita Kingdom of Yemen and replaced it with the Yemen Arab Republic. Sir Charles Johnston, the then-High Commissioner for the Protectorate of South Arabia, was well aware that Aden would not be susceptible to a merger with the Federation if such were to be decided democratically through a potential referendum, and understood that a democratic referendum to decide Aden’s future could potentially jeopardize their “strategic facilities” by sowing the grounds for further discontent(C. Jones 2018).

On December 10th 1963, the Yemeni National Liberation Front (an outgrowth of the Aden-based underground chapter of the regional Movement of Arab Nationalists) attempted to assassinate the High Commissioner of Aden Sir Kennedy Trevaskis by lobbing a grenade into his group on the tarmac inside the Khormaksar RAF Airbase(F. Halliday 1974; Joseph

2022). The assassination attempt failed, but by British accounts sparked what would become known as the “Aden Emergency”, a 4-year armed conflict between British colonial and federation forces against anti-colonial liberation groups such as the National Liberation Front and FLOSY, the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen. Yemeni accounts, however, dispute this date, instead claiming that the armed confrontations in the Radfan hills just south of the quasi-independent Dhala Emirate on October 14th 1963 marked the official beginning of the ‘People’s Revolution’(F. Halliday 1974).

Newly Republican North Yemen (Yemen Arab Republic) played a vital, but oft-overshadowed role in supporting the South Yemeni revolutionaries in their struggle to root out British colonialism. It is important to consider that North Yemen’s revolution of September 26th, 1962, directly helped fuel growing anti-colonial and anti-imperialist sentiment in the Arabian Peninsula. The YAR's definitive position of support for South Yemen only emerged after the British decision to back the royalists in February 1963. This change was partly influenced by the strategic development of the civil war in the North, which underscored the mutual benefits of anti-British activities in the South for the hard-pressed Republican forces in North Yemen(F. Halliday 1974). Additionally, the creation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) was significantly influenced by the environment in North Yemen. The NLF was formed by militants from the South who had gone to the YAR after September 1962, including tribal leaders, army officers, workers, and intellectuals. These individuals were crucial in escalating the armed struggle in the South against the British, starting with guerrilla operations in the Radfan mountains in October 1963(F. Halliday 1974).

The NLF was widely successful in its armed struggle against colonialism. Building on a tangible and realistic socialist and anti-colonial political framework, their struggle was waged two-pronged against both the British directly in Aden and across the hinterlands, as well as the feudal Sultans that maintained power surrounding the Aden Colony. After 4 years of tireless struggle, the tide finally began to turn in favour of the NLF on the summer of 1967. On June 20th, 1967, the NLF emerged from the Radfan mountains where they had been fighting British colonial forces for years, and captured the adjacent Dhala Emirate, the Emir and effectively the entirety of the area. That same day, the British colonial forces were forced to retreat from the area in Aden known as “Crater” (where, up until this point, they had an extraordinarily strong presence), signifying the rapid disintegration of the colonial authority. The British withdrawal from Crater was followed by a mutiny of soldiers and police from the

Federal South Arabian Army, the proxy institution installed by the British as an auxiliary force. Crater was then occupied and governed briefly by the NLF for thirteen days, with several prisoners formerly held in British torture dungeons released and property held by British officers immediately expropriated and granted to the people(F. Halliday 1974). By August 1967, the NLF was in control of practically all the South Yemeni hinterlands, with the Federation of South Arabia having disintegrated without the knowledge of the British colonial authorities.

The NLF now found itself in control of much of South Yemen with the Aden Colony and Britain's colonial control withering away by the week. One major obstacle for total victory was the rival nationalist group FLOSY, which remained loyal to the nationalist political line espoused in Egypt by firebrand leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Egyptian defeat against Israel in 1967 had made FLOSY unpopular among the people, with NLF's popularity growing(F. Halliday 1974). This increasing rivalry can be seen as a manifestation of the core and peripheral divide that overshadowed Yemen. FLOSY was dominated by the small urbanite national bourgeoisie and proletariat from Aden, who much favored more peaceful means to achieve national independence such as negotiations and peaceful protests, while the NLF was dominated by Yemen's rural peasantry and saw armed struggle as the only realistic and viable means to achieve independence(nagi 2022).

The NLF would eventually arise victorious against FLOSY in late 1967, clearing the road towards total political consolidation. On the 21st of November 1967, negotiations between the British Empire and the NLF began, and concluded on November 29th(F. Halliday 1974). Every single British colonial soldier, by November 30th, had retreated from Aden. South Yemen, under NLF rule, was now an independent country for the first time in 129 years.

8.2. Economic Dependence and Peripheral Capitalism:

The following theme will be subdivided into smaller categories based on the most crucial factors that have exacerbated Yemen's economic dependency. This will be done to ensure that a holistic picture is painted of the general situation, both historic and contemporary. These crucial factors are derived from Samir Amin's theoretical works as well as his critique of the international capitalist economy. One chapter will deal with the International Monetary Fund and its engagement with Yemen since the 1990s, while another will be focusing on foreign aid, mostly focusing on immediate humanitarian aid as a result of the still-ongoing war.

International Monetary Fund

Following Yemeni unification on May 22nd 1990, many liberal western institutions, especially those of the Bretton Woods paradigm like the IMF and the World Bank, were keen to bring Yemen out of the fold of economic obscurity and into the integrated global capitalist economy. The result thereof was the approval of Yemen's first stand-by credit by the IMF in 1996, which would grant the new country an approved 15-month stand-by credit worth \$193 million to help quell growing economic instability after a turbulent post-unification period (IMF 1996a). The caveat to these loans was Yemen obligating itself to implement liberalized economic reforms, most notably one-step trade liberalization, multi-sector privatization and liberalization of investments (IMF 1996a). 9 months later, the IMF released a statement proclaiming Yemen's readiness to abide by the obligations under Article VIII of the 1944 Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF 1996b), which prohibits Yemen from imposing restrictions on international transactions and engaging in discriminatory currency arrangements without the direct approval of the IMF (IMF 2016).

The IMF makes its reasons for granting Yemen these loans quite clear in a paper released on December 31st, 2000. The so-called "Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper" argues for numerous reform proposals, but chiefly among them is the "accelerated" privatization of all public enterprises, including the privatization of public sector commercial banks, including the National Bank of Yemen (IMF 2000). The liberalization of monetary policy is another reform proposal, which would secure and maintain the policy of floating exchange rates to ensure competitiveness and to encourage what the IMF underscores as "non-oil exports". To the IMF, Yemen is a stagnated and poor society rife with fundamental flaws across all echelons of state governance. There's a scarcity of cultivatable land, a scarcity of water, insufficient infrastructure with less than 10% of all roads being paved, an

inefficient civil service, gender-based inequality and a national drug epidemic in the form of Qat cultivation(IMF 2000). According to the IMF, the only viable way to mitigate such problems is through the decentralization of government, of commercial banking and of international trade. The IMF signs a total of seven (7) lending arrangements to Yemen between 1996 and 2014(IMF 2015).

Table 1: IMF lending arrangements

Yemen, Republic of: History of Lending Commitments as of December 31, 2015 (In thousands of SDRs)					
Facility	Date of Arrangement	Expiration Date 4/	Amount Agreed	Amount Drawn	Amount Outstanding
Extended Credit Facility	Sep 02, 2014	Sep 01, 2017	365,250	48,750	48,750
Rapid Credit Facility	Apr 04, 2012	Apr 17, 2012	23,575	23,575	23,575
Rapid Credit Facility	Apr 04, 2012	Apr 17, 2012	37,300	37,300	37,300
Extended Credit Facility	Jul 30, 2010	Apr 04, 2012	243,500	34,790	34,790
Extended Credit Facility	Oct 29, 1997	Oct 28, 2001	264,750	238,750	0
Extended Fund Facility	Oct 29, 1997	Oct 28, 2001	72,900	46,500	0
Standby Arrangement	Mar 20, 1996	Jun 19, 1997	132,375	132,375	0
Total			1,139,650	562,040	144,415

The IMF places strong emphasis on liberalization and privatization as the supposed “miracle cure” for Yemen’s ills. In one IMF working paper titled “*How Does Conditional Aid (Not) Work?*”, it is concluded that the conditionality of aid, i.e the IMF imposing certain reform conditions on a country before releasing loans and Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), is not only welfare improving, but can help and enable governments to enact deeply unpopular reforms without costly protest (Ramcharan 2002). This would at least allude to the fact that the IMF is deeply aware that many of its conditions and austerity measures are unpopular, but a general assertion is made that they are implemented for the benefit of long-term fiscal profitability and a decrease in government expenditures. In the book “Yemen in the 1990s: From Unification to Economic Reform” released by the IMF in 2002, it is described how structural reforms faced severe difficulties due to the country’s “limited administrative

capacity”(Choueiri et al. 2002b), which is likely referencing the relic from the 1960s and 1970s whereby the central state is unable to govern in the countryside due to existence of competing and often autonomous tribalist centers of power(Robert D. Burrowes 2016b).

Following the 2011 uprising, the IMF sought to expedite the reform plans that had been agreed upon in the 1990s, most importantly canceling government-subsidized fuel. Quoted in a readout of a roundtable hosted by British NGO Chatham House in 2010, the then-Yemeni Deputy Finance Minister Jalal Omar Yaqoub highlighted the reduction of diesel subsidies as the third out of ten priorities the then-Yemeni government was focused on implementing(Chatham House 2010). Although the roundtable took place before Ali Abdullah Saleh was overthrown in 2011, the plan was generally readopted by the superseding government spearheaded by Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. This plan, along with the IMF loans in the mid-1990s, received the full political backing of both the United States and the United Kingdom. The 10-point plan as outlined by Minister Omar Yaqoub was mentioned in a televised press conference given jointly by then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and then-UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband. Both parties stressed in unison that the IMF restructuring program, which the 10-point plan was largely based on, is a plan the parties must do all it can to see be implemented in its totality (Yemen Conference 2010).

Samir Amin contends that the IMF as an institution has helped exacerbate the dependency of peripheral underdeveloped nations towards the capitalist core, which is manifested in several ways that, I would contend, also applies to Yemen’s case. Samir argues that since contemporary world capitalism is in a constant state of crisis, expressed solely in the fact that the profits extracted from production are unable to be invested into the development of productive capacity, which in turn fuels the incentive for other means to invest said floating capital in order to wholly avoid its total ‘devalorization’(Amīn 2014). At a national level, this rather awkward predicament compels neoliberal governments to enact policies that freeze the economies into perpetual deflation, such that the crisis only must be managed and contained rather than solved. The same can be said on an international level, where Amin argues that the globalization of the capitalist world economy necessitates that it be managed on a global level, which is where the IMF steps in. The IMF, in that respect, only serves “to manage” the global capitalist economy, with no regard given to the further development of the economies of the periphery, and Yemen is by no means an exception. While not a major contributor to the Yemeni national economy, the oil industry (as a direct result of IMF-supported liberal austerity) receives virtually no government oversight, and is

entirely dominated by private oil corporations such as Hunt, ExxonMobil, Yukong, CanOxy and others(Choueiri et al. 2002a). The structural adjustment programs, primarily the focus on cutting vital fuel subsidies, is exactly what paved the way for Ansarallah to swoop in and oust the previous government – because they were so unpopular. IMF acts according to short-term fiscal management and what it calls “Macroeconomic Stability”, yet that “stability” never tackles the root causes for many of Yemen’s problems. Cutting the fuel subsidies may have given the Yemeni government an extra pool of cash to spend elsewhere in the triple-digit millions, but the immediate repercussions meant most Yemenis (almost half of the entire population living under the poverty line(World Bank 2020)) suddenly could not afford to pay the rising gas prices for their cars, generators and motorized farming equipment. According to the World Bank, the poverty rate in Yemen has only gone up, seeing a stark 13.4 percent increase from 2005 to 2014(World Bank 2020).

One key event that ought to be highlighted in general Yemen-focused discourse was the incredibly damaging decision by the US-backed Yemeni government in exile in 2016 to split apart the Central Bank into two distinct institutions, each still claiming to be the only Central Bank of Yemen, and then relocate one part of that bank to Aden (where the “internationally-recognized government” had set up an interim capital”) while leaving the other half in Sana’a virtually isolated from global commerce(AP News 2016). This decision led to roughly 80 percent of the entire Yemeni population being commercially isolated from the outside world, unable to conduct international transactions. It also meant that the IMF (and by extension the unipolar economic elite with the United States at the helm) would be able to weaponize the IMF in hitherto unforeseen ways to curtail and pressure the Ansarallah-aligned Government of National Salvation in Sana’a and the rest of historic North Yemen. On August 23rd, 2021, the IMF announced its intention to release up to \$665 million worth of Special Drawing Rights to the US-backed exiled Government of Yemen(Ghobari and Ghantous 2021). This prompted the Governor of the Central Bank in Sana’a, Hashem Ismail Ali, to author a 3-page personal letter to the IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva on September 13th that same year. In the letter, the governor makes the argument for why the IMF is contradicting itself with regards to the release of SDRs, saying that the IMF is directly culpable for the continued suffering of the Yemeni people, since the released SDRs will be recorded as part of Yemen’s outstanding debt to the institution, and in the event the IMF would go ahead with the release of the funds, the Central Bank of Yemen would cut all ties to the IMF and refuse any culpability for what might happen as a result (see Appendix A).

Samir Amin's critique of the IMF being nothing more than an extended foreign policy arm of the United States rings truer looking at the "whys" for Saleh's not-so-reluctant acceptance of IMF's structural adjustment programs since 1995. Yemen had just become a unified state on May 22nd, 1990, and the First Gulf War starts just 3 months later. Saleh, a self-described Arab nationalist, took Saddam's side in the war, leading him into direct collision course with Saudi Arabia and the United States. The Saudis, on their part, feared that Saleh was conspiring with Saddam to create a southern front that would make the partition of Saudi territory possible, and Yemen regaining territory it lost in the Saudi-Yemeni war of 1934 even more likely. Saudi-Yemeni relations had soured because of the latter's unfavorable standpoint in the eyes of the West, and the country would soon (and swiftly) find itself punished for it. In October 1990, the Saudi Government suspended the residency privileges for Yemeni migrant workers living in Saudi Arabia, banishing at least 350,000 Yemeni migrant workers out of the oil rich kingdom(Ibrahim 1990). The results were immediate:

Yemen lost \$350 million in monthly remittances from expatriate earnings, with Saleh acknowledging that Saudi Arabia's move had hurt Yemen's weak national economy(Ibrahim 1990). The Gulf War eventually ended, and Yemen was staring into the abyss of international isolation and total obscurity if the ship did not turn around, and the only way to do so in a way that, one, maintains the illusion of your country's economic and political autonomy, and two, could be of some benefit to your hold on power and personal wealth, would be to accept IMF's Structural Adjustment Programs, implement short-term austerity measures (with long-term evasive effects) while your grip on power is strengthened and your personal wealth is growing. For Saleh, that and allowing USS Cole to dock in the Port of Aden(Carapico 2007) were two of the strongest messages of goodwill he could send to the United States – Goodwill that would later turn into increased cooperation between the US and Saleh following the 9/11 attacks – and evidently an event that would serve as the catalyst for a whole range of events threatening Saleh's rule once more.

Foreign Aid

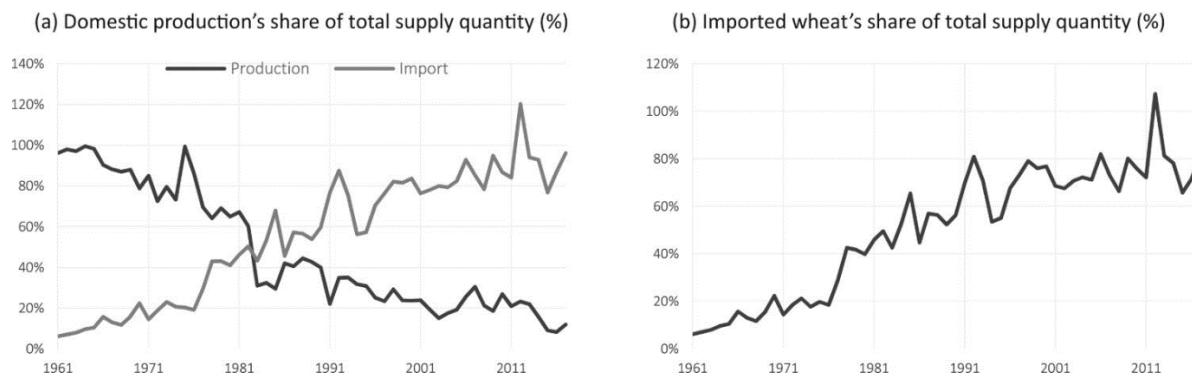
In the book *“Aid to Africa: Redeemer or Colonizer”*, Samir Amin makes his critique of the concept of foreign aid quite clear. Samir Amin’s critique of foreign aid is rooted in his broader analysis of global economic systems and the relationships between developed and developing countries. He perceives foreign aid as a tool for maintaining the existing global power imbalances, arguing that it serves the interests of donor countries more than those of recipient nations. According to Amin, foreign aid often perpetuates a form of neocolonialism, where powerful countries continue to exert control over poorer nations through economic and political means. This control is not just economic but extends to influencing the political decisions and governance structures within recipient countries (Samir Amin and Niyiragira 2009). In his book *“Accumulation on a World Scale”*, Samir Amin describes why countries often become dependent on foreign aid: Peripheral integration into the global capitalist system often necessitates an equilibrium in the balance of payments, which in turn demands an expansion of national exports that far exceeds both the gross internal product and the import capacity of any given peripheral society. Given that an equilibrium in the balance of payments is necessitated, the imports of a society will thus often try to match the demanding export which often transforms a nation into one entirely dependent on foreign aid. The forces internally that expediate this process are multifaceted, but it may include an increased urbanization followed by insufficient growth of local subsistence goods production, which then necessitates foreign imports to meet national and local demand, a rapid growth of administrative expenditure disproportional to the possibilities of the local economy, transformation of income distribution structures and what Amin calls the “Europeanization” of the ways of life, and finally total inadequacy of industrial development (Samir Amin 1974). This means that “growth” in the periphery translates to underdevelopment, for whereas money and economic assistance may be invested into these nations for the short-term management of perpetual economic crisis, its long-term effects are the gradual and total disarticulation of society – *“the development of underdevelopment”* (Samir Amin 1974).

Everything described by Amin can be applied to Yemen, from the excessive imports of basic food products like wheat, rice and flour, to a bloated local and national governance structure spending money that does not exist – and everything in between. Researcher Zaid Ali Basha contends that up until the mid-1960s, Yemen had been agriculturally self-sufficient, primarily owing to centuries of developed agroecology that enabled local farmers

to exploit the otherwise rugged and challenging soil for the benefit of some substantial agricultural output, and indigenous means and ways to sustain that output(Basha 2023).

Figure 1: Grain Import Dependency over time

Source: (FAO and FAOSTAT n.d.) – the grain for the statistical input include sorghum, millet, barley, maize and wheat



The current war on Yemen does play a role in the erosion of Yemeni agriculture, and of the Yemeni national economy at large, but it did not start with the current war. The World Food Programme rang the alarm bell in 2012 declaring upwards of 10 million Yemeni citizens food insecure. It allied itself with Oxfam in 2011 to call for the supply of emergency food aid to one quarter of the Yemeni population(Mundy 2017). It is alarming that a country which once used to be near-total self-sufficient in staple grains such as sorghum, millet and barley in the 1970s (see figure 1) now must beg the international community for humanitarian aid that is, almost exclusively, 100% wheat grain(Mundy 2017). The evidence highly suggests that these issues are structural, fundamental and, arguably, detached from the effects of the war altogether. Arable land may be destroyed directly because of the conflict, but the structural problems, that is, the complete erosion of Yemeni agroecology and total dependency on foreign aid, has been long underway with each passing year.

An inherent problem with foreign aid is the oft overlooked and contentious politicized nature that is arguably inherent to the aid itself, i.e. the question of who gets what by whom for the benefit of what purpose. Everything about aid, especially within the established INGO and NGO circles, is fundamentally political and driven by various determinants which, in the end, does undermine the supposed 'objective' and 'humanitarian' nature of the aid itself. Perhaps in no place in the region other than Yemen is the debate about politicized (and weaponized) aid as prolific and as contentious, having grown even more antagonistic in tone since the start of the war in 2015. Despite being one of the main belligerent actors in the

current conflict, Saudi Arabia has sought to utilize humanitarian aid as a means of power-projection and acquiring influence across the country. Scholars of aid have for many years largely bifurcated into two camps; one camp believing that humanitarian concerns and considerations dominate the wider aid framework, and another camp believing that the self-interests of donor states reigns supreme above all (Van Der Veen 2011).

Table 2: Seven frames of aid (Van Der Veen 2011)

Frame	Goals for Aid
Security	Increase donor's physical security: support allies, oppose Communism, etc.
Power/Influence	Pursue power: increase leverage over others, win allies and positions of influence in international fora
Wealth/economic self-interest	Further economic interests of donor economy; support export industries
Enlightened self-interest	Pursue global public goods: peace, stability, environmental health, population control, etc.
Reputation/self-affirmation	Establish and express a certain identity in international relations; improve international status and reputation
Obligation/duty	Fulfil obligations, whether historical or associated with position in international system
Humanitarianism	Promote the well-being of the poorest groups worldwide; provide humanitarian relief

To understand Saudi Arabia's aid strategy vis-à-vis Yemen, it is important to consider the belligerent Kingdom's primary role in the war on Yemen and its military conduct. Data collected from the Yemeni Ministry of Agriculture shows a shift in Saudi aerial bombardment conduct from August 2015, with a shifted focus from targeting governmental and military institutions to civilian targets of economic importance, which have included water and transport infrastructure, food production and distribution, roads, schools, clinics, hospitals, houses and fields (Mundy 2018). From 2016 the conduct of the Kingdom further shifted to an

all-out economic blockade, essentially isolating the entire country from the outside world as important ports and harbors were blockaded, airports forced to shut and no inbound and outbound flights and ships allowed without the direct approval of the Saudi military(Mundy 2018). The strikes on government facilities, coupled with the forced separation of the Central Bank (as described previously) meant that most Yemenis were either poised to suffer exponentially on purely economic terms for the simple reason that the government is the single-largest employer in the country(Mundy 2018). The aerial bombardment, coupled with the crippling blockade enforced upon Yemen, has led to the war becoming the world's worst humanitarian crisis with more than 80% of the entire Yemeni population relying on food aid just to survive. With Yemen economically brought to its knees, Saudi Arabia saw the penultimate chance to boost its soft-power position by playing a leading role in the distribution of critically-needed food aid to Yemen, with one senior Saudi diplomat alleged to have said off the record "*Once we control them, we will feed them*"(Mundy 2018). According to the Saudi Embassy in Washington DC, the primary Saudi relief agency, KSRelief, has provided more than \$8.2 billion in humanitarian assistance between April 2015 and April 2017(Saudi Embassy to the US 2017). By the Embassy's own account, KSRelief provides direct humanitarian and developmental assistance to nearly 17 million people within the country. Highlighted projects, which appears to be a staple in KSRelief's aid program, has included the establishment of more than 100 health facilities, providing more than 27 million liters of water to said facilities, delivering 2,785 tons of medical aid and supplies and more(Saudi Embassy to the US 2017). A strong emphasis on the humanitarian & obligation framing as shown in Table 2, at least outwardly on the surface. Needless to say, however, is that Saudi Arabia's apparent humanitarian obligation appears rather obscure as they bear primary culpability for the destruction and deterioration of the same infrastructure that they now profess to have rebuilt. The view from the Yemeni capital has remained clear since the beginning of hostilities in 2015: Saudi Arabia (and the UAE) have waged war on Yemen as the regional enforcers of US policy, and that the United States is guilty of waging an economic war that has destroyed and eroded Yemen's most crucial means of survival(al-Qudsī 2024).

8.3. Structural Characteristics of Underdevelopment:

Within this theme, I will be analyzing how external economic pressures and dependencies limit Yemen's ability to develop an autonomous and sustainable economy. As outlined in the beginning of the analysis, structural characteristics of underdevelopment may manifest itself in various forms, but for the sake of this analysis, I will be focusing chiefly on the erosion of the state, of the military structure and capabilities to be specific, and the strengthening of a corrupt bureaucracy by focusing on a highly specific case that, I believe, can be considered appropriate for the sake of this study.

Between roughly 2004 and 2009, the United States Government was engaged with the Government of Yemen on a so-called “buyback” program meant to remove Man-Portable Aerial Defense Systems (MANPADS) from Yemen’s illicit black market. Within this time, the war in Yemen’s northern Saadah region is raging, pitting Government forces against ‘Houthi’ rebels. The official stated goal of this program was to prevent the rebels from getting their hands on these systems, that would otherwise have enabled them to shoot down Government fighter jets with relative ease. Wikileaks documents help us make sense of what took place.

On August 14th, 2004, the Charge D’Affaires at the US Embassy in Yemen Nabeel Khoury sends what is called a ‘reftel démarche’, i.e. the expressed formal position of the US government in reference to a prior telegram, to the Yemeni Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense on August 11th regarding an alleged illicit arms deal between the Yemeni Government and Bulgaria on the procurement of SA-14 MANPADS(US Embassy, Sana’a 2004a). Charge Khoury said that the allegations of the existence of such a deal was deeply troubling, especially since then-Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, Lincoln Bloomfield, was expected to visit Yemen soon to discuss the buyback program that the two sides had been negotiating(US Embassy, Sana’a 2004a).

Bloomfield’s visit to Yemen is later confirmed to take place in the timeframe between the end of August and the start of September, with a scenesetter from the Embassy detailing what the meetings would be focusing on. In the specific scenesetter cable, the Embassy briefs Bloomfield on the MANPADS-buyback program and the position of the Yemeni Government. Firstly, as per the Embassy’s intel, the Yemeni Government was expected to show some degree of resistance to sharing a serialized inventory of its MANPADS stock, and that the government would wish for the entire program to remain a secret(US Embassy,

Sana'a 2004c). Secondly, it was assumed that Saleh would utilize the then-new joint counter-terrorism cooperation between Yemen and the US as major leverage to secure lucrative military and security arrangements, as well as development assistance and food aid(US Embassy, Sana'a 2004c), which alludes to the very realistic possibility that Saleh saw the buyback program as a means to enrich himself and solidify his perpetually-shaky rule. It goes on to state that Ali Saleh's nephew, Ammar Saleh, would be cut out for the position as new director for the National Security Bureau of Yemen, and that Ammar is engaged in his own illicit buyback program on a wide range of different weapons systems, and how US-Yemeni cooperation follows what the Embassy calls a "what have you done for me lately" approach(US Embassy, Sana'a 2004c). A tit-for-tat relationship that only strengthens US strategic objectives in the region at large and the Saleh family's personal fortunes. It is interesting how the Embassy foresees degrees of opposition from the Yemeni government to certain points that were to be raised during the scheduled meeting, such as opposition to a serialized account of MANPADS stocks, to which Ammar should have rebuffed "why would you want to know?", and insistence on the side of the Yemeni government for the need to acquire more modern anti-air systems in lieu of the MANPADS systems, to which Bloomfield is advised to push against such a proposal(US Embassy, Sana'a 2004c)

A later document bearing ID "04SANAA2346_a"(US Embassy, Sana'a 2004b) details Secretary Bloomfield's meeting with Saleh on September 1st 2004. At this point, Saleh has agreed on the general roadmap for the buyback program, but no finalized MoU is in place. Bloomfield continues to underscore the importance of the buyback program when it comes to strengthening the security situation in the region and stressing that MANPADS falling into the wrong hands would pose a grave threat to US security interests(US Embassy, Sana'a 2004b). Saleh claims that Yemen's military does not need the MANPADS for its defense, and uses the conflict in the north as proof that the easy access of such systems has been a fatal mistake for the Yemeni war effort and overarching US regional policy, and advised Bloomfield to convince source nations in Eastern Europe to sell the weapon systems through official channels as a means to curtail the illicit arms smuggling(US Embassy, Sana'a 2004b). Bloomfield says that in talks with said countries, many of them continued to perceive Yemen as a potential client, to which Saleh rebuffed by underscoring how Yemen does not need the system(US Embassy, Sana'a 2004b). It appears as a rather odd back and forth between the two, given reassurances from both the American & Yemeni sides that MANPADS, at the time, did more harm than good for both parties. If that was truly the case, one would not be

far-fetched to assume that source countries would likely, then, not perceive Yemen as a potential client, which could indicate some level of discrepancy surrounding the entire buyback program and the MANPADS question.

To Saleh, however, it was important that the two parties figured out a price that they could agree upon for the buyback program, stressing in meeting with Bloomfield that “everything has a price”, and that the Americans would have to pay “one million dollars for each Strela” (MANPADS variant of Russian origin), with Saleh closing his remarks by bursting out in laughter, and his translator reassuring Bloomfield that he “understood this is a joke”(US Embassy, Sana’a 2004b). It would be woeful ignorance to assume Saleh did not mean what he said in his proposal, given how the UN Security Council concluded in 2015 that Saleh, during his 33 years in power, had amassed a personal fortune between \$33 billion and \$60 billion through corruption and deliberate embezzlement, and engaging in illicit practices such as demanding kickbacks for oil and gas contracts(Al Jazeera 2015). The MANPADS buyback-program, it could be assumed, was perceived by Saleh and much of his nepotistic administration as yet another venture of capital embezzlement and would thus be incentivized to demand the largest possible financial outcome. During that meeting, Saleh also raised the proposal that the buyback program include weapons of other types, saying that the government had already bought back weapons worth \$32 million, and that they urged the United States to buy up the stockpiles for destruction, to which the US government internally raised high doubts about the price figure(US Embassy, Sana’a 2004b).

Finally, on September 28th, the United States Government signs an agreement with the Yemeni Government on the framework of the buyback program, which would entail the purchase and destruction of no less than 1,435 MANPADS(US Embassy, Sana’a 2004d). Deputy Foreign Minister Mohie Al-Dhabbi asks the US Government to ensure that the agreement remains confidential to “avoid any internal public backlash”(US Embassy, Sana’a 2004d). An interesting remark, and an outward admission that the Yemeni Government was deeply aware of the negative repercussions of the agreed buyback program should it come to light and be known by the Yemeni people. The US Government had expected the Yemeni Government to be a more “consistent partner” in the Global War on Terror because of the deal, another outward expression that could allude to the possibility of a previously rocky relationship, which, as has been described previously, have been the case over the years since Yemen became a unified state in 1990.

Five years pass, and in June and July of 2009, the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement at the US Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (shortened PM/WRA), spearheaded by Program Manager Dennis Hadrick, leads a delegation to visit Yemen in order to inspect the progress on the MANPADS buyback program(US Embassy, Sana'a 2009). The general conclusion is that the program has been a success, with 1,161 MANPADS systems having been bought out and destroyed by US technical specialists since 2005. Ammar Saleh, Ali Saleh's nephew, still leads the National Security Bureau, and has accompanied the American delegation in talks and throughout the inspection process. Ammar Saleh underscores that the Yemeni Ministry of Defense would not be susceptible to accept US assistance to destroy official MANPADS stocks, despite the offer having been on the table since 2005(US Embassy, Sana'a 2009).

Such was the general timeline of the highly secretive joint US-Yemeni buyback program. A program that, for all intents and purposes, has been hidden from the eye of the public when it was effective. The general assumption in Yemen, considering what had transpired in the years that followed with wars, coups, revolutions and a sharp increase in instability, was that the buyback program was a deliberate attempt by the United States Government to strip the Yemeni military of offensive capabilities that, in theory, could have been useful in the defense of Yemeni airspace when Saudi Arabia, with US support, began bombing Yemen in 2015. The program itself only came to light in 2021 with a documentary aired by the Yemeni television station Al-Masirah called "War on Arms"(Al-Alam 2021), and caused tremendous uproar by Yemeni public opinion. It is assumed that the expressed intention of the program, that is, to prevent terrorist groups from gaining access to the weapon systems, was a deliberate lie that shielded more ulterior motives. It may be purely speculative, but the documents themselves reveal significant discrepancies that could point to such ulterior motives, as well as the knowledge of the fortune the Saleh family had embezzled from state funds throughout their 33-year hold on power. One major discrepancy is the question on whether the Yemeni Ministry of Defense actually **had** its own stocks of MANPADS systems, with the MoD saying one thing to the US Government – "*MOD insists that there are no official MANPADS stocks*"(US Embassy, Sana'a 2009) And the Yemeni National Security Bureau saying the exact opposite – "*but the intelligence community and the National Security Bureau (NSB) believe that is not the case*"(US Embassy, Sana'a 2009). This major discrepancy manifests itself throughout the leaked telegrams sent by the US

Embassy in Sana'a about the whole process and alludes to the existence of antagonistic competition embedded in the Yemeni security apparatus.

From a theoretical perspective, Dr. Ali Kadri speaks to the nature of the Arab army under neo-liberal economic policies, and describes how the military institution in itself, in its realignment with the merchant class and global financial capital, had become merchants themselves, thus contributing to the total erosion of national security(Kadri 2016). Kadri describes how the “former agents of development”, which consists of an alliance between the military, the working class and bureaucratic elite, has integrated with the international capitalist market to become a class whose purpose is neither development, industrialization or regional trade but exists solely to dismantle the state(Kadri 2016). This scenario played out in Yemen’s immediate post-colonial period, and especially true for North Yemen, whereby the military, the “guardian of the revolution” and the one institution responsible for bringing Yemen out of the fold of feudal obscurity and into a path of national development, essentially became a comprador class of its own with the rise of Saleh and the integration of Yemen into the neo-liberal-dominated capitalist world economy. It would thus come as no surprise that given the Yemeni military’s fundamental role in modern Yemeni society, primarily due to the fact that as attempted civil administrations had been built and later dismantled due to internal conflict, the military has often survived as the only “modern” institution capable of bringing society forward, as Samir Amin argues in many of his works(S. Amin 1976), which would compel the United States to work towards degrees of dismantling and disarticulation of said institution if economic and political hegemony was to be established in the country.

MANPADS may not be the most sophisticated anti-air system ever conceived, but in crisis and war, would at the very least be better than nothing in the face of a much more sophisticated foe. The process of dismantling Yemen’s anti-air capabilities was not solely confined to shoulder-borne systems such as MANPADS. The Yemeni Military’s official newspaper, ‘September 26’, revealed around the time of the documentary’s release that in 2014, the United States was in the process of dismantling so-called “Pechora” missile batteries along Yemen’s coastal areas, which are anti-air missile systems of Soviet origin, and vastly superior to any shoulder-borne systems(26September 2021).

8.4. Strategies and Prospects for Autonomous Development

Within this theme, I aim to analyze national Yemeni strategies for autonomous economic development that can challenge the prevailing neo-liberal status-quo and the deliberate erosion and disarticulation of the Yemeni economy. This theme is important, as it helps to showcase fundamental hands-on attempts at mitigating a crisis that the Yemeni people fundamentally are not responsible for themselves.

When the Ansarallah movement took over the capital city Sana'a in late 2014, the move was officially declared the "Revolution of September 21st". The goal of the revolution was to overturn what the movement perceived to be the imminent dissolution of the Yemeni state and of Yemeni society as the natural result of crippling IMF-supported neo-liberal austerity measures and the further privatization of state-owned industries. Ansarallah marched into the capital with grand promises to the people; promises that most believed in and supported, which was also the reason why most of the pre-September Yemeni Army ended up joining the Ansarallah within a relative short timeframe (Cooper 2018).

In the overarching debate surrounding the Ansarallah, a tendency prevails in the west to paint the movement as nothing but a mere appendage of Iranian expansionism, omitting and erasing all forms of national agency that the group may possess. In truth, the group is the result of Yemeni history itself, the biproduct of Yemen's tumultuous post-colonial era, and the direct result of countless attempts by the United States, as the leading nation of the global capitalist economy, to forcefully integrate Yemen into an economic structure that it was neither developed nor prepared for. Yemen's forced integration into the world capitalist economy has only brought peril and despair to the country, most noticeable in the erosion and total disarticulation of the country's agricultural means of production.

For that very reason alone, a pillar of the Ansarallah's vision for Yemen is the total revival of the country's agricultural infrastructure and output. Dubbed the "agricultural revolution", the plan involves the revitalization of agricultural land and output based on democratic decision-making among the farmers themselves, a plan that almost echoes socialist aspirations for collectivized agriculture in places like the Soviet Union and China. In 2019, the Supreme Political Council – the administrative body in charge of governing Ansarallah-controlled Yemeni territory – released a 10-year plan for the reformation of the Yemeni state and of Yemeni society. In the plan, the Ansarallah highlights and underscore the necessity for achieving self-sufficiency 9 times throughout the document, as well as listing

the achievement and increase in self-sufficiency as one of many strategic goals that take precedence over others (National Vision for the Modern Yemeni State 2019).

Not long after the Ansarallah takeover, the group founded the Higher Agricultural and Fisheries Committee, whose role was to oversee Yemen's retransition towards food and agricultural self-sufficiency. With the announcement of the 'Agricultural Revolution' in 2020, a number of institutions and corporations were established, chiefly the General Corporation for Grain Development and Production and the General Corporation for the Multiplication of Seed Improvement(Saba 2021). A total of eight such companies were established based on a contract farming venture between the farmers and the corporations. According to Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, Dr. Radwan Al-Rubai, the contract farming system has resulted in the percentage of food imports decreasing over time in relation to several highly specific crops such as garlic, maize, raisins, poultry, dates and almonds, with more than 60 such contracts having been signed in 2020(M. S. Hatem 2022). Dr. Al-Rubai also announced that the government in Sana'a had decided to indefinitely put a ban on certain imported goods such as raisins, garlic and apples, as well as seasonal bans on fruits such as Oranges(M. S. Hatem 2022). Doing so incentivizes farmers to grow the crops themselves, as well as sends an important political message that Yemen, despite war and suffering, can afford to ban these products based on a surefire assumption that they are capable of producing enough for national consumption.

Agricultural cooperatives has a long-standing role in post-colonial Yemen, and its large, national foundation can largely be attributed to the social and economic reforms enacted by the then-president Ibrahim Al-Hamdi on March 24th, 1973, in which 13 loosely-organized local cooperatives were merged into the national Confederation for Local Development Associations(Al-Saidi 1992). Hamdi saw the establishment of a national cooperative union as an instrument that could assist in the eradication of feudal-tribal relations in the countryside, and give the largely landless peasantry more autonomy and democratic decision-making over the land they were tilling(Al-Saidi 1992). It was recognized that cooperative agriculture in Yemen could serve a dual purpose; one, by assisting in the economic development of Yemen, and two, progress socioeconomic conditions beyond rural feudalism. Yemeni cooperative agriculture was recognized for its ability to foster a sense of communal, democratic decision-making, whereby each member of a cooperative would pitch in money and advice for any given project, be it farming or autonomously-funded construction projects, and that the incentive to embezzle and cheat was entirely eradicated,

since each had sacrificed to make it happen(Al-Saidi 1992). A document compiled by the Yemeni Ministry of Local Administration concluded rather strongly that these cooperatively-funded projects were often 50% cheaper in terms of funding than the projects initiated by the central government, which in of itself makes for a strong case to why cooperative agriculture may be Yemen's way out of perpetual underdevelopment, and why chiefly the United States (and USAID) have considered them impediments to deliberate strategies designed to turn Yemen into a dependent vassal state. As Dr. Isa Blumi writes in his book "Destroying Yemen", the United States Agency for International 'Development' was tirelessly involved in forcing the integration of Yemen's underdeveloped economy into the global capitalist framework, namely by forcing the country to import cheap US-produced wheat that could force local production to a standstill and later its erosion(Blumi 2018b). Yemen's cooperative movement was perceived as a threat to this strategy, in part because the farmers of rural North Yemen proved difficult to police. USAID directly facilitated the flooding of Yemen's domestic markets with cheap foreign goods, eradicating incentives for local cultivation, and thereby ensuring that the rural population drove towards the country's metropolitan centers, considering that Yemen would be easier to control if said puppeteering was facilitated through a central government instead of a rebellious rural population(Blumi 2018b)

Cooperative agriculture, once a pillar of Yemeni agroecology(Polat 2010), has made a return as part of these new initiatives to foster development towards agricultural self-sufficiency. The Agricultural Cooperative Union was reactivated in the early 2020s with a new set of directives and focus points, and as part of its reactivation, two new distinct cooperatives were formed to each deal with their own focus area – the Cooperative Union of Coffee Producers and the Cooperative Union of Grain Producers(Saba 2021). The Bunyan Development Foundation, a direct biproduct of these new initiatives, have cemented communal involvement in the development of Yemeni agriculture, and helps train farmers and researchers on the methods and strategies that would guarantee maximum crop yield(Saba 2021). These communal initiatives are not only limited to cooperative agriculture itself, but also include service sectors like electricity, roads, water and health facilities, as well as environmental resources such as water, soil, pastures and vegetation. In 2021, a total of 19 studies on a wide range of sectors were conducted by researchers trained by Bunyan(Saba 2021).

Besides the expansion of cooperative agriculture, there also exists a continuous attempt by various agricultural corporations, committees, and societies to enhance Yemen's

meager industrial capacity, chiefly by investing resources into producing equipment that would otherwise have been imported from overseas.

Earlier this year, the Public Corporation for Grain Development Production (PCGDP) unveiled 12 new combine harvesters, produced locally and with local labor, at a grand ceremony in the capital Sana'a (Yemen Eco 2024). The Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation was quoted as saying that unlike imported combine harvesters that can usually process up to one ton per hour, the locally-manufactured harvesters can process up to two tons per hour, and that the costs of manufacturing one harvester at around \$10 thousand dollars is cheaper than to import a harvester at the cost of \$16 thousand dollars (Yemen Eco 2024). Additionally, in 2022, the Al-Iktifa Agricultural Cooperative Society in Yemen's Hodeidah Governorate unveiled the country's first domestically-produced mechanized plow, built entirely from scratch with locally-sourced components (Kanafani 2022). These are achievements that would have been considered inconceivable a decade ago considering how dependent Yemen's economy has always been on imports, and Yemen's minuscule industrial sector.

The so-called "Agricultural Revolution" has been divided into different phases, where degrees of food self-sufficiency and agricultural expansion must be achieved within each phase (M. Hatem 2021). According to a report by the Higher Agricultural and Fisheries Committee, the first phase of the revolutionary process was concluded in 2021 and was a major success. According to the report, a total of 777 trainees from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation had completed their highly specific training to serve the country's many (and expanding) agricultural cooperatives. Of these 777, 22 people received specialized engineering courses trained on Geographic Information Systems (GIS), 55 people trained in marketing and statistics, 50 specialized researchers and 40 people trained in animal health and livestock keeping (M. Hatem 2021). Among other achievements, the first stage of the revolution has resulted in a specialized course on agricultural sciences now being taught at the prestigious Sana'a University, which will train students on the skills necessary for Yemen's agricultural revival (M. Hatem 2021). According to Deputy Minister of Agriculture Al-Rubai, the first stage of the agricultural revolutionary process saw the establishment of more than five thousand local agricultural committees, 74 veterinary campaigns, 56 agricultural associations, 35 dams and water reservoirs refurbished, 558 plows repaired, 2865 community volunteers trained and 34 documents stamped and signed with the country's largest tribal confederations (Al-Haddad 2022). The second phase of the process was focused on the development of the human resources necessary to achieve the objectives set forth in

the agricultural plan, and involved the training of more than 10 thousand new farmers, 1,290 animal health workers, 339 researchers, 25 loan officers, 100 irrigation engineers and 540 ‘association cadres’ trained to administer the day-to-day bureaucratic operation of the many agricultural associations, 10 training programs and the activation of 190 associations spread across the county(Al-Haddad 2022). Most prominently has been the reclamation of land in Yemen’s western Tihama region, with an increase of 104 thousand hectares of arable land(Al-Haddad 2022).

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to highlight and analyze the many ways regional and global powers have kept Yemen in a state of perpetual disarticulation and underdevelopment in pursuit of a grander geostrategic policy in the Red Sea region based on the following preliminary arguments:

- 1. The United States has strategically maintained Yemen's underdevelopment to secure access and control over vital maritime routes and resources in the region. By keeping Yemen politically and economically unstable, the U.S. can exert influence over the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait, a critical chokepoint for global oil shipments, and thus secure the entire Red Sea.*
- 2. Rejection of colonial underdevelopment, hegemony and exploitation can explain Ansarallah's ongoing operations in the Red Sea and the movement's general antagonistic attitude towards US policy.*

The conclusion will be divided corresponding to the prevailing four themes in the analysis:

1. Historical Colonial Interactions

Yemen's long encounter with historic colonial powers such as the Ottoman Empire and the British Empire underscores the importance of the Red Sea region quite clearly. It becomes clear that the colonial powers of their time had an interest in gaining a foothold in Yemen, not because of the existence of any resources that could be exploited to boost and bolster the different colonial economies, but simply because of the country's immediate adjacency to the Red Sea, which then makes Yemen important for colonial ambitions on solely military and strategic considerations. The British colonial ambitions in Yemen are of such recent history that records have been able to adequately reproduce the exact means and methods employed by the colonial authorities to strengthen their foothold. The strategy of playing certain tribes and sultanates against each other in the hinterlands surrounding the important British Aden Colony underscores without any shred of doubt how the colonial empire sought to disarticulate Yemen and keep the country in perpetual disarray to isolate the Aden colony for its own benefit. The British colonial authorities did not facilitate any large settler movement to Yemen, nor did it seek to establish new commodity markets from which wealth could be extracted. Britain's only purpose was to safeguard and secure the Aden colony at the direct cost of the people in the rural countryside, such that the British Empire

had a base at the mouth of the important Red Sea. For that reason alone, I believe preliminary argument #1 has been adequately proven. Preliminary argument #2 cannot be wholly determined for this specific theme, considering the movement did not exist until the late 1990s.

2. Economic Dependence and Peripheral Capitalism

My analysis shows that the IMF has been weaponized for the furtherance of certain US strategic objectives in relation to Yemen, and how IMF lending schemes have exacerbated the disarticulation of Yemeni society. While the IMF may have been correct in its conclusion of the Yemeni economy as unstable and underdeveloped (a basic objective fact), the means with which they have attempted to correct course have been entirely detrimental to Yemeni development. The foregoing knowledge by the IMF and its partners in the former Yemeni regime and the US, that the structural adjustment programs and the slashing of fuel subsidies would likely generate internal discontent, proves to a certain extent a level of general awareness that their programs were, one, deeply and fundamentally unpopular with the broader Yemeni society, and signs of foreknowledge that the programs themselves would be detrimental to the country's immediate development. It is the austerity measures and the removal of fuel subsidies that allows the Ansarallah to march into the capital virtually unopposed and allows them to take over the government institution in a move many Yemenis perceived to be just, righteous and the beginning of a popular revolution.

Furthermore, the partisan ways to which the IMF has been operating in Yemen, most strikingly – as I highlight in the analysis – the undeclared support for the dislodged Aden-based branch of the Central Bank, proves with no shred of doubt that the IMF as an institution largely reflects US policy in the country. Same goes for the very reason Saleh in the late 1990s even accepted the first rounds of IMF lending arrangements, as nothing more than a means to get “back into the fold” with the United States after Saleh decided to take the side of Saddam Hussein in the first gulf war. Predicated on the knowledge that the Ansarallah movement's antagonistic policy towards the United States remains squarely intact, and the Red Sea region being a highly important artery of the current global capitalist economy, I believe both preliminary argument #1 and #2 have been proven. The question regarding foreign aid follows tightly in the footsteps of the role granted to the IMF in the country, and for that reason the two sub-categories have been included in this single overarching theme. As my analysis shows, Yemen used to be entirely self-sufficient in staple cereals such as

wheat and sorghum by the 1960s, only to become entirely dependent on food aid by 2011. I find it conclusive that Saudi Arabia, as the primary exporter of humanitarian & food aid to Yemen since the start of the war in 2015, has used and exploited its position to acquire a stronger soft-power positioning within the war-torn country. This can be shown not only in the general strategy employed by the Saudi Army, such as deliberately targeting agricultural lands, rendering them inoperable and thus making these local areas dependent on foreign aid, but also the amount of aid given to Yemen spread out across different initiatives as data from the Saudi Embassy in DC shows. It becomes clear that Saudi Arabia's strategy has been to bomb civilian areas deliberately, and then through its aid arm establish dependency in these areas such that Saudi Arabia's foothold is not just generated but strengthened and maintained. Because of this, I believe preliminary argument #1 can be considered proven, but only insofar as one subscribes to the overarching argument that Saudi Arabia largely acts as a crucial satellite in the region for US interests, which I believe my paper shows. Based on the theoretical foundations of the paper, which argues that the global capitalist economy is inherently intertwined, and that Yemen's dependency on foreign aid is designed to keep Yemen dependent on foreign aid so that the primary objective of US policy in the region, the maintaining the security of the Red Sea, I believe with certain degrees of confidence that preliminary argument #2 can be considered proven as well.

3. Structural Characteristics of Underdevelopment

The existence of the highly controversial buyback program from 2004 to 2009, wherein the United States would buy illicit MANPADS for the purpose of destroying them speaks to the level of institutional disarticulation that has taken place in the country, and illuminates the very obvious fact that the Yemeni Army at the time had become a merchant class of its own with a vested interest in sustaining the underdevelopment and crisis of the country for the purpose of profit accumulation. What is most striking is one, the secretive nature of the program itself, as well as the fact that the United States, besides dismantling and destroying shoulder borne MANPADS, was also heavily invested in the dismantling of coastal missile batteries. The MANPADS buyback program proves, in my view, how the United States saw to deliberately and with full intent strengthen the corrupt regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh, to dismantle Yemen's anti-air capabilities entirely – which comes to light in the form of the major discrepancy surrounding the existence (or nonexistence) of official MANPADS stocks, which the various Yemeni military institutions seems to fundamentally disagree with. The argument that MANPADS had to be destroyed so they would not fall into

illicit hands may at surface level seem credible, but the credibility of the argument falls apart when the United States, with equal amounts of secrecy, has been dismantling heavy missile batteries along Yemen's coastal areas that are not highly mobile and fixed to battery platforms. In my view, and considering the above, I find both preliminary arguments to be considered proven. The buyback program and the dismantling of coastal missile batteries served US strategic interests in keeping the Red Sea safe and secure for commercial traffic, preventing, as it seems, that the weapons would fall into the wrong hands should a new anti-American administration arise.

4. Strategies and Prospects for Autonomous Development

The Ansarallah gained nationwide prominence in Yemen exactly due to its strong opposition to US interference and US-backed neoliberal austerity measures enacted by the IMF. The "Agricultural Revolution" that the Ansarallah-backed administration enacted in 2020 has proven Yemen's ability to develop independently and outside the systemic framework of the capitalist economy. The fact that the administration has already seen it possible to ban certain imported goods because the percentage of food self-sufficiency on crops such as garlic and raisins has risen since the enactment of the Agricultural Revolution initiative speaks not only to the possibility of autonomous development, but the abject failure of IMF structural adjustment programs. Granted that the underdevelopment of Yemen, if one considers not just present day but the colonial era as well, was a chief necessity to ensure a foothold in the Red Sea region, I believe both preliminary argument #1 and #2 to be considered proven. Yemen's autonomous development strategy under the Ansarallah proves what can be achieved independently from the neo-liberal global capitalist economy and its many institutions, but also, to a certain extent, that the underdevelopment of Yemen is entirely man-made from the outside.

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