Yemen

2016 Country Review

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Chapter 1

Country Overview

Country Overview

YEMEN

Yemen is a country in Middle East, bordering the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea. The modern Republic of Yemen was born in 1990 when traditionalist North Yemen and Marxist South Yemen merged after years of border wars and skirmishes. The country was divided since the early 16th century when the Ottoman Empire conquered north Yemen which became independent in 1918. Meanwhile, Aden and the southeastern part of the country were under British control since 1839. The British withdrew in 1967 from what became South Yemen, and three years later the southern government adopted a Marxist orientation following a coup. The massive exodus of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis from the south to the north contributed to two decades of hostility between the states. The two countries were formally unified as the Republic of Yemen in 1990. A southern secessionist movement in 1994 was quickly subdued.

Today, Yemen is a small oil producer, but its economy depends heavily on oil, and the country has few other natural resources. These challenges are compounded by rapid population growth, poor infrastructure and weak institutional capacity, making Yemen one of the poorest countries in the Middle East.

Yemen is now on the radar of powerful nation states as an emerging base of radical jihadist Islamists seeking to carry out terror attacks against targets in the West. From 2009 to the present, Yemen has become a a stronghold for Islamic extremists and militants, many of whom belong to the al-Qaida terror enclave, and thus giving rise to the Yemen-based al-Qaida entity known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). An attempted terror attack on an airliner on Christmas day in 2009, as well as a cargo plane terror plot in 2010 led to fears of Yemen going down the road of Afghanistan a decade earlier as the world's new base of Islamic Jihadish terrorism. As such, the United States has become more involved in Yemen and has been credited with helping Yemeni forces carry out military offensives against major al-Qaida bases in that country, much to the consternation of al-Qaida itself. That being said, there is no visible American military presence in Yemen, which prefers to achieve its anti-terrorism effort in Yemen using targeted anti-terrorism techniques, including drone strikes and intelligence sharing.

For his part, (now-resigned) President Ali Abdullah Saleh had to establish a delicate balancing act of working with the West to deal with the threat of terrorism from within Yemen's borders, while not alienating the Yemeni citizenry, many of whom sympathize with Islamic extremism. But in

fact, Yemen is the base of both foreign and local al-Qaida fighters. The local fighters are often aided by relatives, typically as a result of tribal loyalty more than ideology. However, when these fighters are killed or arrested by government forces, these heavily-armed tribes often are emotionally driven to increase support of the militants. Meanwhile, Yemen has also been home to thousands of Islamic militants who are veterans of several "holy wars" in other countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. While most of these Islamic militant veterans are no longer active, they nonetheless maintain their extremist views in keeping with al-Qaida ideology. As noted by Ali Saif Hassan, the manager of a Yemeni group that mediates between the government and opposition: "It is difficult to draw the line between who is a fundamentalist and who is al-Qaida. It's a spectrum." As constituents of the country, these elements form part of the broader anti-American and anti-Western base of the country, over which the government has only fragile control.

Meanwhile, the government of Yemen has had to deal with other rebellions and threats to national security, such as the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion, which led to the rise in violent attacks in certain regions of the country since 2004. Known as the Houthis, the Shi'a Zaidi rebels have said they seek greater autonomy. At the core of the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has been the claim that the government of Yemen is too closely aligned with the United States, which has provided supplies and training to Yemen's security forces under the aegis of the "war on terror." The rebels also blame the government for both corruption and discrimination. But Yemen's government has accused the northern Shi'ite rebels, led by Abdul Malik al-Houthi, of trying to oust the democratic government and advancing Shi'a theocratic rule in the country. Indeed, the government has accused the rebels of seeking to re-establish clerical rule that ended with the 1962 Yemeni revolution that yielded the republic. The situation has sometimes spilled over the border into Saudi Arabia and has illuminated the challenges facing the Yemeni government in terms of national security.

Specifically, even as the Yemeni government has had to deal with this rebel threat in the north of the country, there has been another territorial battle against secessionists in the south, as well as the emerging threat posed by al-Qaida terrorists operating from its terrain.

Apart from these political challenges, Yemen is also plagued by an unemployment rate that some estimate is as high as 40 percent, chronic poverty, increased food prices, high levels of illiteracy, and malnutrition. In these ways, Yemen's political, economic and human development challenges are illustrative of complicated terrain that is ripe for further exploitation by extremist, militant, and terrorist elements. It was hoped that the election of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in 2012 would shift Yemen onto more positive footing.

The developments in 2014 with the Houthi Zaidi rebels grabbing control over Sanaa, coupled with the intensified campaign of aggression from rival al-Qaida terrorists, presented a genuine challenge to President Hadi and the government of Yemen. That challenged morphed into a security crisis at the start of 2015 as the Houth Zaidi movement attempted to topple the government of Yemen. Of

course, in the backdrop of effort was the continuing threat posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which was carrying out attacks in Yemen in a bid to wrest influence away from the Houthis. The fresh threat posed by Islamic State against the Houthis in March 2015, manifest in a destructive attack on Sanaa, made the dire security situation significantly worse. The situation was morphing into a geopolitical morass, with the advance of the Iranian-backed Houthis on the second city Aden, the decision by President Hadi to flee the country, and the commencement of air strikes by Saudi Arabia on Yemen.

Indeed, Yemen in the year 2015 was the site of a dangerous power struggle between these various players and disparate factions, and headed by weakened leadership, which was made distinctly worse by the the exit of President Hadi. Yemen was thus alarmingly close to slipping off the proverbial cliff into the abyss of being a failed state.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Middle East
Population:	26667204
Climate:	Mostly desert; hot and humid along west coast
Languages:	Arabic (official)
Currency:	Yemeni Rial (YRI) (New Currency)
Holiday:	Proclamation of the Republic is 22 May (1990), National Day is 14 October, National Unity Day is 22 May
Area Total:	527970
Area Land:	527970
Coast Line:	1906

Yemen

Country Map

Middle East

Regional Map

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Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Yemen was one of the oldest centers of civilization in the Near East. Between the 12th century BC and the 6th century AD, it was part of the Minaean, Sabaean, and Himyarite kingdoms, which controlled the lucrative spice trade, and later came under Ethiopian and Persian rule. In the 7th century, Islamic caliphs began to exert control over the area.

After this caliphate broke up, the former north Yemen came under control of Imams of various dynasties usually of the Zaidi sect, who established a theocratic political structure that survived until modern times. (Imam is a religious term. The Shiites apply it to the prophet Muhammad's son-in-law Ali, his sons Hasan and Hussein, and subsequent lineal descendants, whom they consider to have been divinely ordained unclassified successors of the prophet.)

Egyptian Sunni caliphs occupied much of north Yemen throughout the 11th century. By the 16th century and again in the 19th century, north Yemen was part of the Ottoman empire and in some periods its Imams exerted suzerainty over south Yemen.

Ottoman government control was largely confined to cities, while the imam's suzerainty over tribal areas was formally recognized. Ottoman Turkish forces withdrew in 1918, and the predominant imam, Yahya, strengthened his control over the area. Northern Yemen became a member of the Arab League in 1945, and the United Nations in 1947.

Imam Yahya died during an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1948 and was succeeded by his son Ahmad, who ruled until his death in September 1962. Imam Ahmad's reign was marked by growing repression, renewed friction with the United Kingdom over the British presence in the south, and growing pressures to support the Arab nationalist objectives of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser.

Shortly after assuming power in 1962, Ahmad's son Badr was deposed by revolutionary forces that took control of the capital city of Sanaa and created the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). Egypt assisted the YAR with troops and supplies to combat forces loyal to the imamate. Lining up on the other side, Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported Badr's royalist forces to oppose the newly formed republic. Conflict continued periodically until 1967 when Egyptian troops were finally withdrawn. By 1968, following a final royalist siege of Sanaa, most of the opposing leaders reached a

reconciliation and Saudi Arabia recognized the Yemen Arab Republic in 1970.

British influence increased in the southern and eastern parts of Yemen after the British captured the port of Aden in 1839. It was ruled as part of British India until 1937, when Aden was made a crown colony with the remaining land designated as the East Aden and West Aden protectorates. By 1965, most of the tribal states within the protectorates and the Aden colony proper had joined to form the British-sponsored Federation of South Arabia.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Political Legacy and Genealogy

In 1965, two rival nationalist groups-the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) and the National Liberation Front (NLF)-turned to terrorism in their struggle to control the country. In 1967, in the face of uncontrollable violence, British troops began withdrawing, federation rule collapsed, and NLF elements took control after eliminating their FLOSY rivals. South Arabia, including Aden, was declared independent on Nov. 30, 1967, and was renamed the People's Republic of South Yemen. In June 1969, a radical wing of the Marxist NLF gained power and changed the country's name on Dec. 1, 1970, to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). In the PDRY, all political parties were amalgamated into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), which became the only legal party. The PDRY established close ties with the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and radical Palestinians.

In 1972, the governments of the PDRY and the YAR declared that they approved a future union. Nevertheless, little progress was made toward unification and relations were often strained. In 1979, simmering tensions led to fighting, which was only resolved after Arab League mediation. The northern and southern heads of state reaffirmed the goal of unity during a summit meeting in Kuwait in March 1979. That same year, however, the PDRY began sponsoring an insurgency against the YAR.

In April 1980, PDRY President Abdul Fattah Ismail resigned and went into exile. His successor, Ali Nasir Muhammad, took a less interventionist stance toward both the YAR and neighboring Oman. On Jan. 13, 1986, a violent struggle began in Aden between Ali Nasir Muhammad and the returned

Abdul Fattah Ismail and their respective supporters. Fighting lasted for more than a month and resulted in thousands of casualties, the ousting of Ali Nasir and Ismail's death. Some 60,000 persons, including Ali Nasir and his supporters, fled to the YAR.

In May 1988, the YAR and PDRY governments came to an understanding that considerably reduced tensions, including an agreement to renew discussions concerning unification, to establish a joint oil exploration area along their undefined border, to demilitarize the border, and to allow Yemenis unrestricted border passage on the basis of only a national identification card.

In November 1989, the leaders of the YAR (Ali Abdallah Saleh) and the PDRY (Ali Salim al-Bidh) agreed on a draft unity constitution originally drawn up in 1981. The Republic of Yemen (ROY) was declared on May 22, 1990. Ali Abdallah Saleh became president and Ali Salim al-Bidh became vice president.

A 30-month transitional period for completing the unification of the two political and economic systems was set. The 26-member YAR advisory council and the 17-member PDRY presidium jointly elected a presidential council. The presidential council appointed a prime minister, who formed a cabinet. There was also a 301-seat provisional unified parliament, consisting of 159 members from the north, 111 members from the south, and 31 independent at-large members appointed by the chairman of the council.

A unity constitution was agreed upon in May 1990 and ratified by the populace in May 1991. It affirmed Yemen's commitment to free elections, a multi-party political system, the right to own private property, equality under the law, and respect of basic human rights. Yemen's first parliamentary elections were held on April 27, 1993. International groups assisted in the organization of the elections and observed actual balloting.

The resulting parliament, by party, included 143 members of the General Peoples Congress (GPC), 69 from the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), 63 from Islaah (a pro-reform party composed of various tribal and religious groups), six Baathists, three Nasserists, two al-Haq, and 15 independents. The head of Islaah, Sheik Abdallah Bin Husayn Al-Ahmar became the speaker of parliament.

Islaah was invited into the ruling coalition, and the presidential council was altered to include one Islaah member. Conflicts within the coalition resulted in the self-imposed exile of Vice President Ali Salim al-Bidh to Aden, beginning in August 1993. In addition, there was deterioration in the general security situation as political rivals settled scores, and tribal elements took advantage of the civil instability. Haydar Abu Bakr al-Attas (the former southern prime minister) continued to serve as the Republic of Yemen's prime minister, but his government was ineffective due to political infighting.

Continuous negotiations between northern and southern leaders resulted in the signing of a document of pledge and accord in Amman, Jordan on Feb. 20, 1994. Despite this, clashes intensified until civil war broke out in early May 1994.

Almost all of the actual fighting in the 1994 civil war occurred in the southern part of the country despite air and missile attacks against cities and major installations in the north. Southerners sought support from neighboring states and received billions of dollars of equipment and financial assistance. The United States strongly supported Yemeni unity, but repeatedly called for a cease-fire and a return to the negotiating table.

Various attempts, including those of a United Nations special envoy, were unsuccessful in effecting a cease-fire. Southern leaders declared secession and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Yemen (DRY) on May 21, 1994, but the international community did not recognize this entity. Ali Nasir Muhammad's supporters greatly assisted military operations against the secessionists, and Aden was captured on July 7, 1994. Other resistance quickly collapsed and thousands of southern leaders and military went into exile.

Early during the fighting, President Ali Abdallah Saleh announced a general amnesty that applied to everyone except 16 people. Most southerners returned to Yemen after a short exile. An armed opposition was announced from Saudi Arabia, but no significant incidents within Yemen materialized. The government prepared legal cases against four southern leaders (Ali Salim al-Bidh, Haydar Abu Bakr al-Attas, Abd al-Rahman Ali al-Jifri, and Salih Munassar al-Siyali) for misappropriation of official funds. Others on the list of 16 were told informally they could return to take advantage of the amnesty, but most remained outside Yemen. Although many of Ali Nasir Muhammad's followers were appointed to senior governmental positions (including vice president, chief of staff and governor of Aden), Ali Nasir Muhammad himself remained abroad in Syria.

In the aftermath of the civil war, YSP leaders within Yemen reorganized the party and elected a new politburo in July 1994. The party, however, remained disheartened and without its former influence. Islaah held a party convention in September 1994, and the General People's Congress did the same in June 1995.

Civil unrest continued since the end of the civil war in 1994, and the government was yet to restore control in all areas of the country. A series of assassination attempts and the kidnapping of foreigners and prominent Yemenis have plagued the country, and have impaired the return of tourists, investments and economic development.

Political Parties and Developments

Since the creation of the state of Yemen, the government has sought to extend its control over a

country covering rugged mountains and remote plains. Tribal society and its leaders still exert significant power and influence, and the conflict between tradition and modernity is defining political life in Yemen today. Despite the strong presence of traditional rule, Yemen's formal political life is vibrant and of significant importance. The constitution allows for multiple parties, but active members of the police and armed forces are banned from serving office.

There are over 40 active political parties in Yemen. The General People's Congress (GPC) holds the majority of seats (62 percent) in the House of Representatives. Its leader is President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Yemeni Islaah Party (YIP), which controls 17 percent of the seats in the house, is led by Sheikh Abdallah ibn Husayn al-Ahmar. Independents and smaller political parties make up the remaining 20 percent of the house. The Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) held 53 seats in the 1993 elections but was excluded from the new government formed by President Saleh after the civil war in 1994.

Faraj Bin Ghanem became prime minister after President Saleh's ruling party, the General People's Congress, posted an overwhelming victory in April 1997's parliamentary elections, capturing 187 of the available 301 seats. Ghanem resigned in April 1998 amid differences with President Saleh over political reforms. Abdul-Karim al-Iryani took over as prime minister in May 1998, vowing to continue with the three year old economic reforms. A new cabinet was formed and the cabinet's policy received a confidence vote from parliament on June 7 of that year.

Riots broke out across Yemen in June 1998 due to a 40 percent price increase on fuel and food staples, and renewed violence between government troops and protestors across the country. Different sources reported a death count ranging from 30 to 100 people. In an uprising against the price increases, tribesmen in the south of Yemen blocked roads into the capital, and several soldiers died in the ensuing conflict. The tribesmen also damaged pipelines in June and July. The price rises were part of an economic reform package that the International Monetary Fund and World Bank are coordinating with the Yemeni government.

In operations designed to secure compensation from the government as well as international attention for political views, some groups of Yemeni tribesmen have damaged government and private installations and have kidnapped foreign tourists. In December 1998, 12 British, two American, and two Australian tourists were kidnapped by the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army.

It is believed that the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army kidnapped the tourists as a demand that United States (U.S.) and British air strikes against Iraq come to a halt. During a rescue attempt four of the tourists were killed, as well as two soldiers and one tribesman. In May, two Yemeni tribesmen and one Algerian were sentenced to death for the kidnapping of the 16 tourists. In January, an oil pipeline in southern Yemen was blown up in a demand for compensation for it crossing a tribe's land.

In January 1999, five British Muslims were arrested for alleged terrorist activity. They were arrested in the capital with bomb-making supplies. Soon after their arrest, three more British Muslims were arrested, as well as an Algerian believed to be associated with the group. The British government called for an explanation for the arrests from the Yemeni government but also pledged to investigate possible Yemeni terrorist groups who might be operating from England. In March, a British citizen from Yemen, Abu Hamzeh al-Misri, was arrested in England. Yemen demanded his immediate extradition.

In November 1999, there was an explosion on an oil pipeline in eastern Yemen operated by the American company Hunt Oil. Located in the Sirwa region, the pipeline has been targeted numerous times in the last year and a half by the Kawlan tribesmen in the region. The tribesmen's actions are supposedly due to disputes with the government and foreign companies and are generally described as actions aimed at forcing the government to improve services to the area.

In addition to the pipeline explosion, tourists and foreign expatriates are often kidnapped by discontented tribesmen attempting to compel the government to improve infrastructure in rural and remote areas of Yemen, or alternately, to force the release of imprisoned tribesmen. Although the Yemeni government formed a special forces unit aimed at reducing such acts of terrorism, and even introduced the death penalty to be used in such offenses, kidnappings and killings continue.

Over 60 million weapons are owned by the people of Yemen, according to census findings revealed in June 2002. In other words, for every Yemeni there are three weapons. Statistics have indicated that the arms trade has a negative effect on the economy. As a result of high unemployment, people have resorted to highway robberies and smuggling. The excess of arms has undoubtedly contributed to the kidnapping incidents which have marred Yemen's reputation. This crisis is becoming more complicated over the course of time. It has been aggravated by social, political, and economic reasons. The increase of lapses in security such as bombings, killings, kidnapping, theft, and the like have raised the concern of citizens who look for ways to ensure their own safety and protection. Observers agree that the country is moving towards a hazardous state of affairs and the situation must be reversed before it is too late.

After a disparaging report on human rights in Yemen, the government took action to improve its image. In a comprehensive review of inmates in prisons across the country, 3,000 prisoners who were being held without charge were released. However, human rights organizations continue to report torture, harassment, intimidation and arbitrary detention of journalists critical of the government.

In July 2002, the second session of trial of two journalists was held by the Eastern court of Sana'a. Abdulraheem Mohsen and Ibraheem Hussein stand trial on charges of inciting sectarianism, regionalism and insulting the president of republic in their articles. They are also accused of abusing the rational unity of the country.

A number of human rights activists and journalists staged a sit-in in front of the office of the general prosecutor a week prior, demanding the release of the two writers; demonstrations were held in the city while local and international condemned the arrest of the two journalists. The Yemeni Journalist Syndicate (YJS) expressed its concern; its chairman Mahbub Ali demanded their release on the grounds that the journalists were detained without a legal warrant.

Conflict, Violence and Terrorism

The kidnappings and anti-government actions are closely connected to the troubled economic situation, continued existence of a strong tribal society, and corruption in the political and judicial systems. The government has also clashed with Islamic fundamentalists. Due to the unruly nature of Yemeni society and nature, the country has become a favorite hideout for Islamic fundamentalists, and in particular Afghan Arabs-radical Muslim fighters who, partly encouraged by the United States, fought the communist government in the Afghanistan war in the 1980s.

A Yemeni citizen is believed to be one of the responsible for the bombings of United States (U.S.) embassies in East Africa in August 1998, and Islamic fundamentalists are believed to be behind the assassination of the deputy governor of Sanaa in August 2000.

On Oct. 12, 2000 the destroyer USS Cole was attacked by suicide terrorist bombers during a refueling stop in the Yemeni port of Aden. The attack killed 17 American sailors and wounded 39 others. Yemeni authorities have detained and questioned dozens of people in connection with the attack, and have charged at least six people. They were due to stand trial in 2001.

All of the suspects to be tried for the attack, and at least one of the suicide bombers, are Yemeni citizens. However, due to the size and complexity of the operation, it is widely speculated that an influential, international organization, or even a state, was involved. In addition to Osama bin Laden (a Saudi-Yemeni Muslim fundamentalist residing in Afghanistan and wanted by the United States in connection with the bombing of two U.S. embassies in East Africa as well as the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States), other Islamist fundamentalist groups suspected include the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas, in addition to Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. In common, they all share opposition to American and Western military presence in the region, the U.S.'s close relationship to Israel, and the continued sanctions against Iraq.

In July 2002, security authorities released some of the men accused of attacking the USS Cole and implicated in the September 11 attacks after they were found not guilty. The National Authority for the Defense of Human Rights in Yemen said, "This is a good step to correct the illegal proceedings taken against these innocent men." The authority issued a manifesto demanding the prompt release

of other detainees victimized by efforts to cooperate in the international war against terror. It condemned the continuation of their stay in custody, which is in contravention of the law.

Chairman of the Authority Mohammed Nagi Allaw said that the number of imprisoned men in the country implicated in the incidents reached 163, if not more. He also said that there is no final determination of the number currently released. The authority is trying to contact those who have been imprisoned, but all efforts to reach them have been obstructed. In addition, Allaw said there is a complete absence of reports issued by security authorities about their condition.

After the bombing of the USS Cole and in preparation for the trial of the suspects, Yemeni authorities have cracked down on Muslim extremists, and have arrested over 40 members of Islamic Jihad. Security in the cities of Aden (where the trial is set to take place) and in the capital Sanaa has been tightened. In the beginning of January 2001, several smaller bombs went off in these cities. The offices of the Yemeni Socialist Party, which boycotted the 1999 presidential election accusing the government of undemocratic practices, were damaged in an explosion. The Yemeni Socialist Party is Yemen's largest opposition group. The government has also threatened to ban the party because some of its leaders reside abroad. Also, a church, a hotel and two roads were partly damaged in the actions. In another flare of violence six people were killed in a mosque in early January 2001. The shooting was a result of an argument over the nomination of candidates to the municipal elections in February 2001 among tribesmen. These attacks and the upcoming trial do not bode well for the safety of foreigners and foreign installations in Yemen and in the region, or for the political climate in Yemen in general.

U.S. military advisers were sent to Yemen after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks to help combat the alleged presence of members of the al-Qaida terror network in remote areas of the country. Yemen has since been keen to shed its image as a safe haven for members of Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network, which is held responsible for the aforementioned 2001 attacks on New York and Washington.

By January 2002, Yemen was still holding several people in relation to the USS Cole attack, but Yemeni officials said that their trial had been postponed following a request from the U.S. that the investigation be widened further.

As part of its crackdown on terror and suspected al-Qaida members, Yemen in early February 2002 started to expel more than 100 foreign Islamic scholars, including British and French nationals,

Five of 17 men named in a U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation terrorism alert were being held in Yemen in mid-February 2002. The five are all Yemeni nationals said to have been trained in Afghanistan. At the time, the Yemeni Government said there may be other Al-Qaida suspects in the country, but also said the network has no military training camps or organized presence. They were

already in custody when the U.S. released a list of suspects earlier in the week, Yemeni officials said, having been arrested at the end of 2001 or in early 2002.

On March 15, 2002, an explosion occurred outside the U.S. embassy in the Yemeni capital Sanaa - a day after U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney visited the country. There were no injuries and no damage was done. U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said two objects had been thrown, which appeared to bounce off the embassy walls and then explode. One man was taken into custody; police officials at the scene said security guards fired at the man, who was believed to have been wounded.

Security in Yemen had already been a major concern for the U.S. since a boat packed with explosives had rammed the USS Cole in October 2000. The explosion occurred a day after a brief visit to Yemen by the U.S. vice president, who was halfway through an 11-country tour of the Middle East. His talks with President Ali Abdullah Saleh focused on co-operation against terrorism. It was the highest-level visit by a U.S. official in 15 years. Earlier in the week, Americans in Yemen were warned that they were in danger of being targeted by terrorists.

Then, in April 2002, Yemeni police fired live shots in the air and used tear gas to stop thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters reaching the US embassy in the capital, Sanaa, in protest of U.S. and Israeli actions. Witnesses said at least four people were injured when police broke up the rally of an estimated 5,000 demonstrators demanding the closure of the embassy.

Meanwhile, scores of Yemenis are believed to have joined the radical organization al-Qaida but the authorities in Yemen have been keen to get rid of their reputation as a safe haven for terrorists. They have intensified military patrols in the Marib area, east of Sanaa, in the hunt for al-Qaida suspects.

The underlying and ongoing political conflict in Yemen has been personalized by the differences between President Saleh and Sheikh Ahmar. The president and the government were working to extend governmental control and advocates liberalization and modernization. Sheikh Ahmar, the speaker of parliament, the head of Yemen's largest tribe and the leader of the largest opposition party, Islah, opposes some of the presidents modernizing attempts, and enjoys the support of more radical Muslim groups.

While President Saleh has been clever about co-opting his political foes by giving them positions in the government and allowing their political parties, some fear that this policy might backlash in a time of crisis. It was believed that the government crackdown on Islamists after the USS Cole bombing and subsequent terrorist attacks in the U.S. could rupture the delicate balance of power between President Saleh and Sheikh Ahmar. In a country of 17 million poor people, an estimated 60 million weapons, a recent history of civil war, and the home of thousands of Afghan-Arab warriors, a materialization of this conflict would be detrimental.

As part of its allegiance with the U.S.-led global fight against terrorism, Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh in August 2002 ordered the formation of an anti-terror intelligence agency. The purpose of the agency was to collect information linked to the country's security with a key task to thwart "infiltration by hostile elements."

The United States had previously offered to help train military personnel for Yemen in coordination with its global anti-terror strategy.

By October 2002, Yemeni officials said they had deported thousands of foreigners who were studying at Islamic religious institutions scattered throughout the country since the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the U.S. Other students that were found to have links to al Qaida were arrested.

Tragedy struck on Oct. 6, 2002, when an explosion on a French tanker occurred off the coast of Yemen. A small boat carrying explosives crashed into the Limburg tanker, killing one crew member, wounding 24 others, and sending more than 90,000 barrels of oil pouring into the Gulf of Aden. At first, Yemeni officials were declaring the explosion to be an accident. However, ten days later, Yemeni authorities publicly declared that the blast was a deliberate act of terrorism. Both French and Yemeni officials investigated the matter but were unable to identify those responsible. No group claimed culpability. The style of the attack resembled the suicide bombing of the U.S. warship Cole in Yemen's Aden port in 2000, according to observers.

In early November 2002, threats of an attack forced the closure of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, following U.S. involvement in the killing of six Yemeni Muslim militants suspected of having links with Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network. The embassy re-opened four days later with beefed up security. after being closed for four days following a U.S. military strike which killed six al Qaeda suspects in the country.

By late December 2002, the United States and Yemen had announced a plan to protect a number of oil positions in the Arab country and to carry out new operations against suspected al Qaida members. Yemeni forces were reportedly being trained on new techniques to consolidate cooperation with the United States.

Important oil positions in Yemen are considered potential targets of terrorist actions by al Qaida members hiding in the Arab country or who could infiltrate through the Yemeni coast.

Meanwhile at year's end, three American missionaries were shot fatally in the head by an alleged Muslim extremist. Another missionary suffered a gunshot wound to the stomach. The attack was condemned by U.S.-based Muslim advocacy groups and individuals as well as by Britain. The killer, a Yemeni gunman identified as 32-year-old Ali Abdulrazzak al-Kamel, told police after his arrest that he had shot the three Americans to "cleanse his religion and get closer to Allah."

In early March 2003, two Yemeni citizens being held in Germany were charged in the United States with conspiring to provide support to terrorist groups. And, in mid-March, three people, including a U.S. and a Canadian oil-field worker, were killed by a Yemeni gunman who killed himself after shooting several co-workers.

The incident that occurred in a field drilled by the American-owned Nabors company for Hunt Oil of Dallas. The gunman was identified as Naji Ahmad al-Kumain, who was also employed at the field. Although anti-American sentiment is strong in Yemen and other Arab countries over U.S. policies, including Israel and Iraq, local observers did not rule out that the killings might have been motivated by personal reasons connected with work.

Meanwhile, by March 21, 2003, demonstrations against the war in Iraq were rampant across the Arab world, with four protestors reported killed in clashes with Yemeni riot police. Another seven people were injured. An 11-year-old boy was believed to be among the dead.

A crowd, estimated at 5,000 protestors, reportedly chanted anti-American slogans, called for jihad (holy war) against Americans and for Arab oil to be used as a weapon. Leaflets called for President George W. Bush to be tried as a war criminal. A spokesman for the union of Yemeni opposition parties, which organized the protest, told United Press International that police had opened fire to stop demonstrators from reaching the U.S. embassy.

Demonstrations continued and on March 27, 2003, thousands of Yemeni protesters took to the streets of the capital, Sanaa. But the demonstrators were again prevented from approaching the U.S. embassy. The protesters then gathered at the city's central Liberation Square calling on Arab leaders to take firm anti-war stances reflecting the will of Arab peoples. They described the war as a "new crusade" against Muslims and burned effigies of U.S. President George W. Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Yemen's religious leaders also issued a statement stressing the need to impose economic and political sanctions against the U.S. and Israel and the countries collaborating with them. It called for "declaring war on every aggressor threatening the Arab people and violating any part of the land of Islam and Muslims." It also urged Arab media to expose U.S. and Zionist schemes and aspirations in the region.

Yemeni police cracked down on the massive demonstration, killing two protesters, wounding 23 others and rounding up tens of people, including opposition leaders.

In mid-April 2003, Yemeni intelligence arrested 45 volunteers who had returned from Iraq after fighting against U.S. and British forces, touching off a protest at Sanaa's international airport. With the invasion of Iraq going forward, many Yemenis had fought alongside Iraqi forces against U.S. and British troops. The Yemeni authorities also banned many of them from traveling to Iraq via

Syria, causing a clash at the airport between the volunteers and security forces.

Yemen was slow to officially react to the outcome of the war in Iraq, maintaining that the situation following Saddam Hussein's apparent ousting was "unclear" and "confusing." The two countries have traditionally had good relations, but tension had occurred as Baghdad implicitly criticized Sanaa for a lack of support. The country did however grant political asylum to Iraq's envoy to the Arab League (AL) following the downfall of the Iraqi government. Mohsen Khalil, Iraq's permanent ambassador to the Arab League and Egypt, had served as Iraq's ambassador to Sanaa from 1992 to 1997. He applied for asylum on April 9, 2003, the day U.S. tanks rolled into central Baghdad.

Meanwhile, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh called on officials to help Yemeni diplomats and some 4,000 Yemeni students return home from Iraq, which was under control of U.S. and British forces.

Political Landscape

On the political front, Yemen's government showed signs of progress when the country's prime minister called for an independent political entity for women, urging his country's political parties to nominate only women in specific electoral districts. Addressing the second National Women's Conference in March 2003, Abdul Qader Bajmal called on women to actively participate in the next parliamentary elections, scheduled for April 27, 2003, in order to "be heard," and "to have an independent, political, social and economic entity to enable them to defend their legitimate rights."

As planned, voters went to polling stations on April 27, 2003, in Yemen's third parliamentary elections. Yemeni opposition sources reported shooting incidents and arrests of opposition members in several parts of the country only hours after voting began.

The Nasserite Popular Unity Party accused supporters of the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) of opening fire on supporters of its candidate Abdul Aleem al-Fuhaidi "after the candidate of the ruling party closed the polling in five centers and demanded public voting in these stations." It also alleged that 10 supporters of the Popular Unity Party were arrested in Aden, while its women supporters in the Mansoura and al-Qahera were "kicked out of the voting centers." Meanwhile, a statement issued by the Islamic al-Islah Party said its supporters in Sanaa, Taez, Hadramawt and Shabwah, as well as in other electoral districts, were arrested. It accused supporters of the ruling party of "terrorizing the voters by shooting at them."

Opposition parties also accused the spokesman of the elections committee, Abdo Mohammad al-Jundi, of bias. Critics accused the ruling GPC of using its influence in government institutions during the election campaign.

Initial results indicated that the ruling GPC party won 238 seats in the 301-member parliament and the main opposition, the Yemeni Islah (Reform) Party, secured 46 seats. In the outgoing cabinet, the GPC held 226 seats and the Islah party takes 62.

Yemeni police declared that 10 people, including three soldiers, were killed and 25 others were wounded during the voting and the subsequent four-day clashes between advocates of candidates in the legislative elections process. Despite being marred by violence, the elections saw a high turnout rate of about 76 percent.

Also, on May 1, 2003, Yemeni President Saleh accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Abdul Qader Bajammal after the General People's Congress (GPC) party won a decisive lead in a parliamentary election. Saleh said then that the outgoing government would continue its work as a caretaker to run the country until a new one is formed. Bajammal said that according to Article 142 of the Yemeni Constitution, the resignation of his two-year-old government was a constitutional duty that should be performed when public elections are held in the country for choosing the deputies. He later resumed his position as head of government.

Recent Developments

In 2004, two militants, suspected of being behind the bombing of the USS Cole (aforementioned) were again arrested. Also in 2004, the courts sentenced 15 individuals on terror charges. These included the bombing of a tanker in 2002.

Also in 2004, internal political violence was at stake. A dissident Shi'a cleric, Hussein al-Houthi, was behind clashes with government forces that took place in the north of the country. Although little press attention was given to this situation, reports on the ground estimated that more than 500 people were killed in fighting. Later reports suggested that the cleric had been killed during the clashes. The violence was spurred by the desire on the part of the cleric and his cadre to oust the pro-Western government from office, and establish a religious regime instead.

In mid-2005, protestors clashed with security forces in a case of civil strife that was characterized as the worst violence in more than a decade. In the capital city of Sana, security forces responded with tear gas and then opened fired when protestors threw stones at government buildings. Gunfire was reported to have been heard in several areas, while fires erupted. Army tanks eventually lined several streets and surrounded key government and media buildings. The violence was not limited to the capital city, however, as other urban centers were also rocked with violent clashes. In one particular case, mobs took over a police station and freed the prisoners being detained there. Scores of people were reported to have been died at the time of writing, while still others were apparently badly beaten.

It was believed that public anger over the poor state of the economy, exacerbated by recent subsidy cuts and an unemplyment rate as high as 36 percent, were the primary causes for the eruption of riots. The oil rich country signed an economic agreement with the United States and agreed to crack down on militant Islam following the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001. But oil revenue has not benefitted the mass public, which has also accused the authorities of corruption. Indeed, even after President Ali Abdullah said that he would not run in the presidential elections scheduled for 2006, many people in Yemen expressed sketicism and mistrust, noting that he would find some way to hold on to his power. So, although frustration over the economy may have functioned as the initial catalyst for public anger, expressions of anger against the country's leadership were rooted in more complex dynamics. Indeed, protestors called for the ousting of the government while they burned posters depicting key government officials.

In September 2006, there were attacks against two oil refineries. While those attacks were ultimately foiled, they nonetheless resulted in the deaths of the four suicide bombers and a security guard. The attacks were a reminder that Yemen remained vulnerable to terrorism.

Also in September 2006, four French tourists were kidnapped by tribesmen in Yemen. The French tourists were reported to have been abducted by members of the Abdullah tribe while travelling in the province of Shabwa in the south-eastern part of the country. A Yemeni official said that the kidnapping had been carried out because the tribesmen wanted to force the government to release some of their relatives from prison. Meanwhile, French officials said that they were working with the Yemeni authorities to free the hostages. The French officials also acknowledged that they had received a call from one of the hostages, who said that they [the indivuduals who had been abducted] were being well-treated.

This was the latest in a spate of abductions in Yemen. Over the course of the last decade, hundreds of tourists and expatriates have been kidnapped by Yemeni tribesmen pressing for either the release of relatives from prison, or, improved living conditions. Typically, victims have been released unharmed. Earlier in 2006, five Italians were abducted and held for several days in northern Yemen before being released. In 2005, a former German diplomat and his family were kidnapped by the Abdullah tribe and released days later. Not all abductions have ended with a positive outcome, however. In 2000, several hostages were killed when the Yemeni military botched a rescue attempt.

For his part, Yemen's leader, President Ali Abdullah Saleh, has said he would take a harder line against such kidnappings. In 2006 alone, a number of individuals convicted of kidnapping were executed -- a strong response intended to function as a deterrent against abductions by tribesmen.

In November 2006, a Yemeni court sentenced a newspaper editor, Kamal al-Aalafi, to jail for reprinting controversial cartoons. The Yemeni court also ordered the weekly newspaper to be shut

down for six months. The controversial cartoons were first published in the Jyllands-Posten newspaper in Denmark and depicted the Islamic Prophet Mohammed in an unflattering light. Those cartoons led to worldwide riots by Muslims in the early part of 2006. For his part, the Yemeni newspaper editor said that he had reprinted the cartoons in the interests of public awareness, and not for the purpose of offending Muslims. After being released on bail, he also said he would appeal his sentence. Two other editors attached to other Yemeni publications faced similar fates.

In January 2007, attacks by Shi'a militants in northern Yemen left six soldier dead and 20 injured. The attacks took place at military bases in Saada province and were believed to have been orchestrated by a militant known as Abel Malek al-Houthi -- the brother of the aforementioned cleric who led the Shi'a uprising against the government in 2004. Since that time, there have been a number of clashes between Yemen's security forces and northern Shi'ites who remained loyal to the al-Houthi brothers and also to the anti-government agenda.

At issue has been the claim that the government of Yemen is too closely aligned with the United States, which has itself provided supplies and training to Yemen's security forces under the aegis of the "war on terror." But Yemen's leadership has accused the northern Shi'ites of trying to oust the democratic government and advancing Shi'a theocratic rule in the country.

Meanwhile, after receiving death threats and being confronted with masked, gun-carrying Muslim extremists, forty-five Yemeni Jews fled their village in northern Yemen and took up residence in a hotel in the provincial capital of Saada City. The Jewish community has lived a traditional life in Yemen for centuries. For the first time ever, the Yemeni Jewish community has been threatened. The province's governor said that the extremist Muslims threatening the Jewish population appeared to be Shi'a militants.

Mid-2007 saw terrorism strike Yemen in a direct way. On July 2, 2007, a bombing left six Spanish tourists and one local dead; seven other were injured as a result of the blast. The attack took place when car bomb detonated at the gates of at the Queen of Sheba temple in Marib -- a popular site among visitors to Yemen. It was a clear illustration of the fact that Yemen was still dealing with an increasing spate of violence and attacks, which the government blamed on the terrorist enclave, al-Qaida. To that end and as noted above, Yemen has been a strong supporter of the United States-led global war on terror.

In the second week of January 2008, a protest on the southern port city of Aden in Yemen resulted in some deaths and several more injuries. The rally had been convened for the purpose of advancing reconciliation between the north and south of the country, which had experienced tensions since merging in 1990 under a government dominated by the north. At the same time, some protestors were calling for secession by the south, arguing that they were often disadvantaged both economically and politically. There were conflicting reports about who was responsible for

the violence. Some witnesses on the ground attributed the violence to security forces opening fire on protestors, while a local official placed the blame on "criminal elements."

In April 2008, a Yemeni legislator and member of the country's ruling party was reportedly assassinated. The attack on parliamentarian Saleh Hendi took place in the restive northern part of the country in the province of Saada. Witnesses reported seeing gunmen open fire on the car carrying the politician. The region has experienced a marked increase in violence in recent times, which has been blamed on a Shi'a Zaidi rebellion.

In the spring of 2008, attempts were underway by mediators from Qatar to salvage a truce between the Yemeni government and Shi'a extremists. At issue has been the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion (noted above), which led to the rise in violent attacks in certain regions of the country since 2004. The two sides agreed to a ceasefire but peace efforts quickly dissolved and fighting resumed in 2007. In April 2008, a Yemeni legislator and member of the country's ruling party was assassinated, as discussed just above. Then, in early May 2008, a bomb exploded at a mosque leaving 18 people dead. The period has also been marked by ongoing violence, resulting in the deaths of both Shi'a rebels and security forces.

At the core of the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has been the claim by the Shi'a rebels that the government of Yemen is too closely aligned with the United States, which has provided supplies and training to Yemen's security forces under the aegis of the "war on terror." The rebels also blame the government for both corruption and discrimination. But Yemen's leadership has accused the northern Shi'ite rebels, led by Abdulmalik al-Houthi, of trying to oust the democratic government and advancing Shi'a theocratic rule in the country.

In September 2008, a double car bombing at the United States embassy in Yemen's capital of Sanaa left 16 people dead. Among the dead were four civilians, six members of the Yemeni military and six bombers. One victim was a United States citizen of Yemeni ancestry who had traveled to Yemen for her wedding and was killed in queue outside the embassy along with her husband.

Days after the bloody double bombing, approximately 25 suspects -- all believed to be Islamic militants -- were arrested in connection with the attacks. They were being interrogated by both Yemeni and United States authorities. Islamic militants, known as Islamic Jihad in Yemen, claimed responsibility for the attacks, although there was no confirmation of this claim. Nevertheless, those responsible were quickly tied to al-Qaida, given the fact that recent attacks of this sort in Yemen have been attributed to that terror organization. Yemen -- an ally in the United States' efforts to stamp out terrorism -- has suffered rising violence carried out by extremists and militants in recent years.

An explosion at the United Nations World Heritage site of Shibam in Yemen in mid-March 2009

resulted in the deaths of four foreign nationals and one Yemeni man, as well as injuries to two others. The four foreign nationals were reported to be South Korean tourists traveling in the area, located in the province of Hadramaut. While the immediate cause of the explosion was not confirmed, there was a pervasive belief that Islamic militants active in the area may have been responsible. Indeed, Yemeni security forces have engaged with Islamic militants in the province of Hadramaut on repeated occasions in recent years

On March 19, 2009, Yemen's parliament approved a constitutional amendment on to delay parliamentary elections by two years. The decision effectively meant that the elections, which had been scheduled for April 27, 2009, would instead take place sometime in 2011. Yemeni parliamentarians overwhelming supported the amendment, in a bid to avert a political crisis. At issue has been the call by opposition parties for electoral reform, including a shift from the parliamentary system to a system of proportional representation. The demands by the opposition reached a fever pitch when supporters took to the streets in nationwide protests to bring attention to the matter.

August 2009 saw the Yemeni military carry out an offensive operation against Shi'a rebels in the northern part of the country. In the early part of the operation, there were reports that several people had died although there was no conclusive information on whether those killed included civilians at a market. Further deaths were reported as a result of subsequent clashes. It was the latest manifestation of the conflict between the Sunni government and Shi'a rebels loyal to Abdulmalik al-Houthi who have operated in the mountainous region of Saada, which is located close to the border with Saudi Arabia.

By late August, the operation that had been launched weeks prior now included air strikes and ground assault using tanks and artillery. The operation was aimed at crushing the rebellion from the Zaidi sect and retaking control of the town Harf Surfyan. Central to the scenario was the group's aspiration of restoring Shi'a rule in the northern part of Yemen, juxtaposed with the president of Yemen's claim that the group wants to overthrow the government.

The operation was being hailed as a success thus far, with Yemeni authorities saying that more than 100 militants had been killed, including two rebel leaders. A government statement read: "The bodies of more than 100 rebels have been recovered from the roadside outside the town of Harf Sufyan." The statement also noted that the military offensive had managed in "totally purging the town of rebel elements." There was no independent verification of the claim although several international news agencies have reported the same story emerging from the ground in Yemen.

By September 2009, the ongoing conflict between government forces and rebels in northern Yemen was spreading as a result of a military offensive targeting the Zaidi Shi'a rebels. The escalation of the conflict in mid-September 2009 exacted deadly results when an air raid on a camp for displaced persons left 80 people dead, many of whom were women, children and the elderly.

The Yemeni government disputed the claim that the military hit a refugee camp, insisting that only rebels and supply lines were targeted in the strike. Regardless, Human Rights Watch has called for an investigation into the matter. The conflict was also beginning to take a humanitarian toll. According to the United Nations, food and supplies in the region were running short, spurring massive displacement of up to 150,000 in some areas. At the same time, many civilians were trapped in the cross-fire of violence and unable to flee in other zones. Despite an appeal by the United Nations for assistance to help those in need, there has been little response.

In October 2009, Yemen began a trial in absentia of a leader of Shi'ite rebels in the northern part of the country. The trial of Yahya al-Houthi, a former parliamentarian who has been based in Germany, was accused of spying for a foreign country. The trial came after President Ali Abdullah Saleh vowed to destroy the rebellion by Zaidi Shi'ite Muslims in the provinces of Saada and Amran. Notably, Yahya al-Houthi was the brother of Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the rebels' military leader on the ground in Yemen.

With the government of Yemen ensconced in an ongoing battle against the Shi'a Zaidi rebels in the northern part of the country, some of those very rebels have started operating across the border into Saudi Arabia. On Nov. 4, 2009, Shi'a Zaidi rebels crossed the border into Saudi Arabia, killed a Saudi officer, and reported that they had seized a strategic mountain top region inside Saudi territory. The rebels have accused Saudi Arabia of allowing the Yemeni military to use its terrain to carry out its offensive against them. For its part, Saudi armed forces responded and became embroiled in battles with the rebels in the border region.

On Dec. 17, 2009, Yemeni authorities said that 34 al-Qaida operatives had been killed in ground and air strikes. Later, it was reported that an al-Qaida leader and a Muslim preacher (Anwar al-Awlaki) who was linked to the attack by United States intelligence at an army base in Texas were among those militants killed.* The Yemeni government hailed these developments as a major victory in the ongoing fight against terrorism. Critics, however, have said that Yemeni troops have been occupied fighting a Shi'a rebellion in the north of the country, and a secessionist movement to the south, effectively curtailing more dogged efforts to fight the terrorist threat posed by al-Qaida in Yemen. Accordingly, the success in this operation was thought to have been at least partially due to efforts of either the Saudis or the United States. Indeed, both countries have been pressuring Yemen to carry out a crackdown on al-Qaida, which is reported to be operating within Osama Bin Laden's ancestral homeland. To that end, intelligence sources from the United States and other places have been issuing warnings that al-Qaida was moving some of its field commanders and operatives from the Afghan-Pak region to Yemen and Somalia.

*It should be noted that reports of Awlaki's death were subsequently proved to be untrue.

Christmas Day bomb plot has connection to al-Qaida in Yemen --

Summary:

Yemen's al-Qaida connection has become the focus of geopolitical anxiety in the aftermath of an attempted bombing of a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day. A Nigerian national charged with attempting to bomb the aircraft said he received explosives and training from al-Qaida in Yemen. Fears of terrorist attacks emanating from that country have led to increased anti-terrorism support for Yemen.

The Foiled Attack:

On Dec. 25, 2009, a Nigerian national on a flight from Amsterdam in the Netherlands to Detroit in the United States attempted to carry out a bomb attack. The Christmas Day incident occurred when Northwest Airlines Flight 253, carrying 278 passengers and 11 crew, was less than half an hour from arriving at its destination.

The incident ensued when the suspect, identified as 23-year old Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, tried to ignite an incendiary device, and burnt his leg in so doing. No one else was hurt in what United States officials described as a failed terrorist attack. Passengers on the aircraft described a scene of panic in the cabin after they detected smoke and flames. There were some suggestions that the attempted bomb attack was thwarted when one passenger, Dutch tourist Jasper Schuringa, jumped across several rows of seats to tackle the suspect, and other passengers then helped to fully subdue him. Water, blankets and a fire extinguisher were used to put out the fire. A report by the Associated Press noted that the lives of the passengers and crew about Flight 253 were actually saved because the explosive device failed to detonate due to an apparent malfunction. Nonetheless, Schuringa was hailed as a hero for his quick reaction to the unfolding crisis aboard the flight.

The aircraft was soon cleared for emergency landing at Detroit Metropolitan Airport where Abdulmutallab was taken into official custody and treated for the aforementioned burns at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor. While there, United States District Judge Paul Borman officially charged Abdulmutallab with placing a destructive device on an aircraft, and attempting to destroy a passenger jet by detonating a bomb. According to the Associated Press, Abdulmutallab was asked in English if he understood the charges being brought against him and responded, "Yes, I do." Abdulmutallab's lawyer later said he had been transferred to a federal prison in Milan, Michigan.

Abdulmutallab reportedly told United States authorities that he was acting on behalf of the notorious terrorist enclave, al-Qaida. Indeed, ABC news reported that Abdulmutallab told authorities that he spent one month being trained by al-Qaida in Yemen. Abdulmutallab also

apparently explained that he acquired the explosive powder from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, which he attached to his leg and mixed in a concoction with liquid chemicals, with the intent of causing an explosion. Subsequent media reports indicated that the highly explosive substance was pentaerythritol (PETN) -- the same substance used by the failed show bomber, Richard Reid, exactly eight years earlier in December 2001, when he attempted to bring down a flight from France to the United States. CNN reported that the amount of PETN in this 2009 case was certainly enough to destroy the aircraft, presumably killing all those on board.

Counter-terrorism authorities in the Netherlands confirmed that Abdulmutallab first boarded a KLM flight in Lagos, Nigeria, bound for Amsterdam. It was not known at the time of writing if Abdulmutallab had the explosives attached to his body when his originating flight departed from Nigeria at the very start of the journey. In fact, the logistical details were complicated by the revelation that Abdulmutallab actually flew from Ghana to Nigeria on a one-way ticket.
Nevertheless, once Abdulmutallab arrived in the Netherlands, he transferred to the Northwest flight headed to the United States. According to the Justice Department in the United States, Abdulmutallab at that point had "a device attached to his body" when he boarded the flight in Amsterdam bound for Detroit. He presumably was allowed to board that flight because he had a valid United States visa.

There were serious questions being raised regarding the ease with which the transportation of explosives was able to elude detection. It was possible that security conditions in Nigeria helped in this regard. That is to say, the Lagos airport has long held the dubious distinction of being one of the least efficient travel centers in the world, where lax security runs rampant, largely as a result of widespread corruption. On the other hand, later evidence showing the explosives had been carried in a specially-made pouch within the alleged bombers undergarments would suggest that detection would be almost impossible using a regular magnetometers, and would require more intrusive body scanning techniques.

Accordingly, security at airports worldwide was expected to increase. For his part, United States President Barack Obama ordered that air travel be subject to heightened security measures. Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration in the United States warned that additional screening procedures would be implemented, however, they declined to specify particulars, suggesting that the intent was to preserve the element of surprise for obvious security reasons. Certain international aircraft carriers, though, such as Air Canada and British Airways, noted on their websites that passengers on international flights would be subject to much more intense security, and would be prevented from accessing carry-on luggage or getting up from their seats at certain points during flights. Delays, particularly on trans-Atlantic flights, were being anticipated.

White House spokesperson Robert Gibbs announced that a review of air safety was underway. On one front, there would be an investigation into the systems in place for detecting explosives before

passengers board flights. On another front, there would be an examination of the terrorist identification protocols, in light of the revelation that Abdulmutallab was already listed in a broad terrorist database and yet allowed to board a flight. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano explained in an interview with CNN that despite the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father had warned the United States' embassy in Nigeria that his son might have jihadist inclinations, it was not sufficient actionable information to have moved him to the terrorism "no fly" list. The actual criteria for inclusion in these various databases -- some overseen by the Director of National Intelligence and some by the Federal Bureau of Investigation -- was not made known to the public.

Nevertheless, the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father -- a well-known Nigerian banker -- had gone to such lengths to notify United States officials of his suspicions, along with revelations that Abdulmutallab had purchased a ticket from Ghana using cash and was carrying only one carry-on piece of luggage, were matters expected to be subjects of grave critique in the coming weeks. Typically, such actions would be flagged as suspicious and indicative of a possible terrorist threat and so Secretary Napolitano's assurances that flying was still "very, very safe" were unlikely to go unchallenged. However, despite the perception of breaches in the air transport security system, preliminary examinations in the Netherlands -- where Flight 253 originated -- found that existing security procedures were correctly followed. The obvious conclusion, therefore, has been that current security technology does not facilitate the easy detection of explosive devices and substances. Indeed, as indicated above, most passengers in airports have to pass through only magnetometers, which detect metal and not explosives. Accordingly, there was likely to be intensified focus in the future on equipping airports with "puffer" machines that detect explosive powder residue, manual hand swabs to the same end, bomb-sniffing dogs, as well as body scanners.

Meanwhile, attention was on Abdulmutallab himself, who was born into a life of relative privilege. He once studied engineering at a prestigious school in the United Kingdom, but his Islamic views had caught the attention of his own family, including his father, Alhaji Umaru Mutallab. Indeed, media reports suggested that he was estranged from his family, actually losing touch with them in the months he may have been living in Yemen. The official Saba News Agency in Yemen subsequently reported that Abdulmutallab had, in fact, been living in that country from August 2009 to the start of December 2009 while he attended the Sanaa Institute for the Arabic Language (SIAL). Nigerian authorities suggested that Abdulmutallab used surreptitious means to re-enter Nigeria before departing on the trip that would span three continents.

Yemen and al-Qaida:

The United States government has been reticent about drawing conclusions about a global terrorist plot in this case. Nevertheless, this attempt to carry out an in-flight bombing on Christmas Day appeared to be in keeping with al-Qaida's latest terrorist directives. The NEFA Foundation

published an October 2009 al-Qaida article calling for operatives to use "small explosives" to kill "apostates" and Westerners at airports and in aircrafts. Moreover, Abdulmutallab -- the man at the center of the Christmas Day attempted terror attack -- has expressly conjured up al-Qaida in his interrogations with authorities. Finally, a Yemen-based branch of the network removed some prevailing doubts about the orchestration of the failed terrorist attack by claiming responsibility.

It should be noted that al-Qaida was not the only meaningful reference point offered by Abdulmutallab to the authorities during initial interrogations. Also of significance was his mentioning of Yemen as being the place he garnered the PETN, as well as the venue of his Islamic militant training. Yemen -- the ancestral home of Osama Bin Laden -- is strategically located at the end of the Arabian peninsula and stretches from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. It is also located in close proximity to another emerging al-Qaida haven -- Somalia. Accordingly, Yemen has increasingly factored into the discussions of global terrorism.

Al-Qaida's satellite base in Yemen may be attempting to gain ascendancy at a time when global attention is on the Afghan-Pak region. To this end, Anwar Eshki, the head of the Middle East Center for Strategic and Legal Studies, has argued that al-Qaida in Yemen "is stronger than it was a year ago" and intent on turning that country into a major base of operations against the West. Part of that strength may be derived from the fact that Saudi and Yemeni elements of al-Qaida have joined forces to form the merged entity, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The Saudi authorities, who have carried out a crackdown on its elements, have suggested that many Saudi operatives have fled to Yemen. The Saudi authorities have sometimes accused Yemen of not doing enough to round up its own bastions of extremism.

In the aftermath of the failed terror plot aboard the airliner discussed above, the government of Yemen indicated that while it had the will to deal with al-Qaida, it was hampered by a lack of support. Nonetheless, the Yemeni authorities insisted that they have been working with regional and Western powers to crush militancy within its borders, noting that such action was in the country's own best interests since Islamic extremists pose a grave national security threat. It should also be noted that in the latter part of 2009, faced with the threat that Yemen was becoming a stronghold for Islamic extremists, United States intelligence was credited with helping Yemeni forces carry out military offensives against major al-Qaida bases in that country, much to the consternation of al-Qaida itself. But the Yemeni authorities have to contend with not only the al-Qaida threat, but also a secessionist movement in the south and a Shi'a Zaidi rebellion in the north. This complex political terrain has left large isolated swaths of land vulnerable for use by extremists of many stripes in Yemen.

Meanwhile, Evan Kohlmann, a senior investigator for the NEFA Foundation, warned that rivalry among al-Qaida's branches could be a driving force behind the uptick in Yemen-based al-Qaida activities. He said, "There's now a competition in the world of al-Qaida between various al-Qaida factions, with each trying to prove themselves and prove their worth." There could therefore be an attempt by Yemen-based al-Qaida to distinguish itself as an active base of anti-Western and Jihadist

militancy.

This threat was amplified when, a week after the aforementioned attempted terrorist attack, the Yemeni authorities warned that hundreds of al-Qaida operatives were present in Yemen and could be plotting further terrorist attacks. This claim appeared to coincide with warnings made by Abdulmutallab -- the man behind the attempted Christmas Day attack -- who said that there were other al-Qaida operatives who stood ready to strike with fresh attacks.

Some of those al-Qaida operatives could well be among the hundreds already present in Yemen, as noted by the Yemeni authorities. But Yemen's location close to Somalia might also be a factor. The militant extremist Islamist group, al-Shabab, which has held sway in portions of Somalia, has warned it would send its fighters to assist fellow Islamic militants in Yemen. Sheikh Mukhtar Robow Abu Mansour of al-Shabab reportedly said: "We tell our Muslim brothers in Yemen that we will cross the water between us and reach your place to assist you fight the enemy of Allah."

With attention now focused on the Islamic extremist threat emanating from Yemen, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for a summit to be convened in London at the end of January 2010 simultaneously with a pre-scheduled conference on the future of Afghanistan. The objective of the summit on Yemen would be identify Yemen's counter-terrorism requirements and to determine ways of dealing with the thrust towards extremism via aid and reform. Prime Minister Brown also urged all key international partners to be involved in this endeavor saying, "The international community must not deny Yemen the support it needs to tackle extremism." He also announced that the United Kingdom would commit 100 million British pounds and intelligence support to Yemen -- the most significant outlay by any global power to that Middle eastern country.

Meanwhile, General David Petraeus, head of United States military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia, visited the president of Yemen, Ali Abdallah Saleh, to pledge American support in the fight against al-Qaida. One day earlier, Petraeus announced that the United States would double its counter-terrorism aid to Yemen in 2010.

Across the globe, clearly there was increasing anxiety about Yemen becoming a failed state -- the very environment within which violent extremist groups often find safe haven. To that end, Mark Pritchard, a British parliamentarian and the vice chairman of the Parliamentary Yemen Group, said: "If Yemen does become a failed State it will provide a safe haven for terrorists with close proximity to important shipping routes and neighboring oil-producing Saudi Arabia. The stakes for the region and the West are very high indeed."

For its part, the government of Yemen appeared to give tacit sanction for greater assistance from the Western powers with the Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi saying in an interview with the BBC, "We need more training. We have to expand our counter terrorism units and this means providing them with the necessary training, military equipment, ways of transportation - we are very short of helicopters. The United States can do a lot, Britain can do a lot, the European

Union can do a lot in that regard."

Such help would be of paramount importance given the reports in the early days of 2010 that al-Qaida was planning an attack on the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. In an interview with ABC News, John Brennan, the top counter-terrorism adviser to United States President Obama, said, "We know that they [al-Qaida operatives] have been targeting our embassy, our embassy personnel." Because of this threat, Brennan announced that the United States was temporarily closing its embassy in Sanaa. The British and French governments reportedly moved to do the same. Brennan's claims were consistent with a call from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula encouraging Muslims to assist in "killing every crusader who works at their embassies or other places."

Latest Developments:

On Jan. 5, 2010, it was reported that Yemeni security forces killed several suspected al-Qaida militants as part of its ongoing effort to crush al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. According to reports, the Yemeni forces ambushed a cadre of militants in the Arhab district -- about 40 miles north of the Yemeni capital -- effectively igniting a violent clash with the militants, ultimately yielding the aforementioned deaths.

But even as this offensive operation was taking place, the Yemeni president was signaling that it was interested in engaging with al-Qaida in an effort to end the violence in his country. President Ali Abdullah Saleh suggested he would grant leniency to members of al-Qaida who were willing to enter talks with his government and renounce violence. In an interview that was broadcast on Abu Dhabi TV, he said: "Dialogue is the best way ... even with al-Qaida, if they set aside their weapons and return to reason." The move was essentially an extension of the Yemeni president's previous stance in dealing with al-Qaida. Accordingly, it was expected to be met with grave disapproval from Western powers who have viewed it as a failed strategy, given the terrorist threat emanating from Yemen.

Yemen is the base of both foreign and local al-Qaida fighters. The local fighters are often aided by relatives, typically as a result of tribal loyalty more than ideology. However, when these fighters are killed or arrested by government forces, these heavily-armed tribes often are emotionally driven to increase support of the militants. Meanwhile, Yemen has also been home to thousands of Islamic militants who are veterans of several "holy wars" in other countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. While most of these Islamic militant veterans are no longer active, they nonetheless maintain their extremist views in keeping with al-Qaida ideology. As noted by Ali Saif Hassan, the manager of a Yemeni group that mediates between the government and opposition: "It is difficult to draw the line between who is a fundamentalist and who is al-Qaida. It's a spectrum." As constituents of the country, these elements form part of the broader anti-American and anti-Western base of the country, over which President Saleh has only fragile control.

It is this matter of fragile control that informs President Saleh's stance. With a rebellion in the

north, a secessionist movement in the south, extremists in other parts of the country, and actual control over only Sanaa, Yemeni President Saleh has moved cautiously in the fight against al-Qaida. This wary and cagey positioning has been largely due to President Saleh's concern that working closely with the United States and the West on anti-terrorism efforts could spark a backlash.

In fact, the Yemeni leader has to walk a political tightrope of sorts. He has had to crack down on the rebels, secessionists and militants in order to maintain national security, while simultaneously demonstrating anti-terrorism efforts for geopolitical reasons. Yet, in so doing, President Saleh cannot afford to alienate significant elements of Yemeni society. To this end, he must demonstrate the precise amount of cooperation with the Western powers to assuage them, while currying favor with the extremist elements of his own country. In many senses, it has been the same challenge facing other leaders in the region who must contend with a volatile population base while attending to the geopolitical and national security threats posed by militant Islamic terrorism.

The other territorial battles in Yemen have also factored into the country's complex landscape and challenging security situation. In January 2010, Yemeni security forces entered into the sixth month of conflict with Shi'ite rebels in the northern part of the country. This was part of the government's ongoing "Operation Scorched Earth" offensive aimed at ending the Houthi rebellion. The situation in the north has intersected to some degree with the increasing global attention on Yemen as an emerging base of al-Qaida extremist militants. The government of Yemen has had to balance fighting terrorism and rebellion with appeasing extremist elements of the society, amidst a country with rebels in the north and secessionists in the south. To satisfy these contradictory objectives, the Yemeni government has at times aligned itself with controversial Islamists. Among them has been Sheik Abdul-Majid al-Zindan whom the United States has classified as a terrorist due to his alleged connection to al-Qaida, and who has gained notoriety for his anti-Western rhetoric. But the Yemeni government has relied on its alliance with cleric like al-Zindani in the fight against the Shi'ite rebels in the north, to oppose the secessionists in the south, and to hold onto its tenuous grip on power.

Cast along the complicated landscape has been the growing international call for the government to take a harder stance against al-Qaida, and the reality that such a move could ignite a fierce and deleterious repercussions from the Islamic fundamentalist and tribal factions of Yemeni society. Indeed, as noted by Ali Mohammed Omar, a Yemeni who, according to a report by the Associated Press, fought in Afghanistan in the early 1990s and met Osama Bin Laden: "Any movement against al-Qaida will lead to the fall of the Yemeni regime." He went on to note that if the United States or its allies were to become too directly involved in Yemen, "the whole (Yemeni) people will become al-Qaida. Instead of 30 or 40 people, it would become millions."

Clearly aware of this potentiality, while the United States and the United Kingdom have increased support for anti-terrorism efforts in Yemen in the form of increased funding and training for counter-terrorism forces (noted above), there is no indication of an overt military presence in that

country. In fact, in an interview with People magazine, United States President Obama made clear that he had no intention of deploying American troops to Yemen (or Somalia), despite the nations' growing importance as emerging centers of terrorism on the global landscape. To this end, President Obama said: "I have no intention of sending U.S. boots on the ground in these regions." Instead, he suggested that working with international partners on the situation in Yemen would be the best course. President Obama also emphasized that the main center of al-Qaida activity was still in the Afghan-Pak region.

The president's sentiment was reflected in statements by General David Petraeus, who has been directing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In an interview with Christiane Amanpour on CNN, he said of the Yemeni government that it was "quite clear that Yemen does not want to have American ground troops there. And that's a ... good response for us to hear, certainly." He continued, "We would always want a host nation to deal with a problem itself. We want to help. We're providing assistance." Echoing what was clearly the Obama administration's position on the matter, Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an interview with Fareed Zakaria on CNN, "Right now, as far as any kind of boots on the ground there, with respect to the United States, ... that's not a possibility."

Update

In mid-January 2010, pro-government tribesmen killed 10 Shi'ite rebels when the two sides clashes over control over a northern town, according to reports from the Yemeni Interior Ministry. The northern part of the country has been the site of an ongoing Shi'a Zaidi rebellion for some time although fighting increased in late 2009 and into early 2010. Neighboring Saudi Arabia expressed concerns over the situation in Yemen, largely due to anxieties that instability in Yemen could have a destabilizing regional effect. Indeed, areas of lawlessness and chaos throughout the world have often provided fertile ground for al-Qaida militants to operate.

At issue has been the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion, which led to the rise in violent attacks in certain regions of the country since 2004. The two sides agreed to a ceasefire but peace efforts quickly dissolved and fighting resumed in 2007. The period since 2007 has been marked by ongoing violence, resulting in the deaths of both Shi'a rebels and security forces. Known as the Houthis, the Shi'a Zaidi rebels have said they seek greater autonomy. At the core of the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has been the claim that the government of Yemen is too closely aligned with the United States, which has provided supplies and training to Yemen's security forces under the aegis of the "war on terror." The rebels also blame the government for both corruption and discrimination. But Yemen's government has accused the northern Shi'ite rebels, led by Abdulmalik al-Houthi, of trying to oust the democratic government and advancing Shi'a theocratic rule in the country. As noted above, the situation has now spilled over the border into Saudi Arabia.

On Jan. 13, 2010, the official Saba News Agency reported that Yemeni security forces had killed a key al-Qaida figure in a raid in the in southern province of Shabwa. The source cited in the report was the Interior Ministry, which indicated that Abdullah al-Mihzhar, a leader of a local al-Qaida cell, had been killed the day before in Maifa'ah district during clashes with security forces. The report suggested that security forces also captured four suspected al-Qaida members during the raid in Shabwa. Meanwhile, the provincial governor, Ali Hasan al-Ahmadi, said that two policemen were killed in an ambush carried out by terrorists.

On Jan. 16, 2010, Yemen's Interior Ministry said that two senior al-Qaida leaders -- Kasim al-Raimy, the military leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and Amar Ubadah al-Waili, the leader of al-Qaida group in al-Jawf province (northern Yemen) -- were killed in an airstrike the day before. Four other al-Qaida militants were also killed in that airstrike. The announcement came on the heels of the news of the death of top al-Qaida leader, Abdullah al-Mihzhar. As well, Yemeni authorities reportedly arrested three al-Qaida suspects near the borders with Saudi Arabia; the suspects were allegedly carrying weapons, explosives and leaflets.

Together, these moves represented successful efforts by Yemeni security forces against the country's al-Qaida branch in a short space of time. Indeed, these developments appeared to have all taken place in relation to the ongoing crackdown Yemen has been carrying out on al-Qaida suspects since December 2009. This crackdown has resulted in the termination and arrests of scores of al-Qaida suspects in other areas of Yemen, such as the district of Arhab close to the capital of Sanaa, as well as the southern provinces of Abyan and Shabwa.

In late January 2010, the Obama administration in the United States said that in addition to expanding military support to Yemen in the fight against al-Qaida, it would also bolster its economic assistance program in that country, with an eye on decreasing the influence of Islamist extremists. In this way, the United States Pentagon would provide increased military cooperation, training and counter-terrorism forces, while the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development would work on preparing a development plan that targeting tribal youth who are particularly vulnerable recruits to al-Qaida.

In mid-February 2010, the Yemeni government and the Shi'ite Houthi rebels of the north of the country agreed to a truce, with an eye on ending the conflict that has been ongoing since 2004. A statement by President Ali Abdullah Saleh was broadcast in the national state-run media explained the move as follows: "We decided to stop military operations in the northwest region,and it will take effect at midnight (2100 GMT) on Thursday." Accordingly, a military offensive ongoing since August 2009 dubbed "Operation Scorched Earth" against the rebels appeared to have been officially ended, For its part, the rebel leadership announced its acceptance of the ceasefire and its intent to abide by the agreement. Rebel leader, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, said in his statement, "There will be opening of roads, removal of road blocks and end of fight of the Houthi side." Meanwhile, a fact-finding committee composed of both government officials and Houthi

representatives were to commence work on a joint task to monitor the obligations of the two sides. That task promised to be difficult since only hours after the truce was announced, a gun battle broke out between Yemeni rebels and government forces.

In May 2010, an American-born Islamic cleric who, in the past, called for fellow Muslims to kill United States troops, now called for the killing of United States citizens. In a video released by al-Qaida in Yemen, Anwar Al-Awlaki accused the United States of intentionally killing Muslims in the military engagements ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan, noting that many Muslim civilians had died as a result. He therefore justfied the killing of American civilians in retaliation saying, "The American people, in general, are taking part in this and they elected this administration and they are financing the war."

Al-Awlaki came to prominence as an al-Qaida recruit with links to the attack at the United States army base in Fort Hood, Texas, an attempted terror attack on a flight headed for Detriot, as well as the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in New York and Washington D.C. United States authorities have regarded him as a target due to these associations, but also because of his influence as an English-speaking radical cleric who could presumably facilitate the radicalization of other young Muslims, even contributing to the growth of home-grown terrorists. Accordingly, the Obama administration placed him on a "hit list" for targeted assassination by the Central Intelligence Agency. Indeed, White House spokesman, Robert Gibbs, has made clear that United States authorities were "actively trying to find" him. Al-Awlaki was believed to be hiding in Yemen. His presence there has contribute to rising anxieties about this new base of Islamic terrorism in Yemen.

On June 19, 2010, gunmen dressed in military garb attacked the heavily-guarded headquarters of Yemen's domestic intelligence agency located in the al-Tawahi district of the city of Aden. At least 10 security officers died as a result of the heavy gunfire and the building appeared to be in flames. Suspicion quickly fell on al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as being the likely group behind the brazen attack, due to its strong demand that its supporters take up arms against the government. While this particular raid may have had the narrow purpose of freeing a number of Islamic extremist militants who were being detained at the agency and who escaped with some of the gunmen, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula has urged its supporters to resist the government in response to an ongoing crackdown in the eastern part of the country. At the broader level, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula seeks to oust the Saudi monarchy and the Yemeni government from power, and to establish an Islamic caliphate.

Special Report:

Hidden bombs of cargo planes originate in Yemen --

In late October 2010, bombs were found hidden in cargo planes originating in Yemen and bound

for Jewish synagogues in the city of Chicago in the United States. The devices containing pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) and plastic explosives mixed with lead azide (used to detonate explosives) were inserted into printer cartridges and mailed via cargo shipment from Yemen.

In one case, a printer was found on a cargo plane in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates equipped with a circuit board linked to a mobile phone card. In another case, a explosive device was intercepted at the East Midlands Airport in the United Kingdom only after an initial search yielded no results. Authorities in the United Kingdom were then told that the explosives found in Dubai had been hidden in the printer, thus a more thorough secondary search, this time with positive results.

British Prime Minister David Cameron issued the disturbing news that the explosive device was designed to be detonated on the aircraft, although it was not known when it was intended to explode. In practical terms, this meant that it was unknown as to whether the bombs could be detonated remotely whileairliners were in flight, or, when the packages were opened at their destinations in the United States. John Brennan, counter-terrorism adviser to United States President Barack Obama, warned that the bombs were "sophisticated" and "self-contained" devices, intended to be detonated by the terrorists according to their chosen schedules. Given the use of the particular explosives within the printer cartridges, it would have been difficult for any bomb-sniffing dogs or x-ray machines to discover them.

Both discoveries were made thanks to intelligence passed on from Saudi Arabian authorities as well as a British M16 agent working in Yemen. The Saudi-based intelligence was linked to a tip received from a repentant al-Qaida member, Jabr al-Faifi, once held at Guantanamo Bay. Blame was quickly placed on al-Qaida in Yemen, which has been known to attempt bomb attacks using PETN. Attention was also focused on a well-known al-Qaida explosives expert, Ibrahim Hassan al-Asiri, who was believed to be the bomb maker from Saudi Arabia now living in Yemen.

In that country, now regarded as an emerging base of radical jihadist Islamists such as al-Qaida, a female student was arrested in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa on suspicion of dispatching the explosives-laden packages. The woman's location was traced via the telephone number she furnished to the cargo company. Given the threat, local offices of the cargo firms, UPS and FedEx, shut down freight operations in Yemen, while several countries placed a halt on cargo transported from Yemen. Yemeni officials were additionally on the hunt for additional suspects believed to be involved in procuring forged documents and identification cards. Also under suspicion were two language institutions in Yemen believed to be linked with the orchestrator of the mail bomb plot.

Meanwhile, cargo airliners were not the only ones involved in what appeared to be thwarted terror attacks. News reports indicated that at least one of the packages containing a bomb traveled on passenger flights. To that end, one package was transported on a Qatar Airlines flight from Yemen to Qatar, and then transferred to another Qatar Airlines flight onto Dubai in the United Arab

Emirates. This revelation raised questions about the safety of global travel, given the transportation of cargo in civilian airliners.

Under fire for yet another terrorist attempt emanating from his country, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh said that his country would keep up its fight against al-Qaida "in co-operation with its partners." However, the Yemeni leader intimated that his country would balk at the notion of intervention by foreign powers saying, "But we do not want anyone to interfere in Yemeni affairs by hunting down al-Qaeda."

It was yet to be seen how foreign powers would respond to this call since in December 2009, a Nigerian national tried to detonate explosives on a flight destined for the American city of Detroit. That plot was thwarted by a vigilant passenger on the same flight but the plot was traced back to al-Qaida in Yemen. (See above for more details related to that attempted act of terrorism.)

For its part, the Obama administration in the United States was making it clear that it wanted to assist President Saleh in the fight against al-Qaida. Indeed, the United States government was sending inspectors to Yemen to investigate cargo security practices, given the ostensible assumption that further bombs could be transported in the same way as the two currently at issue. The United States was also reiterating its commitment to destroying the terror enclave, al-Qaida.

Special Report

Wikileaks Revelations --

The notorious website, Wikileaks, in the fall of 2010 published hundreds of thousands of secret United States documents dealing with the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its aftermath. Earlier, Wikileaks published tens of thousands of secret documents dealing with the war in Afghanistan. The United States military analyst responsible for originally leaking the documents was himself awaiting trial for charges related to the illegal release of the materials. As well, the director of Wikileaks, Julian Assange, was wanted by the Swedish authorities in connections with rape allegations. These two legal cases aside, at the close of 2010, further secret documents were being revealed, this time with possible implications for sensitive diplomatic relations around the world. Some of the key leaks revealed in secret cable correspondence included the following with regard to Yemen--

As published by the Guardian, secret dispatches dated September 2009 revealed far more involved United States military involvement in Yemen than had been previously believed, largely a result of United States fears that Yemen was becoming a haven for al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The cables suggested that Yemen allowed the United States to carry out secret air strikes against suspected al-Qaida terrorists, while Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh claimed that the strikes were being carried out by Yemen's military as part of its own anti-militancy offensive. Following a

second strike in 2009, President Saleh told General David Petraeus, the head of United States Central Command at the time, "We'll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours." A December 2009 dispatch had United States Ambassador Stephen Secher explaining that "Yemen insisted it must maintain the status quo regarding the official denial of U.S. involvement." Seche also noted that Saleh supported continued operations until the threat of militant Islamic terrorism emanating from Yemen was fully eradicated.

Special Report

Special Report on Unrest in Yemen

Summary:

Since the start of 2011, long-serving President Ali Abdullah Saleh's grip on power has been threatened by anti-government protests in Yemen. The scenario has grown increasingly tenuous for President Saleh -- an ally of the United States in the global war on terror. In April 2011, Gulf Arab countries embarked on a mediation mission aimed at facilitating a peaceful transition of power and an exit strategy for President Saleh from the political scene. But by the start of June 2011, President Saleh had not yet taken that path, presumably in a desperate bid to hold onto power. Indeed, the situation in Yemen had devolved into a state of severe crisis as Yemeni tribes turned on Saleh and were now in the fight against the regime, and as the country stood on the brink of civil war.

The Yemeni president has consistently argued that there would be no one to effectively fill the power chasm in this Middle Eastern country, which has increasingly become a haven for al -Qaida terrorists. Throughout, President Saleh has had to walk a delicate tightrope as he sought to deal with the threat of terrorism from within Yemen's borders, while not alienating the Yemeni citizenry, many of whom sympathize with Islamic extremism. At the same time, President Saleh has had to deal with secessionists in the south and threats to national security from the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion.

The news that President Saleh had departed the country for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia raised hopes by the opposition movement that the leader's exit might become permanent. Saleh had been injured when tribes allied with the opposition attacked the presidential palace, leaving him badly burned and in need of critical medical attention. Since that time, there have been ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at brokering an end to the political conflict in Yemen. A coalition of the Yemeni opposition rejected initial overtures of dialogue with the Saleh regime, saying there would be no such discourse unless President Saleh officially transferred power to his Vice President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Meanwhile, tribal leader Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar, warned that the United Nations' weak efforts to get Saleh to transfer power could ultimately lead to a Libyan-style rebellion in Yemen.

In the backdrop of these developments has been an exit strategy deal for President Saleh, which was brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Central to the agreement was the resignation of the president within 30 days, a transition of power to his second in command, and the eventual holding of fresh presidential elections. The deal was contingent upon immunity from legal prosecution for President Saleh and his family. President Saleh has, at times, indicated interest in the GCC exit strategy deal, only to eventually distance himself from it, arguing at time that the GCC initiative was "a coup" against his legitimacy.

Background:

On Jan. 22, 2011, mass protests ensued in Yemen, with an eye on replicating the results of the "Jasmine Revolution" in Tunisia that brought down the ruling regime of Ben Ali in that country. Characterized as the effects of the "Tunisian Wind" sweeping across Arab regimes in the Middle East by the British Telegraph, thousands of protesters took to the streets around Sanaa University in the capital of Yemen to call the ousting of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has held the reins of power in that country for more than 30 years. At issue for the protesters was a proposed constitutional amendment that could potentially install Saleh as president for life, as well as public frustration with the increasing price of fuel and other commodities, and the general problem of corruption. Yemeni police were reported to have successfully dispersed the crowds without any violent clashes occurring. For his part, President Saleh carried out a partial cabinet shuffle.

On Jan. 27, 2011, just days after the first round of protests, Yemen was again gripped by anti-government demonstrations as Yemeni citizens took to the streets to demand that President Saleh step down from office. By this point, the "Tunisian Wind" had gained steam as protests were sweeping across not only Yemen but Egypt as well. In the case of Yemen, opposition members closed ranks with youth activists again around the area of Sanaa University, with a strong message of discontent with President Saleh's government. The protesters' zeal for change appeared to have been reinvigorated by the arrest of a well-known human rights activist, Tawakul Karman, on the basis of claims that she was actively organizing anti-government mass action. Her arrest served only to create a rallying call for the disillusioned ranks, who therefore once again took to the streets in Sanaa. Their aforementioned socio-economic grievances aside, the people -- particularly the youth of Yemen -- were frustrated with the lack of political freedom in Yemen, and were heard chanting slogans around the theme that "it was time for change." As reported by Agence France Press, an opposition member of parliament, Abdulmalik al-Qasuss, of the al-Islah [Reform] party, repeated the call for the president to step down saying, "We gather today to demand the departure of President Saleh and his corrupt government."

Note that at the start of February 2011, President Saleh was reported to be convening an emergency meeting with key members of government. Then, in a shocking turn of events, on Feb. 2, 2011, Yemeni President Saleh announced to the country's parliament that he did not intend to seek another presidential term in office. That would indicate that President Saleh's tenure as

president of Yemen would end in 2013. President Saleh also foreclosed the notion of his son taking the reins of power saying, "No life presidency, no inheritance to son." During the emergency meeting of parliament, consultative council, and members of the army that he intended to freeze all the constitutional amendments approved by the ruling party at the start of the year, which would pave the way for him to be president for life. The president also called for participation in elections by youth and said he would advocate youth voter registration programs. In a related development, President Saleh also said he was willing to delay the date of the parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2011, in accordance with the demands of the opposition who want more time to make preparations for the vote.

In these regards, President Saleh appeared to be following in the proactive direction as Jordan's King Abdullah by ensuring that the people knew change was on the way. It was apparent that the Yemeni leader was moving in response to popular protests at home, in the hopes that his country did not descend into the chaos now plaguing Egypt. To that end, President Saleh said, "I present these reforms in the interests of the country. The interest of the country comes before our personal benefits." In response, the opposition appeared to welcome President Saleh's initiatives, but warned that planned protests would go on as planned, despite the president's call for such mass actions to end. Indeed, on Jan. 4, 2011, about 20,000 people gathered in the capital of Sanaa for protests against President Saleh, charging that waiting until 2013 for his term in office to end was too long.

On Feb. 12, 2011, coming on the heels of the successful "Nile Revolution" in Egypt, protesters took to the streets in Yemen's capital of Sanaa. But supporters of President Saleh pushed back the anti-government protesters from the city center. A day later, hundreds of demonstrators again took to the streets, this time headed towards the presidential palace. They were blocked from reaching the compound, clashing instead with police who used batons to push back the crowd. In the port city of Aden, at least two people were reported to have been killed in clashes with police. Days later on Feb. 17, 2011, protests were continuing but the scene was turning violent as Yemeni anti-government demonstrators clashed with pro-government activists. Several deaths and injuries were reported to have resulted overall from the violence. On Feb. 18, 2011, the protests were ongoing, with demonstrations reported in Sanaa, Aden and Taiz.

Meanwhile, President Saleh, who was preparing for a trip to the United States, postponed the visit "due to the current circumstances in the region," and instead convened meetings to deal with the chaotic scenario in Yemen. With an eye on possible domestic chaos in Yemen -- a country where the social, political, and economic conditions provide fertile soil for extremist militants to broaden their ranks -- United States President Barack Obama has called on President Saleh to move forward with his promises of reform and dialogue with political opponents. All expectations that were that President Saleh would indeed concretize these pledges with actions, in a bid to stabilize Yemen's tumultuous terrain.

Escalation:

Sporadic protests were taking place by Feb. 20, 2011, with demonstrators calling for the president to step down from power. Notably, several thousand people -- students, members of the opposition, and other activists -- participated in a sit-in at Sanaa University Monday on Feb. 21, 2011. However, in the two days after, there seemed to be a sense of relative calm spreading over the capital city of Sanaa. For his part, President Saleh addressed the country in the last week of February 2011 and called for productive talks with the opposition, with an eye on reform. As reported by the Washington Post, he said during a news conference, "Yes to reforms. No to coups and seizing power through anarchy and killing. You are calling for the regime to go -- then come and get rid of it through the ballot boxes, not through violence." In this way, President Saleh was also making it clear that he would not be resigning from office.

By Feb. 23, 2011, protests erupted again and moved in a tense direction in the city of Aden with security forces using tear gas to disperse the crowds there. As well, reports emerged that the aforementioned "sit in" at the capital in Sanaa resulted in the deaths of two people. President Saleh saw increased political pressure when some of his officials resigned to register discontent over the government's handling of the protests.

On Feb. 24, 2011, perhaps in response to the aforementioned deteriorating situation on the domestic front, and exacerbated by the global response to the bloody crackdown taking place in the Libyan city of Tripoli as the Qadhafi regime there tried to cling to power, President Saleh ordered his security forces to offer " full protection" all protesters, regardless of their particular predilections. The Yemeni president emphasized also that security forces were tasked with preventing direct confrontation and clashes between anti-government and pro-government demonstrators. The official statement read as follows: "The government... will continue to protect the rights of its citizens to assemble peacefully and their right to freedom of expression." Then, on Feb. 28, 2011, in a continuing bid to calm the unrest plaguing the country, Yemeni President Saleh said that he would establish a government of national unity. For his part, President Saleh appealed to the national interest saying, "The Yemeni people are for security, stability and development and against chaos, violence and vandalism." But by March 1, 2011, the president had postponed such plans with the opposition squarely rejecting the idea of participating in a unity government; instead, they renewed their call for President Saleh to leave office.

Tensions between pro-government factions and anti-government protesters reached new heights on March 6, 2011, as government supporters attacked protesters in the southern part of the country. The situation in Yemen took an ominous turn when unidentified gunmen assassinated a member of the Yemeni opposition coalition in the southeast province of Shabwa on March 7, 2011. Omar al-Mualim, a leader of the Islamic Islah party in Shabwa, was shot to death as he was working in Maifa district in Shabwa. His assassination came at a time when hundreds of people took to the streets in anti-government protests in Shabwa. An investigation was said to be underway but the incident was likely to heighten tensions in Yemen where the political landscape was already

deteriorating.

On March 8, 2011, despite its claims that the people would be protected from attack, the army stormed Sanaa University, firing live ammunition, rubber bullets, and tear gas at demonstrators there. At least one person died and scores of others were injured as a result. A day later on March 9, 2011, thousands of Yemenis took to the streets in mass protests to register their anger at the government's harsh tactics. The protesters issued a "black list" with the names of officials they blamed for the violence against peaceful protesters, and called for revenge against them. Included in the list was the son of President Saleh -- the chief of the Republican Guard. The statement also contained a vow to continue mass action until President Saleh's regime was deposed. Protests were also heating up in the southern port city of Aden.

Meanwhile, the international community -- including the United States, which considers President Saleh an ally in the fight against global jihadist terrorism -- condemned the government for its harsh crackdown. United States Department of State spokesman, Mark Toner, urged both sides to show restraint but also specifically demanded that the Yemeni government cease its "disturbing heavy-handed tactics used with lethal effect against protesters."

In the second week of March 2011, President Saleh announced plans to transform the constitution, with an eye on establishing a parliamentary system and instituting a new election law. In an address to the nation, President Saleh indicated that these reforms signaled a future for Yemen whereby a "government elected by the parliament would take control of the country's executive powers."

By March 13, 2011, police and anti-government activists in Yemen were embroiled in violent clashes close to Sanaa University. As protesters continued to demand that President Saleh step down, police fired not only tear gas but live fire at them, leaving more than 100 people injured. At least one person was said to be in critical condition due to gunshot wounds. Only the day before, clashes and the associated crackdown had resulted in the deaths of at least seven anti-government demonstrators. The security situation was dire not only in Sanaa but also in Dar Saad and Sheikh Othman, where two protesters were shot to death and three others were injured. On the other side of the equation, protesters set three police cars ablaze in Dar Saad and set up roadblocks aimed at repelling police. In the Aden, demonstrators stormed a police station and seizing weapons. In the province of Taiz province, there were reports of bloody clashes between demonstrators and police.

The scenario augured negatively for Yemen, where embattled President Saleh had clearly abandoned his promise to protect protesters and was now using harsh measures to try to clamp down on the anti-government uprising. He was also gradually losing support from some of his own government. Notably, Saleh fired Major General Abdel- Illah al-Qadi a close relative, from a senior military post; Al-Qadi later said that he would join the protest movement.

At the international level, the response was one marked by alarm. While Western powers did not look forward to the loss of an ally in the fight against terrorism, such as President Saleh , they

could not look the other way as the government opened fire on the citizenry. Accordingly, United States Department of State spokesman P.J. Crowley, said: "We call on the Yemeni government to quickly investigate these incidents. People everywhere share the same universal rights to demonstrate peacefully and to freely assemble and express themselves."

On March 18, 2011, Yemen saw the bloodiest day of the uprising when more than 50 protesters died. Despite a ban on gatherings implicit in President Saleh's declaration of a state of emergency, on March 19, 2011, thousands of people gathered for the funeral of those killed the day before. For his part, President Saleh distanced himself from the violence saying that the 52 people died due to the chaos incited by opposition forces.

By March 20, 2011, President Saleh was clearly becoming politically isolated. Several members of his cabinet resigned from office in protests of the government's bloody offensive against protesters. Of significance were the resignations of Abdullah Alsaidi, Yemen's ambassador to the United Nations, and Human Rights Minister Huda al-Baan. In response, President Saleh moved to fire his entire cabinet and said that he would form a new government. But this move was unlikely to calm the disarray now spreading across Yemen. Indeed, President Saleh was losing support from several quarters. Notably, the leader of an important tribal confederation (including the president's own tribe) -- Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar -- called on President Saleh to step down from power. This call was being echoed by religious clerics, who also urged Yemeni soldiers to ignore any orders by Yemeni officials to shoot protesters. Religious clerics said that President Saleh should appease protesters by resigning and this preventing further bloodshed. Of note was the call for Saleh to resign from Sheik Abdul- Majid al-Zindani, an influential member of the Yemeni Salafis -- an extremist Islamic movement aligned ideologically with al-Qaida.

On March 22, 2011, tens of thousands of protesters were gathering in a plaza in the capital of Sanaa now referred to as "Taghyeer," or "Change" square. The gathering was somewhat unprecedented as it included both women and children in this normally-conservative Islamic country.

On March 23, 2011, President Saleh political isolation was more pronounced as a military commander, Major General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, added his name to the increasing list of politically influential figures severing their connections with the Saleh regime. These defections were taking place in response to the deaths of dozens of demonstrators on March 18, 2011 when security forces opened fire on them. But the defection by Major Generalal- Ahmar was particularly significant due to his alliance with the aforementioned Yemeni Salafis -- an extremist Islamic movement aligned ideologically with al-Qaida. Al-Ahmar's defection also coincided with an emerging cleavage within the military as rival units deployed against one another. Factions loyal to President Saleh were surrounding the presidential palace, while factions that were now siding with the dissident commander were now situated close to the protesters. Days earlier, fighting between military factions had broken out in the eastern part of the country between pro-Saleh Republican Guards and defecting army units.

President Saleh accelerated his exit from the political scene, saying that he would step down from power by year's end. This was quite a concession on his part, having pledged not to run for re-election at the end of his presidential term in 2013. It was an overture that may have come too late as the widening ranks of the opposition responded by rejecting the proposition; instead, they reiterated their demand that President Saleh leave power immediately. Perhaps tacitly acknowledging that he was losing his grip on power and that his presidency was on the proverbial precipice, President Saleh warned that the country could slide into a bloody civil war. President Saleh railed against the opposition movement saying, "Those who want to climb to power through a coup should know that things won't stabilize. The nation won't be stable, it will turn into a civil war, to a bloody war, so they should think carefully." But he seemed to have some sympathy for youth protesters, saying he thought they could "renew the democratic energy" and he also urged them to enter the dialogue process.

As expected, the United States and other countries of the West have reacted with alarm to these developments. United States Defense Secretary Robert Gates said on March 22, 2011, that the instability ongoing in Yemen on the domestic scene was a "diversion of attention"from the threat posed by al-Qaida in Yemen.

By the close of March 2011, President Saleh had offered a transition plan in which he would remain in power until 2013 -- the end of his term -- in exchange for ceding power to a caretaker government, presumably to be led by the opposition. But the Yemeni opposition was making it clear that they were not willing to entertain this proposal. Ediarous al-Naqib, a member of parliament from the opposition Socialist Party, was quoted as saying that no one should "delude themselves" about the demands of the people in the streets. He reiterated the protesters' demand that President Saleh step down from power immediately.

Later Developments:

At the start of April 2011, violence was plaguing Yemen. In the city of Taiz to the west of Aden, at least one person died and around 100 more were injured when police opened fire on the crowd.

With the chaos still gripping the country, President Saleh indicated that he was ready to discuss a "peaceful transition of power." To that end, on April 2, 2011, an opposition coalition, Common Forum, wasted no time in tabling a proposal. The main elements of the proposal included a transition of power from President Saleh to Vice-President Abdu Rabu Hadi, followed by a restructuring of the security forces that would ensure greater accountability, the establishment of a national unity transitional government, the establishment of a new electoral commission, and an investigation into the killing of protesters. For his part, President Saleh attended a meeting with representatives from Taiz Province on April 3, 2011; he urged Common Forum to call off the protests, and said that any transition of power would have to take place "through constitutional ways."

Meanwhile, the New York Times in the United States reported that the Obama administration was quietly distancing itself from President Saleh, resigned to the fact that the Yemeni president's continued tenure was untenable and his bid to stay in power was unlikely to end favorably in the long run. Arab leaders were reportedly meeting in Saudi Arabia to discuss an exit of Saleh from the political scene in Yemen. That Arab initiative was welcomed by President Saleh but reportedly found little resonance with opposition activists who rejected the provision offering the Yemeni leader immunity from prosecution. A statement from the president's office described Saleh as hoping that "all parties would accept this initiative and not miss this opportunity." The statement made it clear that President Saleh "had no reservations about transferring power peacefully within the framework of the constitution." But on the other side of the equation, Mohammed al-Sabry, an opposition spokesperson, said, "Who would be a fool to offer guarantees to a regime that kills peaceful protesters? Our principal demand is that Saleh leaves first."

In mid-April 2011, Yemeni security forces opened fire on protesters in the capital of Sanaa as hundreds of thousands of people once again took to the streets in anti-government demonstrations and marches. As before, they demanded that President Saleh immediately step down from power, while the Yemeni leader has reiterated his willingness to hand over power; however, he made clear that he would only transition his presidential power into "safe hands." Further protests were reported to be taking place in Taiz, Aden, and al-Hudaida. On April 19, 2011, Yemeni security forces again opened fire on anti-government protesters, leaving at least three people dead. This flare-up ensued as protesters -- including police who joined the demonstration -- traversed through Sanaa; they were stopped by security forces, who opened fire on them and lobbed tear gas as well as stun grenades.

The situation in Yemen was increasing already-intensified concerns from the international community about the fate of strategically-located Yemen. To this end, the United Nations Security Council convened a meeting on April 19, 2011, to discuss the crisis unfolding in Yemen. No agreement was forged at the meeting since there was no consensus over the statement proposed by Lebanon and Germany conveying concern, supporting the mediation efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and urging all parties "to exercise restraint and to enter into a comprehensive dialogue to realize the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people." Human Rights Watch issued a condemnation of the situation in Yemen and demanded that President Saleh stop the killing of protesters. Philippe Bolopion, the director for Human Rights Watch, said: "Yemen's brutal repression of opposition activists over the last few weeks finally landed on the radar of the Security Council, which clearly sees the issue as a threat to international peace and security." Meanwhile, a delegation from the Yemeni government met with the GCC in the United Arab Emirates to discuss a transfer power by President Saleh.

On April 23, 2011, reports emerged that President Saleh had agreed to an exit strategy proposal brokered by Gulf Arab mediators. Central to the compromise agreement was the resignation of the president within 30 days, a transition of power to his second in command, and the eventual holding

of fresh presidential elections. The deal was contingent upon immunity from legal prosecution for President Saleh and his family.

The proposal seemed on April 23, 2011, to be gaining traction, with a coalition of opposition parties indicating they would be amendable to most of its provisions. The opposition coalition, though, was suspicious that President Saleh might manufacture parliamentary means to hold onto power. As well, the youth element of the protest movement in Yemen was not eager to assent to President Saleh being given immunity from prosecution. Moreover, there was no guarantee that the deal would signal the end of mass action in Yemen. Mohammed al-Sabria, a spokesman for the opposition, explained, "We don't represent everybody in the squares. We only represent the political parties." Indeed, even as news spread about the compromise solution, demonstrations in the streets continued unabated, even spreading to a general strike as government and private offices, as well as schools, all shut down.

The United States welcomed the compromise resolution but noted that it did not seek to determine the outcome of the crisis rocking Yemen. A spokesperson for the State Department, Mark Toner, said: "We will not speculate about the choices the Yemeni people will make or the results of their political dialogue . It is ultimately for the people of Yemen to decide how their country is governed." That being said, the White House called on all factions in Yemen "to move swiftly to implement" the transfer of power.

A day after the news broke that a compromise resolution had been brokered, President Saleh himself entered the fray by stating that he would not hand over power to the protesters and that any transition of power would have to be undertaken in a constitutional manner. He also asserted that while he was ready to resign if the majority of Yemenis wanted him to step down, he was convinced that the protesters constituted a vocal minority in his country. In an interview with the BBC, President Saleh characterized the anti-government protests plaguing the country as a "coup," with the protesters seeking to undermine the democratic system of majority rule. He said of the proposed transition of power: "Who shall I hand it over to? Those who are trying to make a coup? No. We will do it through ballot boxes and referendums. We'll invite international observers to monitor. Any coup is rejected because we are committed to the constitutional legitimacy and don't accept chaos." President Saleh additionally said that extremist al Qaida elements had infiltrated the protest movement; he warned that the West could pay a heavy price in terms of global security, if it sanctioned the opposition ranks. To these ends, President Saleh said, "Al-Qaida are moving inside the camps and this is very dangerous. Why is the West not looking at this destructive work and its dangerous implications for the future?"

As April entered its final week, Yemeni security forces again opened fire on protesters in the capital of Sanaa, killing at least ten people and injuring up to 100 more. Then in the first part of May, more protesters were killed when Yemeni police forces opened fire in an effort to disperse demonstrators in the southern province of Taiz. There, the demonstrators were protesting the suspension of teachers' salaries.

Update:

In the second week of May 2011, President Saleh maintained his position that he would not resign, given the ongoing political tensions, which he attributed to the opposition. The Yemeni government called for the opposition to end the incitement of rebellion from inside army units, and an end to all destabilizing anti-government factions. These demands appeared to be linked with the exit strategy proposal brokered by Gulf Arab mediators, as well as geared toward raising the stakes. The opposition said that it was willing to sign onto the deal, however, the protests would continue.

Indeed, in the backdrop of these developments, demonstrations were ongoing in major cities and provinces of Aden, Taiz, Al-Dhalee, Al-Bayda, Al-Hodayda, Hadramout, Ibb, with participants pressing for Saleh's resignation. But President Saleh intensified the security presence on the streets, given the state of instability, which he blamed on "outlaws" from the opposition, whom he again said were responsible for the crisis facing the country.

On May 10, 2011, Yasin Said Numan, a former Yemeni prime minister and secretary-general of the opposition Socialist Party, said in an interview with Bloomberg News that Yemen was on the verge of collapse, and faced "catastrophic consequences" if President Saleh did not agree to the exit plan proposal by the Gulf Cooperation Council. He said, "The people in the streets are refusing any delay. If there is a delay, we will witness catastrophic consequences." But as before, President Saleh made clear that while he was open to dialogue, he was in no hurry to sign on the Gulf mediators' plan.

By the fourth week of May 2011, the exit strategy deal, which was brokered by the GCC, appeared to fade away. Gulf Arab mediators suspended their efforts to push forth the transition of power agreement when President Saleh refused to sign the deal. President Saleh said that he would only sign the agreement in the presence of opposition leaders, but they had already signed the agreement days before. President Saleh appeared to have some support for his intransigence as his supporters took to the streets and insisted that the GCC initiative was "a coup" against the Yemeni leader's legitimacy. The deal would have seen President Saleh leave office in 30 days with immunity, and transition power to a unity government.

Meanwhile, protests were ongoing in Yemen as women took part in an anti-government march on May 22, 2011. As well, foreign diplomats from the United States, as well as Arab and European countries, found themselves in danger as anti-government supporters besieged embassies in Sanaa, forcing them to be airlifted to safety. A day later, tens of thousands were in the streets as part of anti-government rallies, demanding the immediate exit of President Saleh and threatening to attack government facilities.

By May 24, 2011, members of Yemen's tribal population, led by the important Sheik al-Ahmar,

made good on that promise, firing on government buildings in the country's capital city, and prompting a response from soldiers. Street battles and shelling yielded dozens of deaths. A day later, the Yemeni Hashed tribe (led by Sheik al-Ahmar) had reportedly taken control of several public buildings in Sanaa, causing a mass exodus of frightened civilians from the capital city. The government and the opposition respectively blamed each other for sending the country into a state of chaos.

With the conflict in Yemen now becoming more complicated with the entry of tribal forces into the fray, government forces were carrying out air strike in tribal areas, such as the Naham province outside of Sanaa, in retaliation. There were several casualties but an actual death toll estimate was unavailable. Still, this development augured negatively for Yemen, which was already in a state of political crisis, and now inching closer to political collapse.

On May 27, 2011, world leaders at the G8 Summit in France called on President Saleh to abide by the GCC agreement to step down from power and criticized the violence unfolding in that country. A statement in this regard from the G8 countries read as follows: "We condemn the use of violence in response to peaceful protest throughout Yemen. We urge President Saleh to immediately follow through on his commitments and ensure that the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people are addressed."

Despite this call, in early June 2011, Yemen's capital was seeing renewed violent clashes between President Saleh's forces and the powerful Hashed tribal confederation. Some government facilities previously seized by the Hashed tribes transferred to the control of Saleh's forces following a battle. There were also reports of explosions in Sanaa as well as a battle close to the city's airport. In a related development, there were reports of additional defections from the military ranks of President Saleh's forces.

Meanwhile, new flashpoints were emerging on the Yemeni scene. In the southern city of Taiz, the government forces reacted with brutal force to protesters there, opening fire on them, and killing at least 50 people. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reacted angrily to this development while the international body's human rights agency indicated that it would launch an investigation into the matter. In the coastal city of Zinjibar, government forces were fighting Islamic militants from the terror enclave al-Qaida, complicating the already-complex and fragile political terrain of Yemen.

On June 2, 2011, clashes ensued between armed fighters of the Hashed federation aligned with tribal leader, Sheikh Sadeq al-Ahmar, and pro-government forces of President Saleh on the outskirts of Sanaa. Tribal fighters said they intended to march to the capital city while pro-government forces insisted they were staving off any such advance. At the same time, there were reports that government forces were continuing to shell opposition forces and explosions were reported in the capital, as before. In Taiz, angry youth protesters were setting up blockades on the main street -- a city where government forces had opened fire on demonstrators, as discussed

above.

The proverbial alarm bells were ringing across the region, and indeed, across the world, as international leaders pressed President Saleh to sign on the the GCC-brokered deal that would facilitate his exit and calm the instability rocking the country. The calculation from the West appeared to be that with the Saleh's regime on its last legs, it would be better to install a replacement at the helm of power, rather than let the most extremist elements take control by default.

To this end, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was urging, "We cannot expect this conflict to end unless President Saleh and his government move out of the way to permit the opposition and civil society to begin a transition to political and economic reform." That being said, a report by the political risk consultancy entity, Eurasia Group, argued that President Saleh's exit from the reins of power would not guarantee a better fate for Yemen. As stated in the report: "Saleh leaving power early does not result in a functional Yemeni state that can reassert control over the country in the short term." Perhaps with an eye on the complex challenges facing Yemen at home, and the global community at large in terms of security, United States counter-terrorism adviser, John Brennan, traveled to Saudi Arabia to discuss the crisis gripping Yemen and the threat posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

On June 3, 2011, reports emerged out of Sanaa that the presidential compound in the capital had been subject to a rocket attack. Subsequent reports confirmed that President Saleh, Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Mujawar, Speaker of the Parliament Yahya al-Rai, and several other officials were also wounded, while 11 bodyguards were killed in the assault. Sheikh Ahmar's Hashed tribal federation denied responsibility for the attack on the presidential compound, however, government forces shelled the home of Ahmar's brother in retaliation. For his part, President Saleh took to the airwaves in an audio message, affirming his survival and calling on the army to crackdown on Sheikh Ahmar's tribal group, whom he said were behind the presidential palace attack. According to BBC News, he said, "I salute our armed forces and the security forces for standing up firmly to confront this challenge by an outlaw gang that has nothing to do with the so-called youth revolution."

Given this dangerously devolving situation in Yemen, the United States had already withdrawn much of its diplomatic staff from Yemen out of security concerns in a country on the precipice of possible civil war. Other countries, including Kuwait, followed this lead and took similar action. Now, at the start of June 2011, the European Union was also preparing to evacuate its citizens from Yemen. Various countries and blocs, including the United States and the European Union, were calling for a ceasefire in Yemen -- a call unlikely to be heeded in the immediate future, given President Saleh's directive to confront anti-government and tribal elements.

At the start of June 2011, President Saleh was refusing to accede to the Gulf Arab exit plan, remaining instead ensconced in a desperate bid to hold onto power, even as the country stood on

the brink of civil war and financial ruin. Before the outbreak of unrest, around $40 percent of the citizenry lived on $2 a day -- even as most of the country's assets sat under the control of Saleh's inner coterie. In the capital city, the ongoing crossfire of violence, as well as the lack of food, water and electricity, were collectively creating a grim situation of malnutrition and desperation. With the country in a state of chaos , the fate of the vast majority of the people was on unstable and risky ground. As well, the official death toll since the start of the season of unrest in Yemen was unknown.

Then by June 5, 2011, as the news that President Saleh had departed Yemen for Saudi Arabia to seek medical treatment at a military hospital there, crowds of people aligned with the protest movement took to the streets in celebration. Clearly they hoped that Saleh's exit from Yemen might be made permanent. However, Yemen's Information Ministry was making it clear that the president would return home to his duties after treatment -- the actual feasibility of this move notwithstanding. With President Saleh away, Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi was named as acting head of state. The vice president used his time in power to press for a cooling of the political climate. He offered to withdraw government forces from an area in Sanaa where they had been battling Sheikh Ahmar's Hashed tribal fighters; Sheikh Ahmar reportedly welcomed the move and said his forces would withdraw from the government buildings currently under their control. An uneasy calm appeared to have taken hold in Sanaa between government forces and opposition tribesmen as a result of this de facto agreement.

Despite this positive bit of news, fighting was ongoing in Taiz where gunmen attacked the presidential palace there, killing four soldiers. As well, in the south of the country, an ambush on a military convoy by gunmen left at least nine soldiers dead.

In the first week of June 2011, as many as 20 people died in protests in Taiz to the south of Sanaa. By the second week of June 2011, the situation in Taiz had escalated as opposition tribesmen had control over the city but not before the death toll increased, most notably following an incident when a tank shelled a residential neighborhood. A tribal chief in the region, Sheik Hamoud Said al-Makhlafi, said that the local tribes had become involved out of a desire to protect protesters from the harsh actions of the government.

Around this period, Saudi Arabia's monarchy reportedly had taken on the responsibility of trying to broker an agreement that would bring an end to the conflict, which was taking place in its own geopolitical "neighborhood." The conventional wisdom was that the Saudis would lobby strongly for Saleh to agree to an exit plan, however, the reality was that Saleh's family and inner circle remained in Yemen and would themselves be unlikely to easily relinquish their own hold on power and influence in Yemen.

The desire to see some semblance of resolution in Yemen was coming not only from Saudi Arabia but also from the United States. Fears of a power vacuum in Yemen was worrying both countries, which along with the Yemeni opposition, were now collectively pushing for an exit

strategy plan that would end Saleh's regime and introduce a new government. There was no encouraging response from the Saleh inner circle on this matter who insisted that the president would be returning home to rule, despite emerging reports that Saleh had in fact been badly wounded in the aforementioned attack on the palace. Indeed, reports said that Saleh suffered burns over 40 percent of his body. Still, stalwarts of Saleh noted that the president did not hand over power formally to Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

The United States particularly concerned that the power vacuum would free al-Qaida in Yemen to exploit the unrest with negative consequences for global security. These fears were only bolstered when a videotape was released showing Osama bin Laden's deputy leader of al-Qaida (later to become the head of the terror enclave), Ayman al-Zawahri, saying: "We are with you in your uprising." He called al-Qaida adherents to maintain their efforts to bring down President Saleh's government, and urged that in its place, "a just regime that rules by Islamic law" be established in Yemen. The Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, was on a trip to the Middle East and expressed his country's anxieties about al-Qaida on the Arab Peninsula gaining a greater foothold in Yemen as follows: "It is incredibly dangerous and made that much more dangerous in the ongoing chaos." He went onto speak of the resolution effort in Yemen, noting, "I would certainly urge leaders from every side of this challenge to be calm and try to resolve the issues peacefully."

At the same time, the New York Times was reporting that the United States was secretly intensifying its campaign against al-Qaida in Yemen by carrying out an even greater number of air strikes in areas prone to militants.

Meanwhile, the call for a resolution to the crisis in Yemen was emanating from within its own borders, and in fact, from within the opposition movement. A youth coalition anti-Saleh groups urged immediate dialogue amongst various political and interest groups in Yemen, with an eye on establishing an interim or transitional government of technocrats to administer the country's affairs, with the drafting of a new constitution and the holding of fresh elections to be held in the future.

By mid-June 2011, Islamic extremist militants also laid an assault on the southern port of Aden, but were repelled by Yemeni security forces.

More importantly, hundreds of extremist Islamic militants aligned with al-Qaida attacked the city of Houta, the provincial capital of Lahj province, and managed to take control of several neighborhoods. Some witnesses observed that the militants did not appear to be Yemeni, leading to speculation that they may have been from the al-Qaida ally in Somalia known as al-Shabab. While the militants withdrew half a day later, their advance showed that the ongoing unrest in Yemen provided a climate ripe for exploitation by extremists, as feared by the West. In fact only a day before this incident in Houta, Daniel Benjamin, United States' Department of State's counter-terrorism coordinator, expressed anxieties that the crisis in Yemen could lead to increased cooperation between al-Qaida in Yemen and al-Shabab in Somalia. The evidence was now

suggesting that this cooperation was actually happening, and that al-Shabab was functioning in tandem with al-Qaida in a wide area of the Horn of Africa, across the Red Sea, and onto the Arabian peninsula.

Latest Developments:

In mid-July 2011, news surfaced that President Saleh was returning to Yemen after more than a month of treatment and convalescence at a hospital in Saudi Arabia. Ahead of Saleh return, state media blamed al-Qaida in Yemen, as well as the opposition, for the attack on Saleh. According to an editorial published in Saba, the official news agency of Yemen, members of the opposition movement in Yemen were collaborating with the terror network, al-Qaida, to overthrow the government. The editorial read as follows: "The presidential mosque crime (June 3) was one chapter of a filthy game related to the relation between al-Qaida and extremist leaders of opposition." The editorial continued, "Also, this attack resembles several other terrorist operations that targeted national and foreign interests, in which these opposition figures, in a way or another, had connections or goals," The careful timing of this statement appeared to coincide with the president's plan to return to Yemen, and his claims that his presence was needed to maintain stability in a country rocked by insurgencies and terrorism.

With President Saleh apparently planning a comeback of sorts, a cadre of protesters and members of the opposition quickly moved to circumvent both the apparent authority of Saleh, as well as rival opposition factions, by announcing the establishment of a transitional ruling council composed of 17 members, including former Prime Minister Abu Bakr Haidar al-Attas and former Defense Minister Abdullah Eleiwah. Other opposition officials responded to the news by making it clear that they did not recognize the legitimacy of the transitional council. As expected, the Yemeni government also gave no credence to the council, calling the move ill-advised and likely to only "aggravate" the political crisis already gripping the country.

Meanwhile, protests were ongoing as clashes ensued in Yemen's western province of al-Hodayda between protesters against President Saleh, who were marking his 33 years of rule, and government supporters. Several casualties were reported as a result. Anti-Saleh protests were also staged in Taiz, Ibb, Dhamar and Saada, while pro-Saleh rallies ensued in the capital of Sanaa. In southern Yemen, violent fighting took place between army troops, backed by tribal fighters and al-Qaida militants, leaving a dozen people dead and scores more injured as a result. On July 20, 2011, fierce fighting resulted in the deaths of several al-Qaida militants, including two military leaders, at the hands of the Yemeni military in the southern province of Abyan. Then, on July 24, 2011, Yemen's business capital of Aden was struck by a car bomb; at least six people died as a result, while more than 20 people were injured. The bombing took place close to an Air Force base in the Al-Mansoura district and ensued just as a military convoy was departing the area, en route to the aforementioned southern Abyan province, where government troops have been ensconced in fighting with Islamists extremists.

On the diplomatic front in late July 2011, a visiting United Nations envoy, Jamal bin Omar, urged dialogue between President Saleh and opposition forces in an effort to broker an end to the political conflict in Yemen. A coalition of the Yemeni opposition, though, rejected this call, saying there would be no such discourse unless President Saleh officially transferred power to his Vice President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Meanwhile, tribal leader Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar, warned the Bin Omar that the United Nations' weak efforts to get Saleh to transfer power could ultimately lead to a Libyan-style rebellion in Yemen. On the other side of the equation, Yemeni Acting President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi was lauding international reconciliation efforts, suggesting that it was possible to reach a resolution as soon as the end of the month (July 2011). In fact, there was no productive outcome of the reconciliation efforts at that time.

Note that on Aug. 7, 2011, President Saleh had been discharged from a military hospital in Saudi Arabia, where he was being treated for his injuries. President Saleh was reported to have remained in Saudi Arabia even as speculation abounded regarding his possible return to Yemen.

By Aug. 16, 2011, President Saleh was vowing to return home to Yemen. In a national address that was televised from Saudi Arabia, he said: "See you soon in the capital Sanaa." President Saleh also used the opportunity to blast both the opposition parties and the tribesmen who aligned themselves with the protest movement in Yemen,calling them "highway robbers" and "opportunists."

As August 2011 came to a close, President Saleh had issued a caveat to his promised return to Yemen; he noted that his return was contingent on the completion of an investigation into the (June 2011) bombing of his presidential palace. Saleh also indicated via emissaries that he was ready to work with "all national powers in the state or the opposition to end the current crisis and its political, economic and social repercussions."

At the time, it was not known if Saleh would finally sign on to the transition of power agreement, which was brokered by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and generally regarded as the best option for transitioning power in Yemen. But on Aug. 29, 2011, President Saleh said he was willing to sign the GCC deal, in the interests of national stability. In an address broadcast nationally in Yemen from Saudi Arabia where he remained, President Saleh said the country's prolonged political crisis could come to an end (presumably via the activation of the GCC deal), so long as there was an executive mechanism implemented that would facilitate new presidential elections in Yemen.

In September 2011, the ruling General People's Congress in Yemen said it was reviewing a version of the GCC proposal, with the goal at hand of bringing about a political transition in that country. The revised version of the GCC agreement extended President Saleh's time in power from 30 days to three months before handing over power to Vice President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Consistent with the original draft, Yemen would then prepare for national elections and the crafting

of a new constitution.

Despite these overtures intended to end the insecurity and instability rocking Yemen, by Sept. 19, 2011, the country was hit by another onslaught of violence. Anti-government protesters were taking to the streets of Sanaa to demand that President Saleh step down from office; security forces responded by opening fire on them, leaving at least 50 people dead and more than 300 injured after several successive days of violent clashes. Despite a brief cessation of violence, the bloodshed quickly renewed and by Sept. 22, 2011, the death toll had increased to 100 people, which most of the victims being unarmed protesters. The government issued a different account of the situation, saying that security forces were being attacked by al-Qaida fighters and were simply responding to the assault. Regardless of the cause of the bloodshed, it was undisputed that Yemen was being hit by the worst violence in months. Given this background, it was not surprising that efforts to make progress on the GCC-brokered transition of power deal ended unsuccessfully.

By Sept. 23, 2011, Yemeni President Saleh had returned home from Saudi Arabia to a country beset by violence and chaos. Two days later on Sept. 25, 2011, during his first national address since his return to Yemen, President Saleh urged an end to the violence and affirmed his intent to relinquish the reins of power. He also called for national dialogue and early elections in the interests of national security. Addressing anti-government protesters, Saleh said, "The crisis is big. You who are chasing power, let's all go to the ballot boxes." It was not known if he was advocating elections after he stepped down from power, or, instead of it. The ambiguity would likely do little to quell the unrest plaguing a country on the precipice of civil war.

As of Oct. 8, 2011, President Saleh was saying in a nationally-broadcast address that he would imminently step down from power. Without giving a specific date, President Saleh said, "I reject power and I will continue to reject it, and I will be leaving power in the coming days."

Also absent from his speech was any reference from the aforementioned GCC-mediated transition deal. A leading Yemeni activist and co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, Tawakkul Karman, expressed skepticism about the announcement, saying, "We don't believe this man and if he wants to step down, okay, that belongs to him," she is quoted as saying on al-Jazeera television.

By Oct. 15, 2011, the Yemeni capital of Sanaa was rocked by renewed violence, leaving at least a dozen people dead and scores more wounded as security forces open fire on anti-government protesters. The Yemeni forces used live rounds, tear gas, and water cannons, to try to disperse the tens of thousands gathered in the streets of what came to be known as "Change Square," and called for President Saleh to go. The latest bout of violence only served as a reminder that the country was on the brink of civil war. Indeed, Yemen was dealing not only with eight months of violent unrest from these anti-government protesters, but also a prevailing Shi'a Zaidi rebellion, a territorial battle against secessionists in the south, as well as the emerging threat posed by al -Qaida

extremist militants operating from its terrain.

Yemen's southern port city of Aden saw violence on Oct. 30, 2011, when car bombings left at least one policeman dead and others injured. The attacks came only days after the headof counter terrorism force in Aden was killed in a car bombing close to Aden's International Airport. Given the fact that police and intelligence interests have been the targets of attack in Aden in previous months, it was apparent that the perpetrators had a strategic purpose. Not surprisingly, suspicion fell on al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula for the spate of attacks.

Meanwhile, Yemen remained embroiled in a state of political turmoil as anti-government protesters continued to demand the immediate end to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 33-year rule at the helm of the country. For his part, President Saleh (again) said on Nov. 5, 2011 that he supported the notion of a power transfer and would leave office in accordance with a power of transfer initiative brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council. In an address broadcast on state-run media to the nation, President Saleh said, "I reaffirm my determination to continue to support the constructive efforts of Deputy President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in the light of a mandate I gave him to resume the dialogue with the opposition and to sign the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative and its executive mechanism for achieving legitimate, democratic and peaceful power transition." He continued, "I urge the opposition parties to renounce violence and extremism and I call on their leaders to come back to sit with us at the dialogue table to complete discussing the remaining parts of controversial issues, in order to reach an agreement and set a time-agreed executive mechanism as soon as possible to implement the GCC initiative and its proposal of holding an early election to elect a new president for Yemen." That being said, President Saleh made it clear that he had no intention of being chased out of office in the manner of Tunisia's Ben Ali, Egypt's Mubarak or Libya's Qadhafi. Instead, Saleh said that "his resignation from office and the transfer of power will not be carried out if the opposition rebels and their supporters of the defected army continue to wage violence against government institutions and state troops."

Note that on Nov. 13, 2011, President Saleh announced that, in accordance with the GCC power transfer deal, he would resign from office and his top deputy, Abdu Rabu Ansour Hadi, would form a unity government that would oversee a transition of power and the holding of presidential elections. The formation of the new government, under the aegis of the GCC plan, was aimed at ending the political chaos plaguing the country. In keeping with the GCC power transfer deal, President Saleh would enjoy immunity from subsequent prosecution. It was yet to be seen if opposition leaders would work cooperatively with President Saleh to enact the plan. It was also yet to be seen if President Saleh would, indeed, go forward with a promise to leave office in 90 days, as called for in the GCC plan. On Nov. 14, 2011, Saleh said he did not foreclose the notion of an easier exit, if all the provisions were in place for a peaceful and stable transition.

Hope for a peaceful transition of power flowered on Nov. 21, 2011, when the United Nations was able to mediate an agreement between the Yemeni ruling party and the opposition factions,

ultimately leading to a date for the signing of the GGC plan. In an interview with the media, Mohamed Salim Basindwa, the chairman of the opposition National Council, announced the breakthrough saying, "President Saleh finally agreed to sign the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative after four-day negotiations mediated by visiting UN envoy Jamal bin Omar." He continued, "The compromise included reaching a mechanism deal to implement the GCC initiative. The two sides will sign the two deals on Tuesday, Nov. 22." The ruling party's representative, Sultan al-Barakani, confirmed the agreement.

The GCC peace and power transfer agreement was ultimately signed on Nov. 23, 2011, in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh. The development marked a significant political breakthrough on the Yemeni political scene with Saleh handing over power to his deputy, Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. For his part, Hadi wasted no time in declaring that presidential elections would be held in Yemen on Feb. 21, 2012. The state-run Saba news agency reported Hadi as having said, "Based on the UN-backed Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative and its implementation mechanism, which both were signed in Riyadh on Nov. 23, we call an early presidential election to be held on Feb. 21 next year to elect a new president for the country." Hadi also noted that the date was a concrete one, affirming that "no party has the right to annul or change the date."

Days later on Nov. 25, 2011, an interim consensus government was in the works with Mohamed Basindwa, a senior opposition leader, at the helm. On Nov. 28, 2011, Vice President Hadi officially designated Mohamed Basindwa to form a new national unity government to replace the caretaker government of Ali Mohammed Mujawar. By Dec. 10, 2011, a new coalition government, led by Basindwa, was sworn into office before Vice President Hadi.

By the start of January 2012, Yemen's Houthi-led Shiite rebels had announced that they were ready to enter the political process and would form an independent political wing. The new political entity, called the Al-Omah Party of the rebels, was to be led by Shi'ite hard-liner, Mohammed Miftah. According to Houthi rebel leader, Abdulmalik al-Houthi, the Al-Omah Party would be tasked with furthering the cause of "independence from foreign domination" -- albeit from within the political process.

Despite these developments, Yemen was not yet on the road to stabilization. Sporadic clashes between Saleh's armed loyalists and their rivals were reported across the country, even after Saleh signed the GCC power transfer concord. Explosions were heard in the capital of Sanaa, and shelling between government forces and tribal fighters ensued in the Hassaba district. As well, thousands of protesters gathered at a square in Sanaa, promising to escalate hostilities unless Saleh faced justice. Of course, the GCC deal provided for Saleh with immunity from prosecution. Moreover, by the start of 2012, a draft measure was being advanced that would provide all members of the Saleh administration with political amnesty shielding them from legal or judicial prosecution.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that with Yemen was not only dealing with a state of political crisis, but also a burgeoning humanitarian catastrophe. According to an Oxfam report: "A protracted political stalemate over much of the past six months has left the government in paralysis, prompting a fuel crisis that has brought the economy to the verge of collapse." The Oxfam report additionally warned that a full third of the entire population was at risk of going hungry.

Special Report

Drone strike kills al-Qaida in Yemen terrorist orchestrator, U.S.-born al-Alwaki.

At the close of September 2011, it was reported in the international media that a United States drone strike had killed Anwar al-Alwaki -- a United States-born terrorist orchestrator and propaganda communicator for al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The Yemeni Defense Ministry confirmed the deaths of Alwaki and a number of his associates in the Yemeni province of Jawf.

As an English-speaking United States citizen, Alwaki used his command of language and biculturalism, along with modern media, to reach out to young Muslims in across the world with the objective of radicalizing them and urging them to turn to terrorism. He was also believed to have been responsible for orchestrating a number of attempted attacks, including the recruitment of infamous Nigerian "underwear" bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried but failed to blow up a United States-bound airliner on Christmas Day in 2009. Alwaki was also blamed for inspiring United States Major Nidal Malik Hasan to carry out a 2009 attack on an army base in Texas that left more that a dozen people dead. He was additionally linked with the failed bombing in New York's Times Square in 2010.

United States President Barack Obama hailed the death of Awlaki in Yemen as a "major blow" to the terror enslave, al-Qaida. President Obama said that the AQAP figure was instrumental in the "planning and directing efforts to murder innocent Americans" and was "directly responsible for the death of many Yemeni citizens." President Obama also used the occasion to emphasize the United States' commitment to fighting terrorism. He said, "This is further proof that al-Qaida and its affiliates will find no safe haven anywhere in the world."

At home in the United States, there were some challenges to the legitimacy of eliminating a United States citizen without a trial. That being said, the United States government could well argue that it was operating within legal bounds by targeting an enemy of the state, and a leader of a terror enclave that had declared war on the United States.

Primer on 2012 Presidential Election in Yemen

At the start of 2012, Yemen was preparing for a future without outgoing President Ali Abdullah Saleh at the helm.

Earlier in late 2011, the United Nations was able to mediate an agreement between the Yemeni ruling party and the opposition factions, ultimately leading to a date for the signing of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) peace plan. That plan would ideally end the violence between the pro-government and anti-government factions of that country, which were embroiled in conflict, and provide an exit strategy for Saleh to leave the political field in Yemen.

The GCC peace and power transfer agreement was ultimately signed on Nov. 23, 2011, in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh. The development marked a significant political breakthrough on the Yemeni political scene with Saleh handing over power to his deputy, Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi. For his part, Hadi wasted no time in declaring that presidential elections would be held in Yemen on Feb. 21, 2012. The state-run Saba news agency reported Hadi as having said, "Based on the UN-backed Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative and its implementation mechanism, which both were signed in Riyadh on Nov. 23, we call an early presidential election to be held on Feb. 21 next year to elect a new president for the country." Hadi also noted that the date was a concrete one, affirming that "no party has the right to annul or change the date."

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But in 2012, all attention would shift to the presidential realm, with the highly-anticipated presidential election in the offing on Feb. 21, 2012, as candidates would seek to lead the fragile political terrain of Yemen.

It should be noted that as February 2012 entered its second week, Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi commenced his presidential campaign by promising to launch a national dialogue, to respect all the Yemeni political forces, and to act inclusively towards southern separatists, if he won the election.

The latter pledge fell on deaf ears as hundreds of southern separatists launched anti-government rallies in the southern port city of Aden, and also in southern provinces of Lahj and al-Dhalee, which have been strongholds of the southern separatist movement. The separatists also urged people to boycott the vote. Of course, with or without the boycott, the conventional wisdom was that Hadi would win the presidential election since there was no serious competition in the field. In fact, the election would function more as a ratification of Hadi's authority.

Ahead of the vote, anti-election riots erupts in southern Yemen,leaving dozens of people injured. There were reports of clashes between Yemeni security forces and gunmen from the pro-secession Southern Movement, which sought to disrupt the impending presidential vote. Despite tightened security in Aden and the southern region, explosions and gun battles were reported at a number of polling stations.

In a national televised address, Hadi reiterated his presidential pledges saying, "I have accepted to run for the presidential election... My hands are extending to those who seek support... and I will work to bring changes and a better future for our nation." Hadi continued by addressing the state of political crisis gripping Yemen, saying, "This election was the only effective way to keep Yemen away from dispersion... and with patience we will achieve our country's future through rewriting a constitution and providing good governance that meet the aspirations of all the Yemenis."

Meanwhile, in a farewell statement published by the official Saba news agency, outgoing President Saleh noted that the election would lead the country out of an "acute and bitter crisis." He also promised his loyalty to Yemen stating in the address: "I will remain with you as a citizen loyal to his homeland, people and nation as you have known me through thick and thin, performing my duty and my role in serving the country and its just issues through the ruling General People's Congress."

Election day finally arrived and Yemenis went to the polls, effectively to ratify Hadi as the new president. To that end, when the votes were counted, Hadi received about 99 percent of the vote share. Of course, the southern separatists (as noted above), along with the northern rebels, chose to boycott the election.

Newly-elected President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi would be faced with profound challenges in a country beset by armed conflicts, insurgency, terrorism, and economic strife. Hadi said that tackling the economy would be among his top priorities, but, in fact, he would be faced with the pressing political and national security issues that have dominated the country in recent times. As a reminder of these realities, more than 20 people died in a car bombing in southern Yemen just as the country's new president took the oath of office in the capital city.

Recent Developments

On March 5, 2012, newly-elected Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi raised the emergency alert level in the military to the maximum. The heightened emergency alert included an order from the president for all combat forces, including the air force, to be prepared for possible engagement with al-Qaida in the southern provinces -- not only Abyan, but also Aden, al-Bayda, and Lahj.

The emergency alert was raised in response to a number of attacks in the southern provinces of the

country. Indeed, the death toll from fighting in the volatile southern province of Abyan between al-Qaida militants and government troops was reported to be as high as 130. At issue was a spate of suicide car bombs and violent attacks targeting the army and government interests in the two week time period since Hadi was elected officially to power on Feb. 21, 2012. Indeed, on the very day of Hadi's inauguration, 30 Republican Guards were killed at the presidential palace in the southern province of Hadramout. Since then, a military cargo plane was bombed at the Al-Dailamy Air Force in the capital Sanaa. Elsewhere in the country, there was bomb blast at the headquarters of the local military intelligence agency in the southern port city of Aden. Also in Aden was the attempted assassination of a security official. This spate of violence was attributed to al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

For his part, President Hadi vowed that his government was determined to confront terrorism with all of its power. In an interview with the state Saba news agency, President Hadi said, "We determined to confront terrorism with full force ... and whatever it takes, we will continue to hunt terrorists down to their final hideout." The president blamed the increased incidence of terrorist acts by al-Qaida on the country's weak economy saying, "Economic problems are the most prominent reasons behind joining poor youths to al-Qaida network." Joining the security imperatives with the socio-economic climate, President Hadi wasted no time in carrying out a number of reforms including the stabilization of the the exchange rate of the country's currency as well as increasing supplies of electrical power and water across Yemen.

On April 9, 2012, militants from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula carried out attacks on several army barracks in Yemen's southern province of Abyan. The attacks sparked deadly clashes and fiece battles between the Yemen-based al-Qaida militants and Yemeni government troops in the outskirts of Lauder to the northeast of the provincial capital of Zinjibar. Yemeni warplanes bombed al-Qaida targets while tribal fighters joined government troops in the effort to stave off the al-Qaida terrorist fighters, who were apparently trying to augment their presence in the region. The violence left at least 60 soldiers dead -- including five senior officers -- and dozens of others injured. The Yemeni defense ministry said that as many as 40 al-Qaida fighters were also killed in the battles in Abyan; however, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula claimed that their death toll was only four.

In a separate but related development on April 15, 2012, joint United States-Yemen air raids on al-Qaida hideouts in Abyan province eliminated at least 16 militants. Air strikes were also launched on al-Qaida targets in neighboring province of Shabwa, ultimately disposing of about eight militants. As has been the case in the past, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula denied that any of its fighters died in the air raids.

Regardless of the actual casualty list, it was clear that the resurgent al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula was taking advantage of the year-long political conflict that has plagued Yemen, ultimately leading to the resignation of long-serving Marshal Ali Abdallah Saleh in late 2011 and the

election of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in early 2012. Despite the installation of new leadership in Yemen, it was apparent that the fight against al-Qaida terrorists was continuing in Yemen, and that al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula -- locally known as Ansar al-Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law) -- remained a threat to regional stability. Indeed, the terror enclave has recently taken control of significant swaths of territory in Yemen's restive southern provinces, leading newly -elected President Hadi to assert that the fight against al-Qaida is at the forefront of his political agenda on a daily basis.

On April 18, 2012, the terror enclave, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a Saudi diplomat in Yemen, which apparently ensued a month prior. In an interview with Voice of America, a spokesperson for the government of Saudi Arabia said the terrorist group threatened to kill the diplomat if Saudi authorities refused to release jailed militants and pay a ransom. The Saudi government said the demands were made over the telephone by a terror suspect known as Mashaal Rasheed al-Shawdakhi. Further attacks were also threatened against Saudi interests during the call.

A day later on April 19, 2012, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said it wanted to actively target threats emanating from al-Qaida in Yemen. CIA Director David Petraeus was calling for authority to conduct "signature strikes" against al-Qaida targets in Yemen, according to a report by the Washington Post. At issue was a desire to move forward with surgical strikes against those who might "have a direct interest" in attacking the United States. Such action would be of the type that resulted in the CIA drone strike in 2011 that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. Since the election of Abdu Rabo Mansour Hadi as president of Yemen, activity by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula has increased, presumably due to a desire by the terror enclave the test the new leadership of the country. To that end, Yemeni authorities have warned that an attack on the country's capital could be in the offing. With such threats pending, there has been a desire by both the new leadership of Yemen, as well as the United States, to neutralize the group as much as possible.

On May 6, 2012, an al-Qaida leader linked with the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole died in an air strike in Yemen. The al-Qaida militant was apparently killed as a result of missiles fired from a drone. The details of the death of Fahd al-Quso were confirmed by tribal leaders in Yemen, the embassy of Yemen in the United States, as well as al-Qaida. United States officials expressed satisfaction over the elimination of Fahd al-Quso, noting that the man was a "senior terrorist operative" who was planning further attacks against the United States and Yemen. More than a dozen years ago, al-Qaida militants used a boat laden with explosives to attack the United States warship in the Yemeni port of Aden.

On May 7, 2012, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said that it foiled a new "underwear bomb plot" by al-Qaida in Yemen. According to United States authorities, an upgraded version of the failed 2009 "underwear bomb" was disrupted and the improvised explosives device

(IED) was now in the hands of United States intelligence officials. The bomb plot did not reach the advanced planning stages -- such as selection of a target and the purchase of airplane tickets -- and, accordingly, did not pose a direct threat to the public. That being said, the very development of the IED was a clear indication of the intent to carry out a terrorist attack.

A statement released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation read as follows: "As a result of close co-operation with our security and intelligence partners overseas, an improvised explosive device (IED) designed to carry out a terrorist attack has been seized abroad. Initial exploitation indicates that the device is very similar to IEDs that have been used previously by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in attempted terrorist attacks, including against aircraft and for targeted assassinations."

It was soon disclosed that the foiling of the plot involved a double agent who infiltrated an al-Qaida terror cell, volunteered for the suicide mission, but who then delivered the IED to joint United States and international authorities. The double agent -- a British national of Saudi background -- supplied crucial intelligence information to United States and other foreign intelligence agencies, which allowed the CIA to successfully direct a recent drone strike in Yemen that killed Fahd al-Quso -- a senior figure in al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Al-Quso was linked with the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen.

Meanwhile, with the IED in the hands of the CIA, it could now undergo technical and forensic analysis. Of concern was the degree of technological advancement garnered by al-Qaida terrorists as they attempt to evade conventional airport security measures, such as metal detectors and body scans. The "custom fit" device was reportedly difficult to detect in current airport security checks, and is believed to be the work of master bomb-maker and member of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula -- Ibrahim Hassan Tali al-Asiri.

Overall, the operation was an extraordinary intelligence coup for joint United States, British, and Saudi authorities. The identity of the double agent/informant has not been disclosed although, according to the New York Times, the British national was recruited by United Kingdom intelligence and has been functioning under the aegis of Saudi intelligence service, and in close cooperation with the CIA for several years.

On May 21, 2012, more than 90 people died and at least 200 others were wounded in a suicide bomb attack during a military parade rehearsal in Yemen's capital of Sanaa. The suicide bomber was dressed in an army uniform and detonated the explosives strapped to his body amidst a group of soldiers at al-Sabin Square in close proximity to the presidential palace. The attacker blew himself up just as the country's defense minister and the army chief-of-staff were scheduled to greet the troops.

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula wasted no time in claiming responsibility for the carnage during communications with media outlets. In a statement dispatched to BBC News, al-Qaida said it had

recruited a soldier for the bombing, and the attack was intended to avenge the various "crimes" of Yemen's Central Security Organization. It should be noted that the head of the Central Security Organization was dismissed from his post in the aftermath of the bloody attack. It should also be noted that only ten days prior, the Yemeni military launched an offensive in the southern Abyan province against Islamist militants aligned with al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

On June 18, 2012, General Salem Ali Qatan -- a Yemeni army commander -- was killed during a suicide bombing attack in the port city of Aden. Qatan had been leading the fight against Islamic extremist militants with ties to al-Qaida, in the southern part of the country. That fight has seen some success in recent times, with the army recapturing control over a number of Islamist extremist militant strongholds in the province of Abyan. But on this day, Qatan paid for his efforts with the ultimate price when his three-car convoy was targeted by the suicide bomber. Four security guards and a civilian were injured in the attack, which Yemeni officials said was carried out by a Somali national. The al-Qaida allied extremist militants wasted no time taking responsibility for the attack, claiming that they had assassinated General Qatan in response to the army offensive in Abyan. Ali Mansur, a senior army commander and a stalwart of Qatan, said in an interview with Agence France Pressed that the general's assassination was "a huge loss for Yemen." Mansur said, "In just three months, Qatan achieved major progress towards chasing down and eliminating [the militants]."

On July 12, 2012, a United Nations envoy said that Islamic extremists militants from al-Qaida were posing a threat in both at home in Yemen and globally. Envoy Jemal Benomar said that al-Qaida was not only undermining the fragile political situation in Yemen, but also creating a national security threat, which could well spill over into the international realm. Benomar offered this view a day after a suicide attack occurred in the capital of Sanaa, leaving 10 police cadets dead. Suspicion rested on Ansar al-Sharia, an affiliate of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

As discussed above, the assassinated General Salem Ali Qatan had been leading the fight against Islamic extremist militants with ties to al-Qaida, in the southern part of the country. Also as noted above, the death of Qatan occured amidst the fight against al-Qaida and such Islamist militants. That effort has seen success, with the army recapturing control over extremist strongholds in the province of Abyan.

The situation in Abyan aside, the bordering province of Shabwa was also being targeted by the military in an offensive operation against extremist Islamic militants. That operation has also seen success with fighters from the aforementioned Islamist Ansar al-Sharia being forced to withdraw from the area of Azzan in Shabwa. Those fighters have not, however, left the country; according to the Yemeni newspaper, Akhbar al-Yawm, they merely retreated to the tribal strongholds of the mountains where they have found safe haven. The attack in July 2012 in Sanaa suggested that the group remained a serious threat to national security, and could well weaken the newly-formed post-Saleh government of Yemen.

On Aug. 5, 2012, an attack by a suicide bomber in Yemen left at least 45 people dead and dozens more injured. The attack took place as people gathered for a funeral in the city of Jaar, which is located in the southern province of Abyan. Jaar was the site of violence only days before when militants attacked a police station there on Aug. 1, 2012, killing several people. Suspicion quickly fell on Islamic extremist militants, such Ansar al-Shari'a, which has been aligned with the terror enclave al-Qaida. Indeed, Ansar al-Shari'a has been active in southern Yemen for some time.

Meanwhile, on the same day as the suicide bombing in Abyan, five al-Qaida militants were killed in a suspected United States drone strike in Hadramawt province.

The juxtaposition of the August 2012 attack by al-Qaida militants at the funeral in Abyan, and the drone strike on militants of the Islamic extremist terror enclave, was emblematic of the security challenges facing this country a year after the so-called "Arab Spring" of 2011, which led to a transition of power from former President Ali Abdullah Saleh to President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi. While President Hadi has vowed to crush the militants, the power struggle leading to the exit of Saleh, and then to the presidential election ratifying Hadi, opened up some degree of a power vacuum. These extremist Islamic militants have sought to exploit that power chasm. At the same time, with the threat of global jihadist terrorism emanating from Yemen, United States drone attacks in al-Qaida stronghold areas have continued to occur, alongside the Yemeni authorities efforts to squash the terrorists.

It should be noted that on July 12, 2012, a United Nations envoy said that Islamic extremists militants from al-Qaida posed a threat at home in Yemen and globally. Envoy Jemal Benomar said that al-Qaida was not only undermining the fragile political situation in Yemen, but also creating a national security threat, which could well spill over into the international realm. The continuing attacks suggested that the group remains a serious threat to national security, and could well weaken the newly-formed post-Saleh government of Yemen. Moreover, along the lines of the remarks by United Nations Envoy Benoma, an enduring threat from Islamic militants in Yemen could seriously threaten global security.

On Sept. 11, 2012, Yemen's defense minister escaped an apparent assassination attempt. According to Yemeni police, a car bomb exploded outside the office of Yemen's prime minister in the capital city of Sanaa, killing eight bodyguards of Major General Mohammed Nasser Ahmed, although he escaped unscathed from the attack. The assassination attempt against Defense Secretary Mohammed Nasser Ahmed occurred after the Yemeni military announced the elimination of Said al-Shihri, the second in command of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The death of Shihri, if confirmed, would be a major development in the effort against al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

Also on Sept. 11, 2012, protests erupted in the Egyptian capital city of Cairo with the United

States embassy being the main target. The unrest was sparked by a film of amateur quality, which was produced by a United States citizen, and which some Muslims have determined to be insulting to the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. The protests soon spread to embassies of Western countries located in various other Muslim countries including Lebanon, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Sudan, Nigeria, as well as the Palestinian territory of Gaza, while unrest persisted in Egypt and Yemen. German and British embassies were attacked in Tunisia and Sudan; in Lebanon, atleast one person died. The government of Yemen, like the government of Libya, was quick to express condemnation over the attacks on the United States' embassies. However, there has been concern over the weakness of the new Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's response, prompting United States President Obama to characterize Egypt as neither an ally nor an enemy, effectively placing relations with post-Nile Revolution Egypt in the category of "to be determined." Egyptian authorities soon stepped up their efforts to repel the protesters in that country. Effects in Yemen were yet to be seen.

In early 2013, southern Yemen was hit by violent clashes between pro-government Islamists and pro-secessionists. On Feb. 23, 2013, offices belonging to the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood's Islah Party were burnt to the ground. It should be noted that the Islah Party is the main partner in the current transitional government of Yemen. The secessionists said that the attacks on the offices were carried out in retaliation for pro-government rallies that were intended to show support for Hadi. For his part, President Hadi has urged separatist groups to participate in a reconciliation national dialogue to settle prevailing disputes. But clearly, these groups were in no mood for reconciliation.

United States orders closure of embassies in Middle East, Asia, and Africa amidst security worries

At the start of August 2013, the Obama administration in the United States ordered the closure of several of its embassies in the Middle East and North Africa due to threats of a possible terrorist attack by militant extremists. At issue were interceptions of messages from the senior leadership of the terror enclave, al-Qaida, indicating that a major terrorist attack was in the works. The messages involved conversations between al-Qaida leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Nasser al-Wuhayshi, the leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, discussing a plan to carry out a major terrorist attack on an embassy. The closures were initially supposed to be enforced for a few days but were extended in many cases for up to a week with the United States authorities noting there was a strong possibility of an al-Qaida inspired attack in the Middle East and North Africa.

Meanwhile, the United States Department of State issued a global travel alert, which it said would remain in effect until the end of the month. Like the embassy closures, the travel alert was also issued due to security concerns. Explaining the rationale for the travel alert, the United States Department of State said: "Current information suggests that al-Qaida and affiliated organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks both in the region and beyond, and that they may focus efforts to

conduct attacks in the period between now and the end of August." The travel alert urged American citizens to be vigilant and warned against "the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems and other tourist infrastructure."

Given this guidance, several other Western countries moved to close select diplomatic missions in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, with the United Kingdom (and the United States) paying particular attention to Yemen. The United Kingdom Foreign Office was advising British nationals to leave that Middle Eastern country and urging its citizens to avoid travel to Yemen, noting that there was "a high threat from terrorism throughout Yemen." Several European countries also temporarily shut missions in Yemen. The United States had itself withdrawn its diplomatic staff from Yemen and urged United States citizens to depart that country amid concerns over security threats. At issue were emerging concerns that al-Qaida operatives were arriving in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, and were preparing for a major terror incident that would target both the Yemeni military and international diplomatic interests.

Separately, Yemeni authorities claimed success in foiling an al-Qaida plot to seize two of the country's main ports and blow up oil pipelines. In the first week of August 2013, Rajeh Badi, a spokesperson for the Yemeni government, said in an interview with international media that the al-Qaida plot involved taking over two ports in the south of the country that are used in exporting Yemeni oil, seizing control of the Canadian-administered al-Dhaba oil terminal, and killing or kidnapping foreign workers. The plot also involved plans to bomb and destroy oil pipelines at Balhaf. The entire plot appeared to be driven by revenge for the killing of senior al-Qaida figure, Said al-Shihri, in a drone strike months prior.

According to BBC News, this audacious scheme -- if executed -- would have been highly dangerous to the security of Yemen as it would have provided al-Qaida -- the notorious terror enclave -- with control over key parts of Yemen's vital infrastructure. But the attacks, which were intended to take place at the conclusion of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, were seemingly uncovered with the assistance of Western and Arab powers. Despite foiling this plot, Yemen's capital city of Sanaa remained tense with armored vehicles deployed around the city, and troops and tanks deployed to guard high interest targets, such as government offices, foreign missions, public areas, and the airport.

It should be known that both the United States and the United Kingdom withdrew their diplomatic staff from Yemen, and urged their citizens to leave the country, due to a separate security threat. In that case, intercepted conversations between senior al-Qaida leaders discussing an imminent terrorist attack led to a massive shutdown of United States' diplomatic missions across the Middle East and North Africa. That move was made out of an abundance of caution and appeared to be separate from this plot against the Yemeni ports and pipelines.

Meanwhile, the United States appeared to be stepping up its drone attacks on Yemen with seven

suspected Islamic extremist militants reported to have been killed in one strike in the southeastern part of the country. It was one of several strikes in a two-week period.

Yemeni prime minister escapes attempted assassination plot

At the close of August 2013, Yemeni Prime Minister Mohamed Basindwa narrowly escaped being assasinated. The incident occurred close to the prime minister's home in the capital of Sanaa as unidentified gunman opened fire on Prime Minister Mohamed Basindwa's convoy. The prime minister's bodyguards responded to the assault by returning gunfire. Although the assailants fled the scene, Prime Minister Mohamed Basindwa was able to escape unscathed from the apparent assassination attempt. Yemeni authorities were reported to be investigating the incident, noting that while it was possible al-Qaida was behind the assassination attempt, such actions were not typical of the terror group operating in Yemen.

Al-Qaida militants launch attack in southern Yemen

On Sept. 20, 2013, al-Qaida militants launched simultaneous attacks on army targets in southern Yemen, killing as many as 40 people. One attack involved double car bombs at an army camp in the province of Shabwa province. Another attack ensued in the town of Maifaa as a gunman opened fire on soldiers. Around 30 soldiers died in the car bombings in Shabwa while another ten soldiers died in the incident in Maifaa.

Approximately 10 days later on Sept. 30, 2013, al-Qaida militants disguised as security personnel launched an attack on an army base in south-eastern Yemen . According to the Saba state news agency, the attack ensued at the Yemeni army's Second Division in Mukalla when the militants detonated a car laden with explosives at the gates of the army base. The al-Qaida terrorists then stormed the headquarters of the army's Second Division. At least four soldiers were killed and around ten more were wounded in the attack, while several other military personnel were taken as hostages. Yemeni special forces then set upon the task of re-taking control of the compound, Following hours of engaging the militants in battle, Yemeni special forces were able to regain control and release several hostages from captivity by al-Qaida. As stated by a Yemeni official in an interview with Reuters News, "The anti-terrorism special forces clashed with al-Qaida militants and killed a number of them."

On Oct. 17, 2013, several security checkpoints in Baida province were attacked, leading to the death of at least one soldier. A day later on Oct. 18, 2013, six soldiers in Yemen died and another 10 others were wounded in a suicide car bomb attack at an army base in southern Yemen. According to military officials, the assailant stormed the entrance to Ahwar district base in Abyan province and detonated his explosives-filled vehicle with deadly results. Among those injured was

the base commander.

The spate of attacks by al-Qaida militants in Yemen in a relatively short space of time suggested a significant eruption in terrorist activity, and specifically with regard to military targets.

On Dec. 5, 2013, a series of deadly attacks at Yemen's defense ministry in the capital city of Sanaa left close to 30 people dead and more than 70 others injured. In once incident, a suicide car bombing was carried out at the gates of the defense complex in Sanaa's Bab al-Yaman district. A lengthy gun battle ensued at the hospital inside the compound and resulted in the deaths of at least two foreign medical staff. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, the series of attacks were reminiscent of the type of acts of terrorism typically carried out by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

It should be noted that the government in Yemen has been battling AQAP in recent times. Indeed, a massive military offensive, backed by United States drone strikes, has yielded significant progress in the fight against al-Qaida terrorists with several key leaders eliminated. However, these recent terrorism episodes in Yemen could indicate that AQAP remained a dangerous threat to security, and it was still capable of carrying out bloodshed and violence.

Fighting in northern Yemen; more autonomy for southern Yemen

In mid-February 2014, President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi of Yemen officially approved a transition in the administrative structure of the country into a federal state composed of six regions. Under the new structure, the northern part of the country would be divided into four regions, while the south, with its separatist inclinations, would be divided into two regions. Those two southern regions of Aden and Hadramout would be granted greater say over their internal affairs.

The change would effectively confer greater autonomy in the south, which has long argued for greater self-determination. of course, many separatists of the south rejected the new administrative structure, saying that they would not settle for anything other than their own state. Their reaction raised fears that Yemen would see no end to the turmoil that has plagued the country for years.

Regardless of its reception in the south, the fact of the matter was that the transition arrangement was the culimination of a United States-brokered power transfer agreement forced the resignation of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012, and which was intended to stabilize the country. Next on the agenda for Yemen would be the crafting of a new constitution, which would set the path for fresh elections.

At the start of March 2014, days of successive fighting between Shi'ite Muslim rebels and Sunni tribesmen in northern Yemen left scores of people dead on both sides. At issue was the ongoing

conflict between the Yemeni government and the Shi'a Zaidi rebels, also known as the Houthis, who rail against the government's alignment with the United States on anti-terrorism matters, and seek greater autonomy. Neighboring countries, such as Saudi Arabia -- a Sunni country -- have also been wary of a Shi'ite rebellion close to its borders. For its part, the Houthis were likely looking at recent developments in Yemen, which transformed the country into a federal entity, and conveyed greater autonomy to the south, and responding by tightening their own grip in the north. Local officials have warned that rather than winding down, the violence was increasing and moving toward the capital.

Offensive operations against al-Qaida terrorists:

In the spring of 2014, air strikes resulted in the elimination of as many as 40 al-Qaida terrorists in Yemen. Air strikes on April 19, 2014, in the central part of the country killed 10 Islamist extremist militants from al-Qaida along with three civilians. Air strikes were carried out on April 19, 2014, and April 20, 2014, in the mountainous region of southern part of Yemen; those air strikes resulted in the killing of another 30 Islamist extremist militants.

According to the Yemeni Defense Ministry said the air strikes were carried out in response to intelligence indicating that "terrorist elements were planning to target vital civilian and military installations." While there was no confirmation about the specific type of air strikes that were actually used in this anti-terrorism operation, there were suggestions that unmanned drones were used in the operations. The use of drones would implicate the involvement of the United States, which has no overt military presence in Yemen, but has used targeted anti-terror techniques, such as drone strikes, to stamp out the Jihadist Islamist threat.

For its part, the United States has acknowledged that it utilizes drone strikes to target terrorists from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula; however, it does not generally comment publicly on this practice. That being said, the United States believes that terrorists from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula -- specifically based in Yemen -- pose the most pressing threat to global security. Accordingly, it has emphasized the fact that drone strikes have successfully lessened al-Qaida's control over Yemeni territory. Of course, a counter-argument has been that the use of drones in attacks on remote areas have also yielded civilian casualties, which itself tends to fuel anti-American sentiment both locally and internationally.

At the start of May 2014, Yemeni forces made further progress in the fight against al-Qaida extremists, having carried out an assault on militant hideouts in the southern part of the country, According to the Yemeni defense ministry, military operations were launched in the provinces of Shabwa and Abyan, and resulted in the elimination of another 40 supected al-Qaida extremists. The government was dealing with the threat posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which has become the main base of terrorism since their training bases were shut down in the Afghan-Pak

region.

Meanwhile, the deaths of six soldiers were also reported as a result of a suicide bombing at a military outpost in Shabwa.

According to Yemeni authorities, hundreds of al-Qaida fighters were killed or injured in the ongoing anti-terrorism operation by mid-May 2014. But not all the news involved progress on the anti-terrorism front. On May 11, 2014, a suicide bombing in the southern city of Mukalla killed at least 10 Yemeni police and one civilian. The suicide car bomber drove up to a police station, provoked a confrontation -- presumably to attract more potential victims -- and then detonated his explosives-laden vehicle with deadly consequences. On the same day, a shooting in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa left several people dead.

In a separate but related development, two armed Yemeni civilians were killed when they tried to kidnap two United States nationals. The incident actually occurred in April 2014 but was being reported in the media a month later. The two Americans -- a Special Operations commando and a Central Intelligence Agency officer attached to the United States embassy -- responded by shooting and killing the two Yemeni assailants. It was not known if the two Americans were involved in any kind of a clandestine operation at the time of their attempted abductions and the United States government declined to provide any details. However, the United States Department of State issued the following confirmation of the event: “We can confirm that, last month, two U.S. Embassy officers in Yemen fired their weapons after being confronted by armed individuals in an attempted kidnapping at a small commercial business in Sana. Two of the armed individuals were killed. The Embassy officers are no longer in Yemen.”

U.S. and South African hostages killed after failed rescue attempt in Yemen

United States and South African hostages were killed following a failed rescue attempt by United States SEAL Team 6 special forces in the southern province of Shabwah in Yemen. The rescue operation was actually launched to rescue Luke Somers, a United States photojournalist, who was being held by al-Qaida in Yemen. United States forces were unaware that Somers was being held along with a South African national, Pierre Korkie. Both men were killed by their al-Qaida captors as the rescue effort unfolded.

South African sources said that the timing was unfortunate since there was a clandestine effort underway to pay a ransom to secure Korkie's release. However, United States sources noted that they were unaware of that Korkie was being held with Somers, or that there was a South African relief organization's plan afoot to secure his release by paying a ransom. Instead, they were focused on the rescue operation, which was authorized by President Barack Obama because of prevailing fears that Somers' life was in "imminent danger."

While the operation by United States special forces ended in failure and the loss of life, the United States defended its policy of trying to rescue hostages held by Islamic militants. The United States also defended its policy of neither negotiating with terrorists, nor paying ransoms to kidnappers, both of which the United States has said only facilitates further acts of terrorism. A statement by President Obama read as follows: "As this and previous hostage rescue operations demonstrate, the United States will spare no effort to use all of its military, intelligence and diplomatic capabilities to bring Americans home safely, wherever they are located."

Al-Qaida leader in Yemen rejects beheadings

Meanwhile, it should be noted that despite their tactics of terrorism, al-Qaida in Yemen has made clear that it rejects the babaric practice of beheadings used by the rival terror group, Islamic State, which has taken control over swaths of Iraq and Syria. Nasser bin Ali al-Ansi, a senior leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), said in a video that was posted via the social media outlet, Twitter, "There is no doubt that some of our brothers have been influenced by scenes of beheadings, which have proliferated lately. These are scenes which we do not accept and we strongly reject." Nasser bin Ali al-Ansi indicated that even AQAP had its limits and deemed decapitation to be un-Islamic as he added, "Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him and upon his family, has ordered us to be kind in everything, even in killing, and it is not part of kindness to film beheadings and slayings and publish them in public, where sons and daughters of those killed can see. These are some of the ugliest matters."

Yemeni government at odds with Shi'ite Houthis; historic deal grants Houthis political victory

For some time, the government of Yemen has been at odds with the Zaidi Shi'ite Muslim sect over the formation of a new government. Since 2004, a Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has posed a threat to Yemeni national security. Known as the Houthis, the Shi'a Zaidi rebels have said they seek greater autonomy in northern Yemen, and they have often been embroiled in violent clashes with government forces as a result. In recent years, the Houthis have objected to the government's alignment with the United States on anti-terrorism operations. But in 2014, as the Houthis have attempted to consolidate control over northern Yemeni territory, another center of contention was the matter of fuel subsidies.

At issue was the decision by President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to cut fuel subsidies, which propelled the Houthis to demand that those subsidies be restored. For its part, the government of Yemeni tried to defer the matter, saying instead that it was prepared to step down from office, paving the way for a technocratic government that would be tasked with dealing with the fuel cost issue. However, the Houthis rejected the proposal. Daifallah al-Shami, a Houthi leader, declared

that the reinstatement of the fuel subsidies was a central demand. He said, "No other issues can be discussed."

In an interview with Reuters news, a spokesperson for the government, Abdel Malek al-Mekhlafi, placed the blame for the stalemate on the Houthis, saying, "The Houthis have reneged on all previous understandings, including joining a new government and an offer to reduce the price of oil products, at the first government meeting." He continued, "They have threatened to escalate (i.e. their protests) if the decision to raise fuel prices is not cancelled."

In a bid to end the impasse with the Zaidi Houthis, President Hadi in early September 2014 dismissed the government and said he would name a new prime minister who would be tasked with forming a new national unity cabinet. The president also said he would review the controversial fuel subsidy cuts that were at the heart of the current disagreement.

It was clear that a pledge to review the cuts would not hold sufficient sway with the Zaidis. Indeed, their leader himself, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, was calling for further protests and a campaign of civil disobedience, as he warned: "If our demands are not met there will be decisive measures that we will talk about in time." As well, a Zaidi Houthi spokesperson, Mohammed Abdul Salam, wrote via the social media outlet, Facebook: "We do not agree to it. Our position is still that we stand by the Yemeni people who have gone out in a blessed popular revolution to demand their legitimate and just rights."

A political adviser to President Hadi, Faris al-Saqqaf, responded by accusing the Houthis of greater ambitions as he said in an interview with the Associated Press, "It shows that the Houthis have other goals and are using the subsidies as a pretext to execute another agenda."

With thousands of Houthis gathering on the outskirts of the capital of Sanaa to make their demands known, there were increased concerns about a possible confrontation in the nation's capital. Indeed, anxieties were rising that the Zaidi Houthis were plotting their own Ukrainian-style uprising. Concomitantly, there were increased fears by neighboring countries about regional stability.

In the second week of September 2014, clashes between Yemeni troops and the Zaidis at the Western entrance of the capital Sanaa, augured what could potentially become regularized fare in Yemen. It was apparent that the fuel subsidy issue was just one area of focus for the Houthis. In fact, they were demanding greater rights and an end to government corruption.

By the third week of September 2014, the clashes had, as feared, become more vicious and the Houthi/Zaidi rebels claimed they had seized control of the headquarters of the state television. Violent confrontations were also reported to be taking place close to the Iman University. A well, the Houthi/Zaidi rebels had seized control of government buildings. Overall, more than 100

people had died as a result of the wave of turbulence that had been ongoing. The intensified violence thus compelled Yemen's Higher Security Committee to impose a curfew in four areas of the capital and to close down schools indefinitely. The University of Sanaa was also closed after a mortar landed on the university compound.

On Sept. 20, 2014, an agreement was reached to end the violence that was now plaguing the capital of Sanaa. A statement outlining the agreement read as follows: "This agreement shall be a national document that will advance the path of peaceful change, and will lay the foundations for national partnership and for security and stability." The United Nations-brokered deal called for the formation of a new government, and gave the Houthis and southern separatists the right to nominate a new prime minister.

Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Muhammad Basindawa resigned from office. As September 2014 entered its final week, Abdel Malik al-Houthi -- the leader of the Houthis -- claimed that his fighters had now taken over control of Sanaa and declared that a "successful" Zaidi rebellion had been achieved. It appeared that the rhetorical use of the term "rebellion" was a reference to the fact that the Zaidis' package of prevailing demands had prevailed, and President Hadi had signed onto the deal discussed just above.

For his part, Houthi said, "These great efforts created this great success -- victory -- for all the people, forcing an answer to popular demands." He added, "If it is implemented, this agreement will also change the government, which the people called to fall, to fail, because it stood on an unjust, non-consensual basis."

It should be noted that the Houthi Zaidis success (ie. "victory") in taking over Sanaa and forcing a political solution that would convey "kingmaker" powers to them was not likely to be a curious accident of fate. Several analysts suggested that former President Saleh and his supporters had cultivated a pragmatic alliance with the Houthis to help them achieve these ends, while sidelining President Hadi, who replaced him, and remiding the people of Yemen of the influence he still had over the military. While Saleh has dismissed these claims, there remained continuing reports supporting this theory.

Post-agreement political turbulence plagues Yemen

In 2014, Yemen was rocked by a political and a security crisis as a Sh'ite Zaidi group, known as the Houthis, seized control over the capital of Sanaa as discussed above. Having placed such intense pressure on Yemen's established government, the Houthis managed to forge a power sharing deal with President Abd al-Rab Mansur. But this political gain by the Houthis simultaneously managed to anger the terror enclave, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which commenced a campaign of violence and bloodshed in response. AQAP's anger was

amplified by the fact that they, as hardline Sunni extremists, have viewed the Shi'ite Zaidis as an apostate and heretical group. Now, AQAP wanted to make their own voice heard in Yemen.

Even as these developments ensued, the practical business of governance was ongoing and a new administration had to be established. In October 2014, Yemeni President Hadi appointed a new prime minister. But the Houthis soon made clear that they rejected the nomination of Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak -- a stalwart of President Hadi and the head of state's own office director. They accused the United States embassy of orchestrating the nomination and warned they would soon resume their revolutionary activities as a result. The Houthis' rejection of Mubarak thus returned Yemen to a state of political uncertainty and turmoil.

Later in that month, after Mubarak withdrew his name from consideration, President Hadi advanced a new candidate for the prime minister's office. The president's nomination of Khaled Bahah, a technocrat educated in India, appeared to be met with more approval from the Houthis. Indeed, Abdelmalek al-Ejri, a member of the Houthi political bureau, lauded the nomination of Bahah, saying, "We believe he is the right person. His appointment will help the country overcome the difficulties it is going through." Bahah, in fact, appeared to have the support of various factions in Yemen.

Bahah's first task would be to form a government, and then he would have to tap into his technocratic abilities to divide the country into six administrative regions with devolved powers that satisfied the competing stakeholders across the Yemeni landscape.

Note that at the start of November 2014, the main players in Yemen's political spectrum, including the Houthi rebels, signed an agreement mandating the formation of a new government under Prime Minister Bahah.

But even that apparent sign of progress was forestalled when the Houthis rejected the new power-sharing government due to disagreements over the choice of cabinet ministers. Adding to the political turbulence and turmoil was the fact that President Hadi's own political party, the General People's Congress, ousted him as the group's leader. The move appeared to be a signal that the party was loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced to step down due to Yemen's Arab Spring uprising a few years earlier. Together, the moves left Hadi politically isolated and impotent at the helm of a country quickly spiralling out of control.

By mid-November 2014, there was some stabilization of the political realm when the Houthis finally endorsed the new Yemeni government, regardless of their prevailing objections to some of incoming Prime Minister Badah's cabinet ministers. Then by the third week of December 2014, Prime Minister Bahah's cabinet won a vote of confidence in parliament.

But as December 2014 drew to a close, the inherent instability that had come to characterize the

Yemeni scene rose to the surface once again when the Houthis evicted the director and deputy director of a state oil company from their offices. Already, they had sacked four provincial governors, the editor of the main state newspaper, al-Thawr and the commander of the special forces. These actions made clear that regardless of whom was sitting in the offices of the government, the Houthis were effectively running the state enterprise. Thus, newly-inaugurated Prime Minister Bahah warned that he and his cabinet were ready to resign from office due to his objections to the Houthis' non-constitutional moves to "administer the state."

Al-Qaida attacks in Yemen linked to power struggle with Houthis

Yemen's difficult security landscape became more even dire in the latter part of 2014. At issue was the political and a security crisis as a Sh'ite Zaidi group, known as the Houthis, seized control over the capital of Sanaa (see above for details). As discussed above, the Houthis managed to effectively control Yemen's government and sideline President Abd al-Rab Mansur. But these political gains by the Houthis simultaneously managed to anger the terror enclave, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which commenced a campaign of violence and bloodshed in response. Al-Qaida in Yemen was clearly in a fight for ascendancy with the Zaidi Houthis. As aforementioned, AQAP's anger was amplified by the fact that they, as hardline Sunni extremists, have viewed the Shi'ite Zaidis as an apostate and heretical group. Now, AQAP wanted to make their own voice heard in Yemen.

One manifestation of the national security crisis was a suicide bombing attack on Oct. 16, 2014, in Sanaa that killed close to 50 people. The terror group, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), wasted little time in claiming responsibility for the bloodshed. The violence was apparently a message intended to convey AQAP's anger over the Zaidi Houthis' success in the capital and their effectiveness in pressing a political solution that President Hadi was willing to endorse. AQAP's anger was amplified by the fact that they, as hardline Sunni extremists, have viewed the Shi'ite Zaidis as an apostate and heretical group. Now, AQAP wanted to make their own voice heard in Yemen.

On Oct. 25, 2014, al-Qaida targeted Houthi rebel forces in the city of Radda in central Yemen, killing dozens of them. Violent and bloody clashes between the two sides had been ongoing for days before al-Qaida forces were able to surround the Houthi fighters on a mountain in Radda in the al-Bayda province. However, the Houthis had themselves seen some success in pushing al-Qaida into retreat in some of their (al-Qaida's) Yemeni strongholds during the same period.

Yemen was rocked by violence in December 2014 when two car bombs exploded in the city of Radaa in the central province of al-Bayda. At least 25 people were killed as a result of the attacks. With the first bomb exploding close to a checkpoint controlled by Shi'ite Houthi rebels, and the second bomb exploding close to the home of a pro-Houthi official, all expectations were

that the terror group, al-Qaida, was likely responsible, due to the fact that it was a key rival of the Houthis in the fight for control over Yemen.

On the last day of December 2014, a suicide bomber detonated the explosives strapped to his body at a cultural center in the central Yemeni city of Ibb, killing between 25 and 30 people and wounding close to 50 others. Many of the victims were women, children, and students. The attack took place as people gathered to celebrate the Prophet Mohammad's birthday. The event had been organized by the Houthis and, as such, suspicion for the attack rested on al-Qaida, which has been in a power struggle with the Zaidi Houthi population for control over Yemen. Indeed, several similar bombings and attacks have been carried out by al-Qaida terrorists in Yemen.

In the first week of January 2015, a car bombing outside a police college in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa left 35 people dead and scores more wounded. Yemeni authorities said that the attack was the result of a booby-trapped vehicle, which was detonated by the driver and passenger as people waited to register for classes at the police college. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, blame -- as before -- rested with al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

In recent times, the Houthis, who seized control over the capital of Sanaa, had managed to forge a power-sharing deal with the government of President Abd al-Rab Mansur. Angered by these political gains for the Houthis (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs), the terror enclave al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), has commenced a campaign of terror and violence. AQAP's anger was amplified by the fact that they, as hardline Sunni extremists, have viewed the Shi'ite Zaidis as an apostate and heretical group. Now, AQAP wanted to make their own voice heard in Yemen.

Going back to October 2014, al-Qaida targeted Houthi rebel forces in the city of Radda in central Yemen, killing dozens of them. Violent and bloody clashes between the two sides were ongoing for days before al-Qaida forces were able to surround the Houthi fighters on a mountain in Radda in the al-Bayda province. However, the Houthis saw some success in pushing al-Qaida into retreat in some of their (al-Qaida's) Yemeni strongholds during the same period. Now, in December 2014, al-Qaida was resorting to "traditional" acts of terrorism, using car bombings and suicide attacks to target the Houthis.

These developments heralded an emerging power struggle between the Houthis and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), with the people of Yemen likely to be the ultimate victims. The main question in the immediate future was if this fight between the Houthis and AQAP would be limited to a power struggle for influence in Yemen where President Hadi was being increasingly sidelined, or if it would metastacize into a civil war.

Special Report (some aspects of this report replicated from above): --

Yemen in turmoil: Yemeni landscape mired by Shi'ite Houthi rebellion and under threat from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsular

Introduction

In 2015, the notorious and blood-thirsty terror group, Islamic State (also known as Islamic State in the Levant or ISIL), carried out not shortage of deadly attacks in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, exactly a heavy death toll, and complicating Yemen's already fractious and tumultuous political landscape.

The terror group, Islamic State has held sway in large portions of Syria and Iraq and been responsible for some of the most barbaric acts of murder, slavery, abduction and abuse seen in recent history. While its aim to establish an ultra-hardline Sunni Islamic caliphate has concentrated on the Syria-Iraq region (known as the Levant), attacks in Tunisia and other North African countries, as well as recently announced alliances with other Islamist terror groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, indicate an emerging global Jihadist agenda.

Already, Yemen has been dealing with exactly this threat of global Jihadism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) from within its own borders. But now, with large swaths of Yemen under the control of the Shi'ite Zaidi Houthis, and with the country fracturing, Islamic State was exploiting the power chasm by making Yemen a terror target. The fact that the attacks ensued in Houthi-controlled Sanaa made clear that Islamic State was deliberately targeting the Shi'ite rebels, whom they consider to be apostates.

For their part, the Houthi rebel movement (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs) had been engaged in fierce gun battles with Yemeni armed forces in 2014, ultimately gaining control of the capital of Sanaa and forcing President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi into retreat and then exile, while his supporters resisted the Houthis from their base in Yemen's second city of Aden.

In the backdrop of these developments was a spate of vicious attacks by the Yemen-based terror group, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as they railed against the perceived ascendancy of the Houthis. Angered by the political gains of the Houthis, the terror enclave, AQAP commenced a campaign of violence and bloodshed in response. These developments heralded an emerging power struggle between the Houthis and AQAP, with the people of Yemen likely to be the ultimate victims. The main question in the immediate future was if this fight between the Houthis and AQAP would be limited to a power struggle for influence in Yemen where President Hadi was being increasingly sidelined, or if it would metastasize into a civil war.

Double suicide bombings in Sanaa in March 2015, marked by the entrance of Islamic State into the

equation, served only to destabilize the Yemeni landscape even further. The situation was morphing into a geopolitical morass, with the advance of the Iranian-backed Houthis on the second city Aden, the decision by President Hadi to flee the presidential palace, and the commencement of air strikes by Saudi Arabia on Yemen. Of note was the fact that Yemen was becoming the terrain for a proxy war between Iranian-backed Houthis and the Saudi-backed Hadi government forces. For some time, Shi'a Iran was being blamed for backing the Houthis. But soon Sunni Saudi Arabia was intervening into Yemen to act as a countervailing power against Iran.

In April 2015, there was a glimmer of hope in Yemen as Saudi Arabia and its regional Sunni Muslim Arab allies ended their military campaign in Yemen, declaring they were transitioning their mission to one focused on anti-terrorism and security, along with the pursuit of a sustainable political solution in Yemen. As well, both Iran and the Houthis were signaling an interest in United Nations-brokered talks aimed at ending the conflict in Yemen peacefully.

However, by mid-2015, violence and bloodshed continued to plague the country while unrest and geopolitical turmoil continued to characterize the landscape, and foreign powers continued to play their roles on the turbulent Yemeni soil, with Qatar entering the fray in September 2015. At issue was an offensive operation by the Saudi-led Arab coalition to liberate Yemen from the Houthis. That effort only raised alarm bells about further impending bloodshed and turmoil. Also in September 2015 came the reports of an attack by Islamic State on a mosque in Sanaa, which yielded another harsh death toll.

It was apparent that despite the intervention of regional forces, and occasional announcements of breakthroughs, the Yemeni landscape continued to be one marked by chaos and turmoil in the latter part of 2015. There was renewed interest in a United Nations-brokered peace agreement in October 2015, which brought a glimmer of hope to Yemen's tumultuous scenario. But that glimmer waned in November 2015 as renewed fighting broke out between Iranian-backed Houthis and Saudi-backed pro-Hadi forces in the southwestern part of the country.

-- See below for details related to the threat to national security in Yemen posed by the Houthis, al-Qaida, and Islamic State. --

Background: Houthis on the Rise

For some time, the government of Yemen has been at odds with the Zaidi Shi'ite Muslim sect over the formation of a new government. Since 2004, a Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has posed a threat to Yemeni national security. Known as the Houthis, the Shi'a Zaidi rebels have said they seek greater autonomy in northern Yemen, and they have often been embroiled in violent clashes with government forces as a result. In recent years, the Houthis have objected to the government's alignment with the United States on anti-terrorism operations. But in 2014, as the Houthis have

attempted to consolidate control over northern Yemeni territory, another center of contention was the matter of fuel subsidies.

At issue was the decision by President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to cut fuel subsidies, which propelled the Houthis to demand that those subsidies be restored. For its part, the government of Yemeni tried to defer the matter, saying instead that it was prepared to step down from office, paving the way for a technocratic government that would be tasked with dealing with the fuel cost issue. However, the Houthis rejected the proposal. Daifallah al-Shami, a Houthi leader, declared that the reinstatement of the fuel subsidies was a central demand. He said, "No other issues can be discussed."

In an interview with Reuters news, a spokesperson for the government, Abdel Malek al-Mekhlafi, placed the blame for the stalemate on the Houthis, saying, "The Houthis have reneged on all previous understandings, including joining a new government and an offer to reduce the price of oil products, at the first government meeting." He continued, "They have threatened to escalate (i.e. their protests) if the decision to raise fuel prices is not cancelled."

In a bid to end the impasse with the Zaidi Houthis, President Hadi in early September 2014 dismissed the government and said he would name a new prime minister who would be tasked with forming a new national unity cabinet. The president also said he would review the controversial fuel subsidy cuts that were at the heart of the current disagreement.

It was clear that a pledge to review the cuts would not hold sufficient sway with the Zaidis. Indeed, their leader himself, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, was calling for further protests and a campaign of civil disobedience, as he warned: "If our demands are not met there will be decisive measures that we will talk about in time." As well, a Zaidi Houthi spokesperson, Mohammed Abdul Salam, wrote via the social media outlet, Facebook: "We do not agree to it. Our position is still that we stand by the Yemeni people who have gone out in a blessed popular revolution to demand their legitimate and just rights."

A political adviser to President Hadi, Faris al-Saqqaf, responded by accusing the Houthis of greater ambitions as he said in an interview with the Associated Press, "It shows that the Houthis have other goals and are using the subsidies as a pretext to execute another agenda."

With thousands of Houthis gathering on the outskirts of the capital of Sanaa to make their demands known, there were increased concerns about a possible confrontation in the nation's capital. Indeed, anxieties were rising that the Zaidi Houthis were plotting their own Ukrainian-style uprising. Concomitantly, there were increased fears by neighboring countries about regional stability.

In the second week of September 2014, clashes between Yemeni troops and the Zaidis at the

Western entrance of the capital Sanaa, augured what could potentially become regularized fare in Yemen. It was apparent that the fuel subsidy issue was just one area of focus for the Houthis. In fact, they were demanding greater rights and an end to government corruption.

By the third week of September 2014, the clashes had, as feared, become more vicious and the Houthi/Zaidi rebels claimed they had seized control of the headquarters of the state television. Violent confrontations were also reported to be taking place close to the Iman University. A well, the Houthi/Zaidi rebels had seized control of government buildings. Overall, more than 100 people had died as a result of the wave of turbulence that had been ongoing. The intensified violence thus compelled Yemen's Higher Security Committee to impose a curfew in four areas of the capital and to close down schools indefinitely. The University of Sanaa was also closed after a mortar landed on the university compound.

On Sept. 20, 2014, an agreement was reached to end the violence that was now plaguing the capital of Sanaa. A statement outlining the agreement read as follows: "This agreement shall be a national document that will advance the path of peaceful change, and will lay the foundations for national partnership and for security and stability." The United Nations-brokered deal called for the formation of a new government, and gave the Houthis and southern separatists the right to nominate a new prime minister.

Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Muhammad Basindawa resigned from office. As September 2014 entered its final week, Abdel Malik al-Houthi -- the leader of the Houthis -- claimed that his fighters had now taken over control of Sanaa and declared that a "successful" Zaidi rebellion had been achieved. It appeared that the rhetorical use of the term "rebellion" was a reference to the fact that the Zaidis' package of prevailing demands had prevailed, and President Hadi had signed onto the deal discussed just above.

For his part, Houthi said, "These great efforts created this great success -- victory -- for all the people, forcing an answer to popular demands." He added, "If it is implemented, this agreement will also change the government, which the people called to fall, to fail, because it stood on an unjust, non-consensual basis."

It should be noted that the Houthi Zaidis success (ie. "victory") in taking over Sanaa and forcing a political solution that would convey "kingmaker" powers to them was not likely to be a curious accident of fate. Several analysts suggested that former President Saleh and his supporters had cultivated a pragmatic alliance with the Houthis to help them achieve these ends, while sidelining President Hadi, who replaced him, and remiding the people of Yemen of the influence he still had over the military. While Saleh has dismissed these claims, there remained continuing reports supporting this theory.

Post-agreement political turbulence plagues Yemen

The year 2014 in Yemen was marked by a political and a security crisis as a Sh'ite Zaidi group, known as the Houthis, seized control over the capital of Sanaa as discussed above. Having placed such intense pressure on Yemen's established government, the Houthis managed to forge a power sharing deal with President Abd al-Rab Mansur. But this political gain by the Houthis simultaneously managed to anger the terror enclave, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which commenced a campaign of violence and bloodshed in response. AQAP's anger was amplified by the fact that they, as hardline Sunni extremists, have viewed the Shi'ite Zaidis as an apostate and heretical group. Now, AQAP wanted to make their own voice heard in Yemen.

Even as these developments ensued, the practical business of governance was ongoing and a new administration had to be established. In October 2014, Yemeni President Hadi appointed a new prime minister. But the Houthis soon made clear that they rejected the nomination of Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak -- a stalwart of President Hadi and the head of state's own office director. They accused the United States embassy of orchestrating the nomination and warned they would soon resume their revolutionary activities as a result. The Houthis' rejection of Mubarak thus returned Yemen to a state of political uncertainty and turmoil.

Later in that month, after Mubarak withdrew his name from consideration, President Hadi advanced a new candidate for the prime minister's office. The president's nomination of Khaled Bahah, a technocrat educated in India, appeared to be met with more approval from the Houthis. Indeed, Abdelmalek al-Ejri, a member of the Houthi political bureau, lauded the nomination of Bahah, saying, "We believe he is the right person. His appointment will help the country overcome the difficulties it is going through." Bahah, in fact, appeared to have the support of various factions in Yemen.

Bahah's first task would be to form a government, and then he would have to tap into his technocratic abilities to divide the country into six administrative regions with devolved powers that satisfied the competing stakeholders across the Yemeni landscape.

Note that at the start of November 2014, the main players in Yemen's political spectrum, including the Houthi rebels, signed an agreement mandating the formation of a new government under Prime Minister Bahah.

But even that apparent sign of progress was forestalled when the Houthis rejected the new power-sharing government due to disagreements over the choice of cabinet ministers. Adding to the political turbulence and turmoil was the fact that President Hadi's own political party, the General People's Congress, ousted him as the group's leader. The move appeared to be a signal that the party was loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced to step down due to Yemen's Arab Spring uprising a few years earlier. Together, the moves left Hadi politically isolated and impotent at the helm of a country quickly spiralling out of control.

By mid-November 2014, there was some stabilization of the political realm when the Houthis finally endorsed the new Yemeni government, regardless of their prevailing objections to some of incoming Prime Minister Badah's cabinet ministers. Then by the third week of December 2014, Prime Minister Bahah's cabinet won a vote of confidence in parliament.

But as December 2014 drew to a close, the inherent instability that had come to characterize the Yemeni scene rose to the surface once again when the Houthis evicted the director and deputy director of a state oil company from their offices. Already, they had sacked four provincial governors, the editor of the main state newspaper, al-Thawr and the commander of the special forces. These actions made clear that regardless of whom was sitting in the offices of the government, the Houthis were effectively running the state enterprise. Thus, newly-inaugurated Prime Minister Bahah warned that he and his cabinet were ready to resign from office due to his objections to the Houthis' non-constitutional moves to "administer the state."

Al-Qaida attacks in Yemen linked to power struggle with Houthis

Yemen's difficult security landscape became more even dire in the latter part of 2014. At issue was the aforementioned political and a security crisis as the Sh'ite Zaidi group, known as the Houthis, seized control over the capital of Sanaa (see above for details). As discussed above, the Houthis managed to effectively control Yemen's government and sideline President Abd al-Rab Mansur. But these political gains by the Houthis simultaneously managed to anger the terror enclave, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which commenced a campaign of violence and bloodshed in response. Al-Qaida in Yemen was clearly in a fight for ascendancy with the Zaidi Houthis, ultimately contributing to a national security crisis.

One manifestation of the national security crisis was a suicide bombing attack on Oct. 16, 2014, in Sanaa that killed close to 50 people. The terror group, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), wasted little time in claiming responsibility for the bloodshed. The violence was apparently a message intended to convey AQAP's anger over the Zaidi Houthis' success in the capital and their effectiveness in pressing a political solution that President Hadi was willing to endorse. AQAP's anger was amplified by the fact that they, as hardline Sunni extremists, have viewed the Shi'ite Zaidis as an apostate and heretical group. Now, AQAP wanted to make their own voice heard in Yemen.

On Oct. 25, 2014, al-Qaida targeted Houthi rebel forces in the city of Radda in central Yemen, killing dozens. Violent and bloody clashes between the two sides had been ongoing for days before al-Qaida forces were able to surround the Houthi fighters on a mountain in Radda in the al-Bayda province. However, the Houthis had themselves seen some success in pushing al-Qaida into retreat in some of their (al-Qaida's) Yemeni strongholds during the same period.

Yemen was rocked by violence in December 2014 when two car bombs exploded in the city of Radaa in the central province of al-Bayda. At least 25 people were killed as a result of the attacks. With the first bomb exploding close to a checkpoint controlled by Shi'ite Houthi rebels, and the second bomb exploding close to the home of a pro-Houthi official, all expectations were that the terror group, al-Qaida, was likely responsible, due to the fact that it was a key rival of the Houthis in the fight for control over Yemen.

On the last day of December 2014, a suicide bomber detonated the explosives strapped to his body at a cultural center in the central Yemeni city of Ibb, killing between 25 and 30 people and wounding close to 50 others. Many of the victims were women, children, and students. The attack took place as people gathered to celebrate the Prophet Mohammad's birthday. The event had been organized by the Houthis and, as such, suspicion for the attack rested on al-Qaida, which has been in a power struggle with the Zaidi Houthi population for control over Yemen. Indeed, several similar bombings and attacks have been carried out by al-Qaida terrorists in Yemen.

In the first week of January 2015, a car bombing outside a police college in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa left 35 people dead and scores more wounded. Yemeni authorities said that the attack was the result of a booby-trapped vehicle, which was detonated by the driver and passenger as people waited to register for classes at the police college. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, blame -- as before -- rested with al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

In recent times, the Houthis, who seized control over the capital of Sanaa, had managed to forge a power-sharing deal with the government of President Abd al-Rab Mansur. Angered by these political gains for the Houthis (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs), the terror enclave al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), has commenced a campaign of terror and violence. AQAP's anger was amplified by the fact that they, as hardline Sunni extremists, have viewed the Shi'ite Zaidis as an apostate and heretical group. Now, AQAP wanted to make their own voice heard in Yemen. To that end, al-Qaida was resorting to "traditional" acts of terrorism, using car bombings and suicide attacks to target the Houthis.

These developments heralded an emerging power struggle between the Houthis and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), with the people of Yemen likely to be the ultimate victims. The main question in the immediate future was if this fight between the Houthis and AQAP would be limited to a power struggle for influence in Yemen where President Hadi was being increasingly sidelined, or if it would metastacize into a civil war.

Houthis engaged in fierce fighting in Sanaa raising questions about a possible coup

On Jan. 19, 2015, Yemen's Houthi movement (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs) were engaged in fierce gun battles with Yemeni armed forces close to the presidential palace in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. Of note was the fact that the presidential palace was

defended by the Yemeni armed forces' presidential protection unit. The fighting appeared to have resulted in several deaths and injuries.

Relations between the government and the Houthis deteriorated two days earlier on Jan. 17, 2015, when the Zaidi Shi'ite rebel movement abducted President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's chief of staff, Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak. Analysts speculated that the kidnapping was aimed at gaining leverage as the two sides argued over a proposed new constitution. That draft constitutions would devolve regional authority in an attempt to address political and sectarian differences; however, the Houthis opposed this plan, believing that it would decrease its power and influence. Clearly, the political scene degenerated further as the fighting broke out outside the presidential palace.

The Houthis' assault on the capital was not a new phenomenon as they had seized control of Sanaa in September 2014, ultimately forcing the government into an uneasy power-sharing agreement and a fragile truce. But the abduction of the president's chief of staff, coupled with the eruption of fighting less than six months after forging a truce, made clear that the deal was not something the Houthis were actually prepared to honor. Indeed, the renewed fighting on Jan. 19, 2015, appeared to undermine the prevailing concord between the government and the Houthis, and was soon being interpreted as an attempt to topple the government of Yemen.

As noted by Information minister Nadia al-Saqqaf, in an interview with Reuters News, "If you attack the presidential palace ... This is aggressive, of course it is an attempted coup." Saqqaf also indicated that the Houthis had taken control of the state news agency, Saba, as well as the state television service. Saqqaf also accused Houthi fighters of opening fire on Prime Minister Khaled Bahah's motorcade after he departed from a meeting with President Hadi and a Houthi adviser over a draft constitution. The Yemeni government was interpreting the attack on Prime Minister Bahah's armored convoy as an assassination attempt. However, the Houthis also noted that they were being attacked themselves. The scene could certainly be understood as precarious.

On the evening of Jan. 19, 2015, there were reports that a ceasefire between the two sides had been achieved, while witnesses told international media that the sounds of artillery and gun fire had eased. It was to be seen if this tenuous ceasefire would prove to be sustainable, or, if once again, hostilities would erupt.

In the days following the fracas, there were intermittent reports of a peace deal, along with suggestions that President Hadi had assented to the demands of the Shi'a rebel movement. Those demands included the call for greater powers in the process of crafting a new constitution -- the very issue that resided at the heart of the Houthis' latest grievances.

On Jan. 22, 2015, turbulent political conditions prevailed when Prime Minister Khaled Baha offered the resignation of his government, saying that the administration did not wish to participate in "an unconstructive political maze." But that overture was overshadowed with the news that the

Houthi rebels had fought their way into the presidential palace, battled the presidential guards, and grabbed control over the presidential compound. As a result, President Hadi was left effectively imprisoned in his own official residence.

Yemen was thrown into a deeper chasm of chaos when it was announced that President Hadi had resigned from office leaving Yemen with no elected leader at the helm. In a letter submitted to parliament, Hadi expressed his regrets but noted that negotiations on the future course for the country had reached a "dead end." (Note: Under the provisions of the existing Yemeni consitution, with Hadi gone, the speaker of the parliament would become the interim president.)

There were suggestions that (Shi'a) Iran was complicit in the Houthis' rise to the fore in Yemen, thus compelling (Sunni) Saudi Arabia -- which has for some time been wary of the Houthis -- to react by cutting off their financial aid to that country. The latest developments would likely only exacerbate Shi'a-Sunni tensions in the region and fuel speculation of a proxy war between Tehran and Riyadh with Yemen as "ground zero" of the battle.

It should be noted that while the Houthis could certainly claim to control Sanaa, they could not claim to command control over the whole country. Yemenis in the southern part of the country -- already inclined towards secession -- have made clear they would not bow to the Houthis. The existing Yemeni nation state was thus precipitously close to collapse.

As January 2015 came to a close, the leader of the Houthis -- Abdel-Malek al-Houthi -- struck a conciliatory note, saying that he was hoping for a peaceful transfer of power following the resignation of President Hadi. He said, "We are seeking a peaceful transfer of power on the basis of partnership." The Houthi leader also called on various Yemeni factions to come together for the sake of the country, saying, "Let everyone go toward cooperation instead of clashing, arguing and wrestling." In another move aimed at calming tensions, the Houthis released Hadi's chief of staff, Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, who was abducted in an effort to hold leverage over the government at the time. The release of Mubarak was being regarded with cautious optimism as a step in the right direction.

In the first week of February 2015, various political factions in Yemen -- including the Houthis who dominated Sanaa and the southern separatists known as Herak -- agreed to the establishment of a presidential council that would administer the country for a period of one year. The presidential council would be headed by Ali Nasser Mohammed, a former president of what was once known as South Yemen before it merged with North Yemen in 1990. Should this agreement go forward, it would be a stabilizing move in a country that has been recently beset by tumult and turmoil.

But as quickly as the notion of a political agreement emerged, it just as quickly dissipated. On Feb. 6, 2015, the Houthis dissolved parliament and announced that an interim assembly would be

established that would be empowered to elect a five-person presidential council that would be in power for a transitional period of two years.

Some opposition factions blasted the news, characterizing the moves by the Shi'ite Zaidi movement as a "coup." Nasser al-Noubah, a leader of the southern separatists, known as Herak, said, "What the Houthis have done is political suicide and also a coup that would lead the country into the unknown." In the Yemeni city of Taiz, protesters took to the streets to register their discontent over the Houthis' unilateral moves. As well, provincial leaders in Marib, to the east of the capital Sanaa, made clear that they would oppose the Houthis' attempts to take control of the country. Nevertheless, the presence of some former cabinet ministers at the presidential palace where the leadership announcement was made indicated that there was some consensus of sorts at stake.

Talks aimed at calming the situation were set to commence on Feb. 9, 2015. It was to be seen if such discussions would, indeed, result in assuaging the anger of the disparate factions in Yemen. The leader of the Shi'ite Zaidi movement, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, tried to strike a statesman-like note of unity as he declared, "Our hand is extended to every political force in this country. The space is open for partnership, co-operation and brotherhood."

Those talks in the second week of February 2015 aimed at resolving the Yemeni political impasse, however, ended in failure when two parties withdrew from the meeting, citing threats and intimidation from the Houthis. The opposition party, Islah, a large Islamist tribal entity, as well as a smaller group, known as the Nasserist Organization, complained that the Houthis were intent on imposing their will "by force."

By Feb. 11, 2015, the capital of Sanaa and the central city of Taiz were the sites of mass protests, as Yemenis took to the streets to register their outrage over the Houthis' heavy-handed tactics. Among those demonstrating against the Houthis were Islamist tribal militants.

In mid-February 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution demanding that the Houthis "immediately and unconditionally" withdraw from government agencies and cede power in Yemen. It also demanded the release of President Hadi who stepped down from office and has since been under house arrest. It was apparent that there was alarm over Yemen's descent into chaos.

In fact, the resolution was not much more than a multilateral rebuke as it was not enforceable militarily. That lack of military enforcement was the source of contention for several Arab countries, including those of the Gulf Cooperation Council (composed of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates). They argued for the resolution to be adopted under the aegis of the United Nations' Chapter Seven provision, which enforces the measure militarily or through sanctions.

Note that as February 2015 entered its final week, following negotiations hosted by the United Nations, the various Yemeni parties were able to agree on a transitional council. United Nations mediator Jamal Benomar hailed the accord, saying, "This progress is not a (final) agreement, but an important breakthrough that paves the way towards a comprehensive agreement." The deal would retain the composition of the Yemenu house of representatives, but would replace the upper chamber with a new transitional council, which would be represented by some of Yemeni's disenfranchised sectors, such as pro-southern groups unwilling to be under the control of the Houthis, as well as youth and women. The two chambers would be charged with crafting legislation aimed at moving Yemen through its transition to stability.

While this agreement was being touted as a breakthrough by negotiators, there remained real fears that it would crumble as previous deals have similarly unraveled in the recent past. The argument in favor of another failed deal was bolstered by the news that Houthi militias had taken control over a special forces base in Sanaa and a coast guard station in the port city of Hodeidah on the Red Sea. It was apparent that the diplomatic moves were not doing much to stem the growing instability in Yemen.

The diplomatic climate was also not likely to be helped by the Houthis' claim that former President Hadi had lost his legitimacy and should be treated as a fugitive from justice. Such a pronouncement was being regarded negatively by Hadi's supporters. In fact, as the diplomatic moves were playing out at the United Nations (as discussed above), parallel moves were unfolding on the ground in southern Yemen as pro-Hadi forces took control of key buildings, such as government offices and the television station, in Aden. The militias, which have pledged their support for President Hadi, engaged in fighting in the southern city before taking control over major interests there. Elsewhere in Yemen, tens of thousands of Yemenis across the country took to the streets to protest against the Houthis. It was apparent that while the Houthis held sway in Sanaa, other parties were intent on asserting their power in the south.

Political acrimony surfaced in the first week of March 2015 when former President Hadi refused to participate in United Nations-brokered talks with the Houthis. Hadi said the Shi'ite Zaidi rebel movement should withdraw from the capital before he would consider sitting at the negotiating table.

For their part, the Houthis - who had insisted that Hadi "lost legitimacy" (as noted above) - instead moved to consolidate their power in the capital, seizing control over the offices of the National Dialogue's secretariat in Sanaa. The secretariat, whose goals have been aimed at national reconciliation since the 2011 uprising that drove former President Saleh from power, released a statement on its neutrality following the takeover of its offices by the Houthis. The statement read as follows: "As everyone knows, the general secretariat is a technical apparatus which is neutral ... It cannot work under the authority and control of any political party."

Islamic State carries out deadly suicide bombings in Sanaa --

On March 20, 2015, the notorious and bloodthirsty terror group, Islamic State (also known as Islamic State in the Levant or ISIL), carried out double deadly suicide bombings in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, killing close to 140 people and injuring 300 others. The four suicide bombers detonated explosives strapped to their bodies at two Shi'ite Muslim mosques -- the Badr mosque in southern Sanaa, and the al-Hashoosh mosque in northern Sanaa, as worshippers gathered for Friday prayers. The attacks were timed to ensure the maximum number of casualties.

The terror group, Islamic State, has held sway in large portions of Syria and Iraq, and has been responsible for some of the most barbaric acts of murder, slavery, abduction, and abuse seen in recent history. While its aim to establish a ultra-hardline Sunni Islamic caliphate has concentrated on the Syria-Iraq region (known as the Levant), an attack earlier in the week in Tunisia, as well as recently announced alliances with other Islamist terror groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, indicate an emerging global Jihadist agenda. Already, Yemen has been dealing with exactly this threat of global Jihadism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninula (AQAP) from within its own borders. But now, with large swaths of Yemen now under the control of the Shi'ite Zaidi Houthis, and with the country fracturing, Islamic State was exploiting the power chasm by making Yemen a terror target. The fact that the suicide bombings ensued in Houthi-controlled Sanaa made clear that Islamic State was deliberately targeting the Shi'ite rebels, whom they consider to be apostates.

Indeed, Islamic State wasted little time claiming responsibility for the bloodshed, and promising more violence to come as it declared via the social media outlet, Twitter, "Let the polytheist Houthis know that the soldiers of the Islamic State will not rest until we have uprooted them." Although the White House in the United States warned that ISIL may simply be claiming credit for propaganda purposes while not actually being behind the attacks in Yemen, the fact was that there was few other plausible possibilities. While al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is active in the region and has carried out no shortage of attacks on the Houthis, al-Qaida leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, issued a dictate prohibiting the targeting of mosques or markets. Moreover, AQAP itself denied being behind the double bombing in Sanaa.

Houthis advance on Aden; President Hadi flees presidential palace --

In the third week of March 2015, it was apparent that Yemen was fracturing into pro-Houthi and anti-Houthi elements. At issue was an outbreak of fierce fighting in Aden. More than a dozen people died as fighters loyal to President Hadi raided Aden's international airport and took control over a nearby military base. Soon thereafter, there was an attack by pro-Houthi warplanes on the presidential palace in Aden. The outbreak of violence in Aden was another illustration of the fact that while the Houthis retained control over Sanaa, pro-Hadi elements remained a force to be reckoned with in Aden.

By the last week of March 2015, Houthi fighters were advacing on President Hadi's stronghold of Aden, engaging in battles with pro-Hadi forces, and capturing the town of Kirsh about 60 miles north of Yemen's second city. Other Houthi fighters were meanwhile capturing the strategic Red Sea port city of al-Mukha. In the town of Dhalea, known to be a southern separatist hotbed, Houthis were engaged in gun battles and making clear that they intended to extend their rule. There were points of resistance elsewhere in the country. For example, anti-Houthi elements were engaged in clashes in portions of Taiz province, which was previously captured by the Houthis .

For his part, Hadi had been holding the proverbial fort in Aden, backed by military units, militias, and tribesman loyal to him, and with an eye on holding off the Houthis. But as Houthi rebels grabbed control over the al-Anad air base, it was apparent that Hadi and his anti-Houthi supporters were under pressure. Realizing that his options were limited, President Hadi on March 24, 2015, urged the United Nations Security Council to authorize a military intervention into Yemen to "protect Yemen and to deter" further Houthi infiltration into the southern part of the country.

But a day later on March 25, 2015, before the international community could digest the rate at which the Houthis were over-running Yemen, and without time to consider the request for intervention, the president of Yemen had abandoned the presidential palace in his stronghold of Aden. It was soon reported that President Hadi had fled Yemen "voluntarily" in response to the advance of the Houthis in Aden. These developments made clear that the internationally-recognized government of Yemen, as headed by Hadi, was no longer viable as Yemen disintegrated further into the abyss of instability. Meanwhile, state television -- now under the control of the Houthis -- declared there would be a bounty of 20 million Yemeni riyals (approximately $93,000 USD) for the capture of the "fugitive" president.

As noted below, on March 26, 2015, in response to the advance of the Iran-backed Houthis, Saudi Arabia commenced air strikes in Yemen.

Foreign Relations Dimension; Saudi Arabia leads air strikes in Yemen --

With Yemen embroiled in an escalating crisis, Western powers, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, had already announced the closure of their embassies in that country, noting that they were moving their diplomatic staff out of Yemen on the basis of deteriorating security conditions. As noted by State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki, "Recent unilateral actions disrupted the political transition process in Yemen, creating the risk that renewed violence would threaten Yemenis and the diplomatic community in Sana'a.

The United States and United Kingdom went a step further in the last week of March 2015. Following the attack by Islamic State, American and British authorities announced that they were withdrawing their military special operations forces from Yemen.

The United States Pentagon admitted that the political chaos in Yemen would negatively impact the United States' counter-terrorism capabilities. As noted by Rear Admiral John Kirby during a press meeting, "There's no question as a result of the political instability in Yemen that our counter-terrorism capabilities have been ... affected."

As Western powers moved to distance themselves from Yemen, regional powers were now signaling their entrance to the Yemeni crisis. Already, Shi'a Iran was being blamed for backing the Houthis. But soon Sunni Saudi Arabia was warning that it would intervene into Yemen to act as a countervailing power against Iran. Prince Saud Al Faisal promised to protect Yemen's sovereignty, saying, "We are against Iran's intervention in Yemen ... it is actually an act of aggression... We are keen on protecting Yemen's sovereignty, the legitimacy of Yemen represented by President Hadi." He continued, "We are ready to take the necessary measures if needed."

Saudi Arabia's possible intervention would likely be welcomed by the internationally-recognized Hadi government of Yemen. As noted above, President Hadi himself had called for the United Nations Security Council to authorize military intervention into Yemen. Also of note was a call by the Yemeni foreign minister, Riyadh Yaseen, for Arab neighbors to assist militarily to stop the advance being made by Houthi fighters. He said, "We have addressed both the [Gulf Cooperation Council] and the U.N. for the need of [imposing] a no-fly zone and banning the use of warplanes at the airports controlled by the Houthis." Of course, that intervention was aimed at stemming the advanceof the Houthis and not necessarily at addressing the terror threats posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula or Islamic State.

In the early hours of March 26, 2015, following the news the day before that President Hadi had fled the presidential palace in Aden, Saudi Arabia announced it had commenced air strikes in Yemen. In fact, Saudi Arabia said its military operation was being conducted in coordination with a coalition of several regional partner countries. The Saudi effort was aimed at stemming the Houthi tide and restoring the internationally-recognized "legitimate" Hadi government to the helm in Yemen. But with the Houthis -- a Zaidi Shi'ite rebel movement -- being backed by Iran, and with Sunni Saudi Arabia now entering the fray, Yemen was quickly turning into a sectarian and geopolitical proxy war.

Note that the United States soon announced that while it was not one of the partner countries carrying out air strikes in Yemen, it was nonetheless providing logistical and intelligence support to the Saudi-led operation in Yemen.

After only a few days of air strikes, the Saudi-led regional forces had not yet overpowered the Houthis; however, they were limiting movement of the Shi'ite Zaidi rebellion and were successfully imposing a naval blockade. As March 2015 was coming to a close, Saudi and Houthi fighters were embroiled in fierce fighting along the Saudi-Yemeni border. Fighting was also taking place in Aden between Houthi fighters and pro-Hadi loyalist forces.

At the start of April 2015, despite the air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition, the Houthis were actually making gains on the southern port city of Aden -- the one time stronghold of President Hadi. With fighting increasing, a humanitarian crisis emerging, and the death toll increasing (almost 200 people were killed from late March through the first few days of April 2015 alone), several countries began the process of evacuating its citizens from Yemen, while the Red Cross was bringing in humanitarian aid supplies.

It should be noted that in an interview with the Arabic television channel al-Arabiya Hadath, Yemeni Foreign Minister Riyadh Yasseen sanctioned the intervention of Arab powers into Yemen, calling for an actual Arab regional force help restore the elected goverment of President Hadi to power in Yemen and save the country from its slippage into chaos. He said, "Yes, we are asking for that, and as soon as possible, in order to save our infrastructure and save Yemenis under siege in many cities."

Evidence of the Iranian-Saudi proxy war in Yemen was manifest in the second week of April 2015 when Iran called for the formation of a new Yemeni government, and even said it would be willing to offer its assistance in Yemen's political transition. The statement came at a time when the Iranian-backed Houthis advance on the city of Yemen. For its part, Saudi Arabia has been involved in air strikes on Yemen, with the intent aim of restoring President Hadi (who had taken refuge in the Saudi capital of Riyadh) to the helm of government. It was apparent that the two countries were not only a military collision course but also on a parallel political one.

Note that on April 14, 2015, the United Nations Security Council imposed an arms embargo on the Iran-backed Houthis. The resolution was overwhelmingly backed by security council members, although Russia abstained from the vote.

Saudi Arabia ends its military campaign in Yemen; Iran and Houthis call for return to United Nations-brokered negotiations --

In the third week of April 2015, as Yemen remained embroiled in a state of chaos, the scene took an ominous turn as Islamist tribal militants aligned with the terror group, al-Qaida, took control of an oil terminal and an airport. The militants siezed control over the oil terminal in the city of Al-Shihr in Hadramawt province after military forces that had been protecting the compound withdrew from the area. The militants also took control over the military air base in the area, as well as the Al-Rayyan International Airport. It was apparent that as the conflict escalated in Yemen, al-Qaida and its allies were taking advantage of the situation to lay their own claims on power and territory.

As the Yemeni conflict escalated, the United States dispatched an aircraft carrier, the USS Theodore Roosevelt, and a guided-missile cruiser, the USS Normandy, to the maritime waters

close to Yemen. The general consensus was that the presence of the USS Theodore Roosevelt and the USS Normandy was for strategic reasons, and intended to ensure that the United States was positioned to take rapid action if the situation necessitated it. For its part, the United States Pentagon said that its presence in the Arabian Sea was not to intercept Iranian arms shipments to Yemen, but rather to "ensure the vital shipping lanes in the region remain open and safe."

Irrespective of this official explanation, it was well known that a flotilla of Iranian ships with unknown cargo was in the region and moving in the direction of Yemen. While the United States authorities were drawing no public conclusions about the purpose of the movement of those particular Iranian vessels, White House spokersperson Josh Earnest suggested there were signals that Iran was sending arms shipments to the Houthis in Yemen as he said, "We have seen evidence that the Iranians are supplying weapons and other forms of support to the Houthis in Yemen. That's the kind of support that will only contribute to greater violence in that country, a country that's already been racked by too much violence." United States President Barack Obama entered the fray, warning Iran not to send weapons in Yemen. He said, "What we've said to them [the Iranians] is that, If there are weapons delivered to factions within Yemen that could threaten navigation, that's a problem. And we're not sending them obscure messages. We send them very direct messages about it."

In a surprise move on April 21, 2015, Saudi Arabia announced it was ending its bombing campaign against the Houthis. Saudi authorities declared the joint alliance had achieved the military goals of the operation. An official statement read as follows: "Operation Decisive Storm has achieved its goals...(including) removing the threat to Saudi Arabia and neighboring countries, especially in terms of heavy weapons." The joint alliance would thus transition its efforts to a new mission called "Restoring Hope." The new operation would be aimed at counter-terrorism and security, and would look towards a political resolution in Yemen. Nevertheless, Saudi authorities warned that it reserved the right to go after the Houthis, with Saudi Brigadier General Ahmed Asseri saying, "The coalition will continue to prevent the Houthi militias from moving or undertaking any operations inside Yemen."

Yemen's internationally-recognized leader, President Hadi, offered his thanks for the Saudi-led regional effort, saying, "I express the deepest gratitude and respect to our Arab and Muslim brothers and friends in this exceptional strategic alliance in my name and on behalf of the Yemeni people."

While Iran welcomed the end of "Operation Decisive Storm," the fact of the mater was that the fighting continued to plague Yemen, with around 1,000 people dying in the four week period from late March to the third week of April 2015. Indeed, Houthis and factions loyal to President Hadi continued to engage in battles across the country, while infrastructure was being destroyed, and food and aid supplies were being depleted. Accordingly, there was an increasing call for United Nations negotiations to resume, with an eye on finding a peaceful political solution to the conflict

in Yemen.

For their part, the Houthis intimated that a diplomatic process was underway, and there was an attempt to forge an agreement that would bring an end to the fighting. But the Houthis were unsure whether the Saudi announcement regarding an end to "Operation Decisive Storm" was part of that agreement. Indeed, the news emerged on April 22, 2015, that even though an end to "Operation Decisive Storm" was over, Saudi-led strikes were still taking place in southern Yemen. It seemed that a mission remained in place to protect the port city of Aden from the Houthis. Saudi Arabian ambassador Adel al-Jubeir explained the situation, saying, "When the Houthis or their allies make aggressive moves there will be a response. The decision to calm matters now rests entirely with them."

Meanwhile, Iran was calling for "urgent humanitarian assistance" in Yemen, with Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif stating via the social media outlet Twitter, "Positive developments in Yemen should be followed by urgent humanitarian assistance, intra-Yemeni dialogue and broad-based govt. Ready to help." Iranian President Hassan Rouhani was meanwhile urging negotiations and a peaceful end to the bloodshed in Yemen, as he said, "We believe that sustainable peace can prevail if military intervention is ceased and proper conditions are prepared for talks and dialogue among all political groups." The Houthis themselves were signaling an interest in a return to United Nations-brokered negotiations, along with an end to the Saudis' aerial bombardment campaign. Via the social media outlet Facebook, the Houthis' spokesperson, Mohammed Abdul-Salam, declared: "We call for -- after the complete cessation of the brutal aggression on Yemen and the total dismantling of the blockade on its people -- the resumption of political dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations."

Note that as April 2015 came to a close, the marine waters surrounding Yemen saw some de-escalation when the aforementioned Iranian flotilla, which was believed to be carrying arms to the Houthis, sailed past Yemen and to the north. The general consensus was that the presence of the USS Theodore Roosevelt and the USS Normandy in the area, may have had an effect. However, in a separate incident, Iranian forces fired warning shots and boarded a Marshall Islands-flagged cargo ship, the MV Maersk Tigris, with a Danish crew in the Strait of Hormuz. The vessel was reported to be following a normal commercial route between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates when the shots were fired, thus spurring the crew to issue a distress call that was picked by by United States forces. While Iranian authorities downplayed the incident, the United States Pentagon characterized the incident as a provocation.

Continued Turmoil and a Return to the Negotiating Table

In early May 2015, the hotspot in Yemen continued to be the southern city of Aden where Houthi fighters battled forces loyal to President Hadi, despite continued Saudi-led strikes. The fighting was quite fierce with more than 120 people killed on May 6, 2015, alone. Among the dead were

people trying to flee the violence in a boat that was struck by shelling from Houthi fighters. The situation in Aden was quite dire with Houthis advancing in the historic district of al-Tawahi -- the location of the presidential palace.

Meanwhile, in the north, close to the border with Saudi Arabia, mortar and rocket fire killed five Saudi civilians, prompting retaliatory strikes by Saudi-led forces in that region.

By mid-May 2015, Saudi Arabia was reported to be sending a "strike force" to its own border zone with Yemen. The move came after fierce artilery clashes with Houthi rebels in the area and was intended to reinforce the zone. Also in mid-May 2015, Saudi Arabia was launching air strikes on Sanaa. One strike on a rocket base left 90 people dead and hundreds others injured. It should be noted that these strikes were ensuing weeks after Saudi Arabia announced that it was ending its bombing campaign in Yemen, known as "Operation Decisive Storm," and only days before a fresh ceasefire.

It was apparent that despite the intervention of regional forces, and occasional announcements of breakthroughs, the Yemeni landscape continued to be one marked by chaos and turmoil in the spring of 2015.

By the start of June 2015, regional coalition forces, led by Saudi Arabia, were striking Houthi targets in Yemen, with scores of people dying as a result. A significant number of the dead included women and children in their own homes in the rural north of Yemen, close to the border with Saudi Arabia, which has long been the center of the Houthi rebellion. Strikes were also taking pace elsewhere in Yemen -- in Sanaa, at Yemen's naval command base at the port city of Hodaida on the Red Sea, at a customs office in the northern province of Haradh, and even in the southern city of Aden.

Despite the fatal effects of the strikes on Houthi civilians, Saudi Arabia and its allies were resolute in their efforts to stabilize Yemen and return the country to a state of legal governance -- ideally with President Hadi at the helm. In an interview with Reuters News, Khaled al-Attiyah, the foreign minister of Qatar, agued that the Saudi-led coalition strikes on the Houthis in Yemen had prevented the rebel movement from completely taking over the country. He said, "If there had not been (Operation) Decisive Storm, we would have seen the Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh's people all over Yemen. I think Decisive Storm ... has restored legitimacy in Yemen."

It would seem that Foreign Minister Khaled al-Attiyah's claims held some truth given the Houthis' interest in returning to the negotiating table. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of this latest spate of strikes, the Houthis were signaling their willingness to participate in United Nations-sponsored peace talks in Switzerland set for June 14, 2015. Daifallah al-Shami, a member of the Shi'ite Zaidi leadership, said in an interview with Reuters News that the Houthi movement was ready to support "without preconditions the efforts of the United Nations to organize Yemeni-Yemeni

dialogue." With rival groups, including those supportive of President Hadi and former President Saleh, also set to attend the peace talks, it seemed there was a genuine opportunity ahead to bring an end to the chaos rocking Yemen. South seccessionist factions, however, would not likely be in attendance and could function as the proverbial "fly in the ointment."

By mid-June 2015, there were fews signs that United Nations-sponsored talks in Switzerland would produce anything substantial, or that the warring sides were willing to make the hard compromises needed for peace and reconciliation. Of note was the fact that as the talks were convened, the Saudi-led Arab coalition was striking Houthi targets in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. Also of note was the intransigence of the pro-Hadi wing and the Houthis respectively. While Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed - the United Nations envoy to Yemen -- cast the talks as an opportunity to end the conflict in Yemen, he nonetheless acknowledged that a massive gulf divided the two sides. He said, "All the parties are still barricaded behind their positions and continue to bet on war rather than a political settlement."

Indeed, there was no reason for either side to buy into the benefits of peace when the facts on the ground were as follows: 1. Despite an aggressive air campaign, the Saudi-led coalition had failed to dislodge the Houthis; and 2. Any peace agreement would likely be to the detriment of pro-Hadi forces in Yemen. For both sides, war offered a more promising path to power.

In the third week of June 2015, the United Nations-sponsored peace talks ended without a plan for peace and the Saudi-led air campaign continued against Houthi targets. U.N. special envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said while the warring factions agreed that there was a need for a ceasefire in keeping with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216, there was no actual movement on the path forward. Nevertheless, he was not about to abandon all hope as he said, "There is a certain willingness from all the parties to discuss issues around a ceasefire accompanied by withdrawal ... I personally come out from these few days with a certain degree of optimism that we can achieve this." He continued, "The (opposing) positions that as you know have been so strong in view of so many lives having been lost and where a government that is internationally recognized is outside the country. A lot of things didn't make it easy for us."

Meanwhile, Yemen slipped further into the abyss of chaos as four car bombs exploded in Sanaa, hitting mosques and the Houthis' headquarters; at least two people were killed and 60 others were wounded as a result. The terror group, Islamic State, claimed responsibility for the bloodshed. Their attacks made clear that Islamic State was willing to exploit the power vacuum in Yemen as rival factions -- Iranian-backed Houthis, Saudi-backed government and pro-Hadi enclaves, and southern separatists -- fought for ascendancy.

In July 2015, Saudi authorities announced a ceasefire after air strikes hit a residential area of the Red Sea town of Mokha, killing approximately 120 people and injuring as many as 150 others. Children were among the casualties, prompting the United Nations, Amnesty International, and

Human Rights Watch to respectively warn the Saudi-led coalition that indiscriminate bombardment of populated areas was a violation of international law. It was not guaranteed that the Saudi-led coalition would heed this admonishment; however, the coalition did respond to a call by Yemeni President Hadi to halt the military activity long enough for humanitarian aid to be rendered. To this end, the cessation of the air campaign was to last for five days to allow emergency response teams to offer assistance and to deliver supplies to the victims.

Although attention was focused at this time on the ceasefire, the Saudi-led coalition targeting the Houthis in Yemen warned that it would, nevertheless, reserve the right to retaliate against any military activity taken by the Houthis. Of related significance was that the ceasefire did not bring a complete end to hostilities. Clashes erupted in the city of Taiz as a result of shelling by Shi'a Houthis rebels several districts. As well, fighting was reported the the north of the restive port city of Aden and in the provinces of Marib and Lahj.

Latest Developments

In September 2015, with the sectarian conflict between Iranian-backed Houthis and the Saudi-backed Hadi government forces still raging on, the landscape was complicated by the decision by Qatar to deploy 1,000 ground troops to Yemen. The move came ahead of a massive offensive operation by regional Sunni Arab forces against the Iranian-backed Houthis who continued to hold sway in the Yemeni capital city of Sanaa. Qatar was already part of the Saudi-led regional operation carrying out air strikes on Houthi-controlled regions of Yemen; however, its decision to deploy ground forces marked a notable shift in a campaign that has been stalled for several months, although some progress was made in driving Houthis and forces allied with former President Salleh from Aden.

In the same period, Saudi-led air strikes continued to pound Houthi targets in Yemen. The air battle actually increased in strength after a particularly deadly attack in the first part of September 2015 when a Houthi missile attack killed scores of Gulf Arab troops stationed to the east of Sanaa. In retaliation, the air strike campaign by Sunni Arab states on the capital intensified and deployments of troops were increased. These developments came ahead of an offensive operation discussed above, which was being billed as a "decisive battle to liberate Sanaa." Of course, Saudi ground forces were already "in country" and carrying out an offensive in the province of Marib, aimed at driving out the Houthis. The Sanaa offensive was to be understood as a continuation of that operation.

Meanwhile, even as plans for a final battle for Sanaa was in the works, the United Nations was planning to broker peace talks on the Yemeni crisis. But those plans hit a snag in mid-September 2015 when Yemen's government in exile, headed by President Hadi, said it would not participate unless the Houthis withdrew from the terrain it captured. Of note was the fact that Hadi and his stalwarts were simply articulating the need to make good on a provision already enshrined in the

prevailing United Nations Resolution 2216.

A few days later, Yemen's exiled government modified its stance, saying it would join the United Nations-sponsored talks, but under the condition that the Houthis publicly accepted the terms of the United Nations resolution, which called for them to withdraw from the main cities of Yemen and recognize Hadias the elected president of the country. As noted by Yemeni government spokesperson Rajeh Badi in an interview with Reuters News, "If the Houthis are serious about sitting down for negotiations about implementing resolution 2216, they must publicly announce their recognition of this resolution."

In the last week of September 2015, the capital city of Sanaa was the site of bloodshed and violence due to double suicide bombings at a mosque that left at least two dozen people dead and scores more seriously injured. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack at the al-Balili mosque, which ensued just as worshippers were celebrating the Eid al-Adha festival.

In the same period of late September 2015, the Red Sea port city of Mocha was struck by tragedy when suspected air strikes hit a wedding party, killing at least 130 people. The Saudi-led coalition operating in Yemen and charged with targeting the Houthi rebellion quickly dismissed any charges of culpability as follows: "There have been no air operations by the coalition in that area for three days. This is totally false news." Yet even as the Saudi-led coalition denied any responsibility for the incident, there were few other plausible explanations for a fatal air strikes in the area. It was unknown, however, as to whom was actually responsible for the deaths of more than 130 people at a wedding party. Not surprisingly, the United Nations expressed condemnation for the incident, noting that the air strikes were emblematic of "the disregard shown by all sides for human life" in Yemen.

On October 6, 2015, members of the Yemeni government were targeted in a terror attack on the Qasr hotel where they were staying in Aden. Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and members of his government escaped the double bombing at the hotel unharmed. But a series of attacks at two military installations housing coalition forces from the United Arab Emirates also took place on the same day with different results. The violence at the military outfits exacted a death toll as 15 pro-government and Saudi-led coalition forces were killed. While initial blame for the spate of attacks fell on the Houthis, the terror group, Islamic State, soon claimed responsibility. Clearly the Islamist terror group was taking advantage of the power vacuum created as a result of the power struggle between the Saudi-backed government and the Iranian-backed Houthis.

Meanwhile, also in late September 2015, President Hadi returned from exile in Saudi Arabia to his stronghold in the southern city of Aden. By the start of October 2015, President Hadi's government moved to sever its diplomatic ties with Iran. While there was no detailed explanation offered for the move, the general consensus was that the legitimate government of Yemen objected to Iran's backing of the Houthis, and viewed Iran's actions as overt acts of interference in its

sovereign affairs. Of course, as discussed here, the fact remained that several countries, including a Gulf Arab alliance, were now intervening into the affairs of Yemen.

By October 2015, there was a glimmer of hope on the turmoil-etched Yemeni landscape as the Houthi rebels finally committed to the United Nations-brokered peace process, although it was not known if they officially accepted the terms of a prevailing United Nations resolution. In a letter, the Houthi leadership declared: "We, from our side along with other parties, commit to these seven points as one unified bundle. We welcome the UN call for all sides to return to the table of dialogue." At issue was the seven-point Muscat peace plan that was forged in Oman and which stalled for some time, but was now being revived with the Houthis signing on to the deal.

Should the Houthis actually move forward by implementing the provisions of the Muscat agreement -- specifically, enacting a ceasefire, withdrawing from the cities, and accepting the return of the legitimate government to the capital city of Sanaa -- Yemen could well be backing away from the precipice of the crisis that has rocked the country for some time.

Note that at the start of November 2015, the United Nations envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, said in an interview with Reuters News that he expected negotiations between the rival sides to commence by the middle of the month (November 2015).

But in mid-November 2015, Yemen's exiled President Hadi had returned to the southern port city of Aden -- one of his strongholds -- for the purpose of rallying forces loyal to him ahead of a campaign to retake control over Taiz. This effort went forward and pit pro-Hadi forces against an alliance of Houthis and fighters loyal to former President Saleh. Dozens of deaths were reported on both sides, while Saudi Arabian forces continued their aerial bombardment effort against Iranian-backed Houthis. These developments indicated that a prevailing United Nations-brokered peace agreement was not being legitimately considered at this time.

Yemeni hospital used by Medecins Sans Frontieres struck by "projectile"; UN peace talks postponed

Yemen -- already in the throes of crisis as Iranian-backed Houthis battled the Saudi-backed government forces -- was struck by tragedy in January 2016 when a "projectile" struck the Shiara hospital in the northern Saada province, killing four people and injuring about a dozen others.

The medical aid group, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), said that it was affiliated with the hospital, but noted that it could not confirm if the medical facility was struck by a Saudi air strike or ground-based rocket fire. MSF personnel, however, said that warplanes were identified in the skies at the time the hospital was hit. Moreover, as noted by the MSF regional operations chief, Raquel Ayora, the GPS coordinates of the medical sites were well known. She said, "There is no way that anyone with the capacity to carry out an air strike or launch a rocket would not have

known that the Shiara Hospital was a functioning health facility providing critical services and supported by MSF."

MSF personnel noted that three of the persons wounded by the missile strike were staffers, and two of them were in critical condition. Pointing to the gravity of a hospital facility being struck in this manner, especially when such incidences had occurred before, MSF issued a statement that read as follows: "This is the third severe incident in the last three months. Our teams struggle on a daily basis to ensure the respect of health facilities. We reiterate to all parties to the conflict that patients and medical facilities must be respected." Of note was the fact that a clinic in Taiz was struck in December 2015 while a MSF hospital in Haydan was decimated in October 2015.

In the background of these developments have been ongoing peace efforts to bring an end to the proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia on Yemeni terrain. Going back to September 2015, the United Nations introduced its plan to broker peace talks on the Yemeni crisis. At issue was the seven-point Muscat peace plan that was forged in Oman and based on the prevailing United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216. Central to the deal was the establishment of a ceasefire, the withdrawal of fighters from cities, and the return of the legitimate government to the capital city of Sanaa.

Those plans or peace hit a snag in mid-September 2015 when Yemen's government in exile, headed by President Hadi, said it would not participate unless the Houthis withdrew from the terrain it captured. By October 2015, there was a glimmer of hope on the turmoil-etched Yemeni landscape as the Houthi rebels finally committed to the United Nations-brokered peace process. Negotiations between the rival sides was set to commence by mid-November 2015. But at that time, Yemen's exiled President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi returned to the southern port city of Aden -- one of his strongholds -- for the purpose of rallying forces loyal to him ahead of a campaign to retake control over Taiz. This effort went forward and pit pro-Hadi forces against an alliance of Houthis and fighters loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Dozens of deaths were reported on both sides, while Saudi Arabian forces continued their aerial bombardment effort against Iranian-backed Houthis. These developments indicated that the prevailing United Nations-brokered peace agreement was not being legitimately considered at this time.

In January 2016, there were high hopes that all interested parties would return to the peace table for talks based on the United Nations-brokered peace deal. But those hopes were dashed when former President Saleh, who was aligned with the Houthis, announced that he would not enter into negotiations with the Hadi government. The United Nations envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, indicated he would need more time to bring the interested parties together. As such, the peace talks were effectively on temporary hold.

Yemeni President Hadi sacks consensus prime minister in government shake-up ahead of peace

talks

In April 2016, Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi carried out a government shake-up, sacking Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and replacing him with Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr. President Hadi also named Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar as his new vice president. These changes indicated President Hadi's desire to upend the political landscape ahead of scheduled peace talks. Those peace talks set to start in mid-April 2016 were intended to rescue the country from brutal war rocking the country between Hadi's supporters and Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who were believed to be aligned with the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Of note was the fact that Daghr was once an official in the former Saleh regime's General People's Congress party, and that Al-Ahmar was an important army general who left the Saleh camp. By removing Prime Minister Bahah, who was regarded as a consensus figure of sorts, while appointing former Saleh stalwarts to key positions, Hadi was actually emphasizing the political divisions. It was to be seen these moves would impact the peace process.

Editor's Note:

Yemen is now on the radar of powerful nation states as an emerging base of radical jihadist Islamists seeking to carry out terror attacks against targets in the West. From 2009 to the present, Yemen has become a stronghold for Islamic extremists and militants, many of whom belong to the al-Qaida terror enclave, and thus giving rise to the Yemen-based al-Qaida entity known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). An attempted terror attack on an airliner on Christmas Day in 2009, as well as a cargo plane terror plot in 2010 led to fears of Yemen going down the road of Afghanistan a decade earlier as the world's new base of Islamic Jihadish terrorism. As such, the United States has become more involved in Yemen and has been credited with helping Yemeni forces carry out military offensives against major al-Qaida bases in that country, much to the consternation of al-Qaida itself. That being said, there is no visible American military presence in Yemen, which prefers to achieve its anti-terrorism effort in Yemen using targeted anti-terrorism techniques, including drone strikes and intelligence sharing.

For his part, (now-resigned) President Ali Abdullah Saleh had to establish a delicate balancing act of working with the West to deal with the threat of terrorism from within Yemen's borders, while not alienating the Yemeni citizenry, many of whom sympathize with Islamic extremism. But in fact, Yemen is the base of both foreign and local al-Qaida fighters. The local fighters are often aided by relatives, typically as a result of tribal loyalty more than ideology. However, when these fighters are killed or arrested by government forces, these heavily armed tribes often are emotionally driven to increase support of the militants. Meanwhile, Yemen has also been home to thousands of Islamic militants who are veterans of several "holy wars" in other countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. While most of these Islamic militant veterans are no longer active, they nonetheless maintain their extremist views in keeping with al-

Qaida ideology. As noted by Ali Saif Hassan, the manager of a Yemeni group that mediates between the government and opposition: "It is difficult to draw the line between who is a fundamentalist and who is al-Qaida. It's a spectrum." As constituents of the country, these elements form part of the broader anti-American and anti-Western base of the country, over which the government has only fragile control.

Meanwhile, the government of Yemen has had to deal with other rebellions and threats to national security, such as the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion, which led to the rise in violent attacks in certain regions of the country since 2004. Known as the Houthis, the Shi'a Zaidi rebels have said they seek greater autonomy. At the core of the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has been the claim that the government of Yemen is too closely aligned with the United States, which has provided supplies and training to Yemen's security forces under the aegis of the "war on terror." The rebels also blame the government for both corruption and discrimination. But Yemen's government has accused the northern Shi'ite rebels, led by Abdul Malik al-Houthi, of trying to oust the democratic government and advancing Shi'a theocratic rule in the country. Indeed, the government has accused the rebels of seeking to re-establish clerical rule that ended with the 1962 Yemeni revolution that yielded the republic. The situation has sometimes spilled over the border into Saudi Arabia and has illuminated the challenges facing the Yemeni government in terms of national security.

Specifically, even as the Yemeni government has had to deal with this rebel threat in the north of the country, there has been another territorial battle against secessionists in the south, as well as the emerging threat posed by al-Qaida terrorists operating from its terrain.

Apart from these political challenges, Yemen is also plagued by an unemployment rate that some estimate is as high as 40 percent, chronic poverty, increased food prices, high levels of illiteracy, and malnutrition. In these ways, Yemen's political, economic and human development challenges are illustrative of complicated terrain that is ripe for further exploitation by extremist, militant, and terrorist elements. It was hoped that the election of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in 2012 would shift Yemen onto more positive footing.

The developments in 2014 with the Houthi Zaidi rebels grabbing control over Sanaa, coupled with the intensified campaign of aggression from rival al-Qaida terrorists, presented a genuine challenge to President Hadi and the government of Yemen. That challenged morphed into a security crisis at the start of 2015 as the Houth Zaidi movement attempted to topple the government of Yemen. Of course, in the backdrop of effort was the continuing threat posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which was carrying out attacks in Yemen in a bid to wrest influence away from the Houthis. The fresh threat posed by Islamic State against the Houthis in March 2015, manifest in a destructive attack on Sanaa, made the dire security situation significantly worse. The situation was morphing into a geopolitical morass, with the advance of the Iranian-backed Houthis on the second city Aden, the decision by President Hadi to flee the country, and the commencement of air strikes by Saudi Arabia on Yemen.

Indeed, Yemen in the year 2015 was the site of a dangerous power struggle between these various players and disparate factions, and headed by weakened leadership, which was made distinctly worse by the exit of President Hadi. Yemen was thus alarmingly close to slipping off the proverbial cliff into the abyss of being a failed state. Note that the return of Hadi in late 2015 did not significantly changing the dire state of the landscape. It was to be seen if the existence of a peace deal as of 2016 would present the opportunity for stabilization.

-- April 2016

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief , www.countrywatch.com . Research sources listed in Bibliography. Supplementary Sources: BBC News; New York Times; Yemen Times; ArabicNews.com; United Press International; Guardian Unlimited.

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The Political Risk Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain

complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8
Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	4
Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6

Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	3
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5

Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4-4.5
Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8

Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6
East Timor	5
Ecuador	6
Egypt	5
El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4

Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5
Grenada	8
Guatemala	6
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9
Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9
India	7.5-8
Indonesia	6
Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3

Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7
Japan	9
Jordan	6.5
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8
Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4.5
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6

Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4
Malawi	4
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8
Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7
Mexico	6.5
Micronesia	7
Moldova	5
Monaco	9

Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5
Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3.5
Palau	7
Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5

Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5
Romania	5.5
Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9
Sao Tome and Principe	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	6
Serbia	5

Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8
Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6
Somalia	2
South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6

Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	6
Turkey	7
Turkmenistan	4.5
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	7
Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5

Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Risk Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)

2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)

3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)

4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)

5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)

6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)

7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)

8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)

9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)

10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address

graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected Syria where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. Iraq has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. Libya has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in Libya have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. Yemen continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessinionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Conversely, Tunisia and Egypt have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, Zimbabwe continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and miring Zimbabwe with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. Somalia also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in Kenya. On the upside, Nigeria, which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national security front with its new president at the helm. Mali was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the Central African Republic was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. South Sudan -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. Burkina Faso, Burundi and Guinea have been downgraded due to political unrest, with Guinea also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, Ukraine was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. Russia was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary, due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, Nepal was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in Pakistan resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, Singapore retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for Mexico , Guatemala, and Brazil. Argentina was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. Venezuela was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the United States maintains a strong ranking along with Canada, and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the United States to be downgraded in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The Political StabilityIndex is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5
Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5-9
Argentina	7

Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5
Brazil	7
Brunei	8

Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	5

Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4
Estonia	9
Ethiopia	4.5

Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	6.5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7
Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4
Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4
Holy See (Vatican)	9.5
Honduras	6

Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7
Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5
Ireland	9.5
Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2
Korea, South	8.5
Kosovo	5.5

Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5
Liberia	3.5-4
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4
Malawi	5
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	8

Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8
Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5
Mongolia	6.5-7
Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8
Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5

Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8
Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6
Paraguay	8
Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7
Romania	7
Russia	6
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9
Saint Lucia	9
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9

Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5
Seychelles	8
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7
Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5
Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3
Suriname	5

Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6
Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5
Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9

United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5
Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5
Yemen	2.5
Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)

2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability

3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights

4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance

5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")

6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection

7. level of unchecked crime and corruption

8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security

9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation

10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, Afghanistan, and Somalia -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both Afghanistan and Somalia continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In Afghanistan, while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism. In Somalia, while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in Somalia, but across the border into Kenya with devastating results/ Also in this category is Iraq, which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, Libya, and Yemen have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. Syria has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddhafi landscape of Libya has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is Yemen, which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secesionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In Bahrain, the landscape had

calmed. In Egypt, the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of Tunisia -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the Central African Republic was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. Zimbabwe has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in a slightly improved direction is Nigeria, which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. Mali was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited Burkina Faso and Burundi as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In Burundi, an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In Burkina Faso, the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South Sudan -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. Guinea has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola heath crisis.

In Europe, Ukraine was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. Russia was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Serbia and Albania were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while Romania was slightly downgraded on the basis of corruption charges against the prime minister. Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country

successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, Greece was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, Germany, France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, Nepal was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. Cambodia was very slighly downgraded due to post-election instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in Japan in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in Pakistan resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, Haiti retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. Mexico was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. Guatemala was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. Brazil was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. Argentina was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. Venezuela was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. Colombia was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States. Meanwhile, the United States, Canada, Costa Rica, Panama, and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, Fiji was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, Maldives has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	

Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	

Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	
Burma	7	7	Not Free	
Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	⇑
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	⇓

Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	⇓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	⇓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	
Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	

Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	⇓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	
The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	

Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	⇓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	

Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	⇑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	⇓
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	

Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	⇑
Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	⇓
Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	⇓
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	⇓
Norway*	1	1	Free	

Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	⇓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	

San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	⇓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2	Free	

Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	⇓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	⇓
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	
Ukraine*	3	2	Free	
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	

United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	⇓
Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:
PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.
⇑ ⇓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.
Available at URL: http://www.freedomhouse.org

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Human Rights in Yemen

Overview
While the government of Yemen works to respect the civil and human rights of its citizens, there were still numerous violations reported in recent years. Members of the security force arbitrarily arrest and detain, as well as torture and abuse citizens and suspects. There are still hundreds of people held without being charged or tried in a court of law, many due to the "war on terror." Some of those held are children as young as 11 years-old. There are ongoing efforts to implement directives to align arrest, detention, and interrogation procedures closer with international standards, but implementation of these directives has not yet occurred. Prison conditions are poor. Many government officials are considered corrupt. There is a definite lack of transparency in government procedures. The government limits the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and privacy. Freedom of movement and workers' rights are also restricted. Child marriage, child labor, and human trafficking are also growing concerns.

In August 2004, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor granted refugees the right to work in Yemen. For many years, thousands of refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia and other nations had been living in Yemen without the right to seek legal employment opportunities.

NOTE: See "Special Report" on the 2011 "Season of Unrest" gripping Yemen in the "Political Conditions" of this Country Review, including the hardline crackdown on anti-government protesters by the Saleh regime.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:
See full listing of the Human Development Index located in the Social Overview of this report for this country's current rank.

Human Poverty Index Rank:
77th out of 103

Gini Index:

33.4

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):
60.97 years

Unemployment Rate:
35.0%

Population living on $1 a day (%):
15.7%

Population living on $2 a day (%):
45.2%

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):
45.2%

Internally Displaced People:
N/A
Note- Some 63,500 Somali refugees are currently seeking asylum in Yemen

Total Crime Rate (%):
N/A

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):
Public: 1.0%

% of GDP Spent on Education:
9.5%

Human Rights Conventions Party to:
• International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
• International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
• International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
• International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
• Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
• Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
• Conventions on the Rights of the Child
• Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
• Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Signed but not yet ratified)

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in

177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

According to Yemen's constitution, the president is the chief of state and the commander in chief of the armed forces. The president is elected for a five-year term and is limited to two terms. The constitution provides that henceforth the president will be elected by popular vote from at least two candidates selected by the legislature. The president appoints the vice president and the prime minister. On the advice of the prime minister, the president also appoints other members of the government. In 1994, amendments to the unity constitution eliminated the presidential council.

Authority of the legislative branch rests in the bicameral legislature consisting of a Shura Council (111 seats; members appointed by the president) and a House of Representatives (301 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve six-year terms). The Yemeni constitution affords the legislative branch the power to debate and approve legislation, to write state policy, to control public spending, and to ratify international treaties and agreements. The president has the authority to dissolve the House of Representatives, but only when necessary.

At the judicial level, there is a Supreme Court. The legal system is based on Islamic law, Turkish law, English common law, and local tribal customary law.

Government Structure

Names:
conventional long form:
"Al Jumhuriyah al-Yamaniyah" (Republic of Yemen)
conventional short form:
"Al Yaman" (Yemen)

Type:
republic

Executive Branch:
Head of State:
Following a period of political turmoil from 2014 to 2015, the elected leader, President Maj. Gen. Abd al-Rab Mansur al-Hadi (in power since 2012), resigned from office under pressure from Houthi rebels now in control of the government. Hadi was the vice president since 1994 and served as acting leader since 2011. Hadi succeeded former President Field Marshal Ali Abdallah Saleh (from 1990 - 2011). As noted here, he resigned in Jan. 2015; however, Hadi remains the recognized leader of Yemen by vast swaths of the international community. As of 2016, he was resuming his presiential duties. Please see "Political Conditions" for details.

Elections:
Held in February 2012 as discussed in Election Primer below

Head of Government:
In April 2016, Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi carried out a government shake-up, sacking Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and replacing him with Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr. President Hadi also named Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar as his new vice president. These changes indicated President Hadi's desire to upend the political landscape ahead of scheduled peace talks. Those peace talks set to start in mid-April 2016 were intended to rescue the country from brutal war rocking the country between Hadi's supporters and Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who were believed to be aligned with the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Of note was the fact that Daghr was once an official in the former Saleh regime's General People's Congress party, and that Al-Ahmar was an important army general who left the Saleh camp. By removing Prime Minister Bahah, who was regarded as a consensus figure of sorts, while appointing former Saleh stalwarts to key

positions, Hadi was actually emphasizing the political divisions. It was to be seen these moves would impact the peace process. Please see "Political Conditions" for details.

Cabinet:
Typically, the Council of Ministers is appointed by the president on advice of the prime minister.

Note on Political Turmoil raging in Yemen in 2014 and 2015:
For some time, the government of Yemen has been at odds with the Zaidi Shi'ite Muslim sect over the formation of a new government. Since 2004, a Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has posed a threat to Yemeni national security. Known as the Houthis, the Shi'a Zaidi rebels have said they seek greater autonomy in northern Yemen, and they have often been embroiled in violent clashes with government forces as a result. In recent years, the Houthis have objected to the government's alignment with the United States on anti-terrorism operations. But in 2014, as the Houthis have attempted to consolidate control over northern Yemeni territory, another center of contention was the matter of fuel subsidies.

In a bid to end the impasse with the Zaidi Houthis, President Hadi in early September 2014 dismissed the government and said he would name a new prime minister who would be tasked with forming a new national unity cabinet. The president also said he would review the controversial fuel subsidy cuts that were at the heart of the current disagreement.

It was clear that a pledge to review the cuts would not hold sufficient sway with the Zaidis. Indeed, their leader himself, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, was calling for further protests and a campaign of civil disobedience, as he warned: "If our demands are not met there will be decisive measures that we will talk about in time."

A political adviser to President Hadi, Faris al-Saqqaf, responded by accusing the Houthis of greater ambitions as he said in an interview with the Associated Press, "It shows that the Houthis have other goals and are using the subsidies as a pretext to execute another agenda."

With thousands of Houthis gathering on the outskirts of the capital of Sanaa to make their demands known, there were increased concerns about a possible confrontation in the nation's capital. Indeed, anxieties were rising that the Zaidi Houthis were plotting their own Ukrainian-style uprising. Concomitantly, there were increased fears by neighboring countries about regional stability.

In the second week of September 2014, clashes between Yemeni troops and the Zaidis at the Western entrance of the capital Sanaa, augured what could potentially become regularized fare in Yemen. It was apparent that the fuel subsidy issue was just one area of focus for the Houthis. In fact, they were demanding greater rights and an end to government corruption.

By the third week of September 2014, the clashes had, as feared, become more vicious and the Houthi/Zaidi rebels claimed they had seized control of the headquarters of the state television. Violent confrontations were also reported to be taking place close to the Iman University. A well, the Houthi/Zaidi rebels had seized control of government buildings. Overall, more than 100 people had died as a result of the wave of turbulence that had been ongoing.

On Sept. 20, 2014, an agreement was reached to end the violence that was now plaguing the capital of Sanaa. The United Nations-brokered deal called for the formation of a new government, and gave the Houthis and southern separatists the right to nominate a new prime minister.

Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Muhammad Basindawa resigned from office. As September 2014 entered its final week, Abdel Malik al-Houthi -- the leader of the Houthis -- claimed that his fighters had now taken over control of Sanaa and declared that a "successful" Zaidi rebellion had been achieved. It appeared that the rhetorical use of the term "rebellion" was a reference to the fact that the Zaidis' package of prevailing demands had prevailed, and President Hadi had signed onto the deal discussed just above.

It should be noted that the Houthi Zaidis success (ie. "victory") in taking over Sanaa and forcing a political solution that would convey "kingmaker" powers to them was not likely to be a curious accident of fate. Several analysts suggested that former President Saleh and his supporters had cultivated a pragmatic alliance with the Houthis to help them achieve these ends, while sidelining President Hadi, who replaced him, and reminding the people of Yemen of the influence he still had over the military. While Saleh has dismissed these claims, there remained continuing reports supporting this theory.

In October 2014, Yemeni President Hadi appointed a new prime minister. But the Houthis soon made clear that they rejected the nomination of Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak -- a stalwart of President Hadi and the head of state's own office director. They accused the United States embassy of orchestrating the nomination and warned they would soon resume their revolutionary activities as a result. The Houthis' rejection of Mubarak thus returned Yemen to a state of political uncertainty and turmoil.

Later in that month, after Mubarak withdrew his name from consideration, President Hadi advanced a new candidate for the prime minister's office. The president's nomination of Khaled Bahah, a technocrat educated in India, appeared to be met with more approval from the Houthis. Indeed, Abdelmalek al-Ejri, a member of the Houthi political bureau, lauded the nomination of Bahah, saying, "We believe he is the right person. His appointment will help the country overcome the difficulties it is going through." Bahah, in fact, appeared to have the support of various factions in Yemen.

Bahah's first task would be to form a government, and then he would have to tap into his

technocratic abilities to divide the country into six administrative regions with devolved powers that satisfied the competing stakeholders across the Yemeni landscape.

Note that at the start of November 2014, the main players in Yemen's political spectrum, including the Houthi rebels, signed an agreement mandating the formation of a new government under Prime Minister Bahah.

But even that apparent sign of progress was forestalled when the Houthis rejected the new power-sharing government due to disagreements over the choice of cabinet ministers. Adding to the political turbulence and turmoil was the fact that President Hadi's own political party, the General People's Congress, ousted him as the group's leader. The move appeared to be a signal that the party was loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced to step down due to Yemen's Arab Spring uprising a few years earlier. Together, the moves left Hadi politically isolated and impotent at the helm of a country quickly spiralling out of control.

By mid-November 2014, there was some stabilization of the political realm when the Houthis finally endorsed the new Yemeni government, regardless of their prevailing objections to some of incoming Prime Minister Badah's cabinet ministers. Then by the third week of December 2014, Prime Minister Bahah's cabinet won a vote of confidence in parliament.

But as December 2014 drew to a close, the inherent instability that had come to characterize the Yemeni scene rose to the surface once again when the Houthis evicted the director and deputy director of a state oil company from their offices. Already, they had sacked four provincial governors, the editor of the main state newspaper, al-Thawr and the commander of the special forces. These actions made clear that regardless of whom was sitting in the offices of the government, the Houthis were effectively running the state enterprise. Thus, newly-inaugurated Prime Minister Bahah warned that he and his cabinet were ready to resign from office due to his objections to the Houthis' non-constitutional moves to "administer the state."

On Jan. 19, 2015, Yemen's Houthi rebel movement (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs) were engaged in fierce gun battles with Yemeni armed forces close to the presidential palace in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. The fighting occurred just days after the Houthis abducted President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's chief of staff, Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak. Analysts speculated that the kidnapping was aimed at gaining leverage as the two sides argued over a proposed new constitution. Clearly, the political scene degenerated further as the fighting broke out outside the presidential palace. With reports emerging that Houthi fighters also opened fire on the convoy carrying Prime Minister Khaled Bahah, the Yemeni government was soon accusing the Houthis of carrying out a coup d'etat.

In the days following the fracas, there were intermittent reports of a peace deal, along with suggestions that President Hadi had assented to the demands of the Shi'a rebels, who were calling

for greater powers in the process of crafting a new constitution. But on Jan. 22, 2015, the Houthi rebels had fought their way into the presidential palace, overpowered the presidential guards, and effectively imprisoned President Hadi in his own official residence. Yemen was thrown into a deeper chaos when it was announced that President Hadi had resigned from office.

As of 2016, President Hadi was back at the helm and assuming his executive duties.

Please see "Political Conditions" for details about the political and security challenges facing Yemen.

Legislative Branch:
Bicameral system:
A new constitutional amendment ratified on 20 February 2001 created a bicameral legislature consisting of a Shura Council (111 seats; members appointed by the president) and a House of Representatives (301 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve six-year terms)

Elections:
Last held April 27, 2003 (next elections scheduled for April 2009 and then postponed until a later date)

Election results:
GPC 228, Islah 47, YSP 7, Nasserite Unionist Party 3, National Arab Socialist Ba'th Party 2, independents 14

elections: last held April 2003 (scheduled April 2009 election postponed until a later date)

Judicial Branch:
Supreme Court

Legal System:
Based on Islamic law, Turkish law, English common law, and local tribal customary law; does not accept compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Constitution:
May 1991; amended September 1994 and February 2001

Administrative Divisions:
21 governorates (muhafazat, singular - muhafazah) and 1 municipality*; Abyan, 'Adan (Aden), Ad Dali', Al Bayda', Al Hudaydah, Al Jawf, Al Mahrah, Al Mahwit, Amanat al 'Asimah (Sanaa City)*, 'Amran, Arkhabil Suqutra (Socotra Archipelago), Dhamar, Hadramawt, Hajjah, Ibb, Lahij, Ma'rib, Raymah, Sa'dah, San'a' (Sanaa), Shabwah, Ta'izz

Note: Yemen was officially transitioned to a federal state with more autonomy for south in 2014. The new administrative structure
was a federal state composed of six regions. Under the new structure, the northern part of the country would be divided into four regions, while the south, with its separatist inclinations, would be divided into two regions. Those two southern regions of Aden and Hadramout would be granted greater say over their internal affairs.

Political Parties and Leaders:
General People's Congress or GPC [Ali Abdallah SALIH]
Islamic Reform Grouping or Islah [Muhammed Abdallah al-YADUMI, Abdul Wahab al-ANSI]
Nasserite Unionist Party [Abdallah NU'MAN]
Yemeni Socialist Party or YSP [Dr. Abd al-Rahman Umar al-SAQQAF]

Note that the major political pressure group, the Houthis, gained political ascendancy from 2014-2015.

Suffrage:
18 years of age; universal

Principal Government Officials

Government of Yemen

Executive Branch:
Head of State:
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Houthi rebels now in control of the government. Hadi was the vice president since 1994 and served as acting leader since 2011. Hadi succeeded former President Field Marshal Ali Abdallah Saleh (from 1990 - 2011). As noted here, he resigned in Jan. 2015; however, Hadi remains the recognized leader of Yemen by vast swaths of the international community. As of 2016, he was resuming his presiential duties. Please see "Political Conditions" for details.

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-- as of 2016

Leader Biography

Leader Biography

Leadership of Yemen

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Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Muhammad Basindawa resigned from office. As September 2014 entered its final week, Abdel Malik al-Houthi -- the leader of the Houthis -- claimed that his fighters had now taken over control of Sanaa and declared that a "successful" Zaidi rebellion had been achieved. It appeared that the rhetorical use of the term "rebellion" was a reference to the fact that the Zaidis' package of prevailing demands had prevailed, and President Hadi had signed onto the deal discussed just above.

It should be noted that the Houthi Zaidis success (ie. "victory") in taking over Sanaa and forcing a political solution that would convey "kingmaker" powers to them was not likely to be a curious accident of fate. Several analysts suggested that former President Saleh and his supporters had cultivated a pragmatic alliance with the Houthis to help them achieve these ends, while sidelining President Hadi, who replaced him, and reminding the people of Yemen of the influence he still had over the military. While Saleh has dismissed these claims, there remained continuing reports supporting this theory.

In October 2014, Yemeni President Hadi appointed a new prime minister. But the Houthis soon made clear that they rejected the nomination of Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak -- a stalwart of President Hadi and the head of state's own office director. They accused the United States embassy of orchestrating the nomination and warned they would soon resume their revolutionary activities as a result. The Houthis' rejection of Mubarak thus returned Yemen to a state of political uncertainty and turmoil.

Later in that month, after Mubarak withdrew his name from consideration, President Hadi advanced a new candidate for the prime minister's office. The president's nomination of Khaled Bahah, a technocrat educated in India, appeared to be met with more approval from the Houthis. Indeed, Abdelmalek al-Ejri, a member of the Houthi political bureau, lauded the nomination of Bahah, saying, "We believe he is the right person. His appointment will help the country overcome the difficulties it is going through." Bahah, in fact, appeared to have the support of various factions in Yemen.

Bahah's first task would be to form a government, and then he would have to tap into his technocratic abilities to divide the country into six administrative regions with devolved powers that satisfied the competing stakeholders across the Yemeni landscape.

Note that at the start of November 2014, the main players in Yemen's political spectrum, including the Houthi rebels, signed an agreement mandating the formation of a new government under Prime Minister Bahah.

But even that apparent sign of progress was forestalled when the Houthis rejected the new power-sharing government due to disagreements over the choice of cabinet ministers. Adding to the political turbulence and turmoil was the fact that President Hadi's own political party, the General People's Congress, ousted him as the group's leader. The move appeared to be a signal that the party was loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was forced to step down due to Yemen's Arab Spring uprising a few years earlier. Together, the moves left Hadi politically isolated and impotent at the helm of a country quickly spiralling out of control.

By mid-November 2014, there was some stabilization of the political realm when the Houthis finally endorsed the new Yemeni government, regardless of their prevailing objections to some of incoming Prime Minister Badah's cabinet ministers. Then by the third week of December 2014, Prime Minister Bahah's cabinet won a vote of confidence in parliament.

But as December 2014 drew to a close, the inherent instability that had come to characterize the Yemeni scene rose to the surface once again when the Houthis evicted the director and deputy director of a state oil company from their offices. Already, they had sacked four provincial governors, the editor of the main state newspaper, al-Thawr and the commander of the special forces. These actions made clear that regardless of whom was sitting in the offices of the government, the Houthis were effectively running the state enterprise. Thus, newly-inaugurated Prime Minister Bahah warned that he and his cabinet were ready to resign from office due to his objections to the Houthis' non-constitutional moves to "administer the state."

On Jan. 19, 2015, Yemen's Houthi rebel movement (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs) were engaged in fierce gun battles with Yemeni armed forces close to the presidential palace in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. The fighting occurred just days after the Houthis abducted President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's chief of staff, Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak. Analysts speculated that the kidnapping was aimed at gaining leverage as the two sides argued over a proposed new constitution. Clearly, the political scene degenerated further as the fighting broke out outside the presidential palace. With reports emerging that Houthi fighters also opened fire on the convoy carrying Prime Minister Khaled Bahah, the Yemeni government was soon accusing the Houthis of carrying out a coup d'etat.

In the days following the fracas, there were intermittent reports of a peace deal, along with suggestions that President Hadi had assented to the demands of the Shi'a rebels, who were calling for greater powers in the process of crafting a new constitution. But on Jan. 22, 2015, the Houthi rebels had fought their way into the presidential palace, overpowered the presidential guards, and effectively imprisoned President Hadi in his own official residence. Yemen was thrown into a

deeper chaos when it was announced that President Hadi had resigned from office.

As of 2016, President Hadi was back at the helm and assuming his executive duties.

Please see "Political Conditions" for details about the political and security challenges facing Yemen.

Foreign Relations

General Relations

The geography and ruling imams of north Yemen kept the country isolated from foreign influence before 1962. The country's relations with Saudi Arabia were defined by the Taif Agreement of 1934, which delineated the northernmost part of the border between the two kingdoms and set the framework for commercial and other kinds of contact. The Taif Agreement has been renewed periodically in 20-year increments, and its validity was reaffirmed in 1995. Relations with the British colonial authorities in Aden and the south were usually tense.

Regional Relations

Yemen's border dispute with Saudi Arabia dates back 60 years. Over the years, fighting has erupted along this 1,300-mile frontier. Tensions arose once again in mid-July 1998 when an armed clash broke out on the Red Sea island of Duwaima, off the coast of Yemen. The fighting lasted for five hours until a cease-fire was negotiated. Each side has accused the other of initiating this latest conflict. On July 28, 1998, the two countries agreed to evacuate disputed areas until a solution to the border conflict could be found. Yemen has long disputed Saudi Arabia's claim to three Red Sea islands and parts of the "Rub al-Khali" (Empty Quarter), a desert region thought to contain valuable oil fields. In June 2000, a final land and sea border agreement granting Saudi sovereignty

over the disputed islands was signed, and effectively ended the conflict between the two countries.

The relationship between Oman and Yemen has been troublesome. Their common border has never been delineated, and border clashes occurred up until 1988. Yemen was believed to be a key refuge for rebels during an uprising against the Sultan of Oman in 1994, and the relationship between the two countries consequently soured. The two governments agreed to delineate the border in May 1999, but to date the border remains officially unsettled.

Yemen has recently been actively seeking improved relations with many countries in the Middle East. In a meeting in April 1999, Vice President Hadi met with then-Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan to discuss economic cooperation and their positions on the Middle East peace process. In May, President Saleh met with President Afwerki of Eritrea to discuss bilateral relations and the prospect of peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In February, Saleh had offered to mediate peace negotiations between the two countries. The offer was accepted by Eritrea, but turned down by Ethiopia. Also in May, Yemen reopened its embassy in Kuwait after it was closed in 1990 by Kuwaiti authorities after the government of Yemen denounced attacks by U.S. and allied forces against Iraq in the Gulf War.

Yemen has improved its relations with Iran, and in April 2000 Iran and Yemen signed three cooperation agreements in the fields of politics, air transportation and fisheries. In August 2000, Yemen and Qatar signed eight cooperation agreements.

Relations with European Countries

In July 2002, the Italian government relieved Yemen from $20 million worth of debts. The minister of interior said that Italy decided to single out this loan to Yemen so that the funds could be used toward the establishment of the Marine patrol police (MPP) meant to prevent the flow and infiltration of suspected terrorists to Yemen.

Then, in December 2002, Russia and Yemen signed an agreement to strengthen political cooperation and cooperation in trade and economic, military, oil and gas, and other areas.

Other Significant Relations

The United States (U.S.) established diplomatic relations with the imamate in 1946, and the United States was one of the first countries to recognize the Yemen Arab Republic, doing so on Dec. 19, 1962. On June 6, 1967, Y.A.R. under Egyptian influence, broke diplomatic relations with the United States in the wake of the Arab-Israeli conflict of that year. Relations were restored following a visit to Sanaa by U.S. Secretary of State William P. Rogers in July 1972.

During a 1979 border conflict between the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the United States cooperated with Saudi Arabia to greatly expand the security assistance program to the YAR by providing F-5 aircraft, tanks, vehicles and training. George Bush, while vice president, visited in April 1986, and President Ali Abdallah Saleh visited the United States in January 1990.
From 1973 to 1990, the United States provided the Y.A.R. with assistance in the agriculture, education, health, and water sectors. Many Yemenis were sent on U.S. government scholarships to study in the Middle East and in the United States. There was a Peace Corps program with about 50 volunteers. The U.S. Information Service operates an English-language institute in Sanaa.

Yemen expressed its opposition to U.S. and allied strikes on Iraq during the Gulf War and after.
Due to the Yemeni government's improvements and its anti-terrorist actions since the mid-1990s, the strategically located port of Aden was approved as suitable for occasional U.S. naval stopovers. Since early 1998, limited military to military contact has taken place the between Yemeni and American governments. The signing of a contract between the two governments allows American military crafts to use Yemeni shipping lanes while patrolling the Persian Gulf to oversee U.N. sanctions against Iraq. It was under this agreement the USS Cole docked in Aden on Oct. 12, 2000. However, the relationship between the two countries has been strained after the USS Cole attack. The Yemeni government's attitude has been characterized as "obstructionist," and an agreement on the coordination of the investigation between the two governments was only reached in mid-November 2000. The trial of the suspects was scheduled to be held in Yemen.

By January 2002, Yemen was still holding several people in relation to the USS Cole attack, but Yemeni officials said that their trial had been postponed following a request from the U.S. that the investigation be widened further. U.S. military advisers were sent to Yemen after the September 11 attacks to help combat the alleged presence of Al-Qaida members in remote areas of the country. As part of a crackdown on terror and suspected al-Qaida members, Yemen started to expel in early February 2002 more than 100 foreign Islamic scholars, including British and French nationals. Five of 17 men named in a US Federal Bureau of Investigation terrorism alert were being held in Yemen in mid-February 2002. The five are all Yemeni nationals said to have been trained in Afghanistan.

At the time, the Yemeni Government said there may be other Al-Qaida suspects in the country, but also said the network has no military training camps or organized presence. They were already in custody when the U.S. released a list of suspects earlier in the week, Yemeni officials said, having been arrested at the end of 2001 or in early 2002.

On March 15, 2002, an explosion occurred outside the U.S. embassy in the Yemeni capital Sanaa - a day after U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney visited the country. There were no injuries and no damage was done. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said two objects had been thrown, which appeared to bounce off the embassy walls and then explode. One man was taken

into custody; police officials at the scene said security guards fired at the man, who was believed to have been wounded.

Security in Yemen had already been a major concern for the U.S. since a boat packed with explosives had rammed the USS Cole in October 2000. The incident came a day after a brief visit to Yemen by the U.S. vice president, who was halfway through an 11-country tour of the Middle East. His talks with President Ali Abdullah Saleh focused on co-operation against terrorism. It was the highest-level visit by a U.S. official in 15 years. Earlier in the week, Americans in Yemen were warned that they were in danger of being targeted by terrorists.

Then, in April 2002, Yemeni police fired live shots in the air and used tear gas to stop thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters reaching the U.S. embassy in the capital, Sanaa, in protest of U.S. and Israeli actions. Witnesses said at least four people were injured when police broke up the rally of an estimated 5,000 demonstrators demanding the closure of the embassy. Please see the "Political Conditions" section of this review for more in relations with the United States.
Meanwhile, scores of Yemenis are believed to have joined Al-Qaida - the organization blamed for the September 11 attacks on the United States. But the authorities in Yemen are keen to get rid of their reputation as a safe haven for terrorists. They have intensified military patrols in the Marib area, east of Sanaa, in the hunt for Al-Qaida suspects.

As part of its allegiance with the U.S.-led global fight against terrorism, Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh in August 2002 ordered the formation of an anti-terror intelligence agency. The purpose of the agency was to collect information linked to the country's security with a key task to thwart "infiltration by hostile elements." The United States had previously offered to help train military personnel for Yemen in coordination with its global anti-terror strategy.

By October 2002, Yemeni officials said they had deported thousands of foreigners who were studying at Islamic religious institutions scattered throughout the country since the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the U.S. Other students that were found to have links to al Qaida were arrested.

Tragedy struck on Oct. 6, 2002, when an explosion on a French tanker occurred off the coast of Yemen. A small boat carrying explosives crashed into the Limburg tanker, killing one crew member, wounding 24 others, and sending more than 90,000 barrels of oil pouring into the Gulf of Aden. At first, Yemeni officials were declaring the explosion to be an accident. However, ten days later, Yemeni authorities publicly declared that the blast was a deliberate act of terrorism. Both French and Yemeni officials investigated the matter but were unable to identify those responsible. No group claimed culpability. The style of the attack resembled the suicide bombing of the U.S. warship Cole in Yemen's Aden port in 2000, according to observers.

In early November 2002, threats of an attack forced the closure of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, following U.S. involvement in the killing of six Yemeni Muslim militants suspected of having links

with Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network. The embassy re-opened four days later with beefed up security. after being closed for four days following a U.S. military strike which killed six Al Qaeda suspects in the country.

By late December 2002, the United States and Yemen had announced a plan to protect a number of oil positions in the Arab country and to carry out new operations against suspected al Qaida members. Yemeni forces were reportedly being trained on new techniques to consolidate cooperation with the United States.

Meanwhile at year's end, three American missionaries were shot fatally in the head by an alleged Muslim extremist. Another missionary suffered a gunshot wound to the stomach. The attack was condemned by U.S.-based Muslim advocacy groups and individuals as well as by Britain. The killer, a Yemeni gunman identified as 32-year-old Ali Abdulrazzak al-Kamel, told police after his arrest that he had shot the three Americans to "cleanse his religion and get closer to Allah."

In early March 2003, two Yemeni citizens being held in Germany were charged in the United States with conspiring to provide support to terrorist groups. And, in mid-March, three people, including a U.S. and a Canadian oil-field worker, were killed by a Yemeni gunman who killed himself after shooting several co-workers.

The incident that occurred in a field drilled by the American-owned Nabors company for Hunt Oil of Dallas. The gunman was identified as Naji Ahmad al-Kumain, who was also employed at the field. Although anti-American sentiment is strong in Yemen and other Arab countries over U.S. policies, including Israel and Iraq, local observers did not rule out that the killings might have been motivated by personal reasons connected with work.

The United Kingdom announced in late February 2003 its plans to shut its embassy in Yemen in the face of increased fears over security. British citizens were advised to leave the Arab state, which the United Kingdom believed to contain a number of Islamic terrorists. The diplomatic missions in the country had been kept open in order to provide assistance to those from the United Kingdom who remained in Yemen.

Update --

On Dec. 17, 2009, Yemeni authorities said that 34 al-Qaida operatives had been killed in ground and air strikes. Later, it was reported that an al-Qaida leader and a Muslim preacher (Anwar al-Awlaki) who was linked to the attack by United States intelligence at an army base in Texas were among those militants killed.* The Yemeni government hailed these developments as a major victory in the ongoing fight against terrorism. Critics, however, have said that Yemeni troops have been occupied fighting a Shi'a rebellion in the north of the country, and a secessionist movement to the south, effectively curtailing more dogged efforts to fight the terrorist threat posed by al-

Qaida in Yemen. Accordingly, the success in this operation was thought to have been at least partially due to efforts of either the Saudis or the United States. Indeed, both countries have been pressuring Yemen to carry out a crackdown on al-Qaida, which is reported to be operating within Osama Bin Laden's ancestral homeland. To that end, intelligence sources from the United States and other places have been issuing warnings that al-Qaida was moving some of its field commanders and operatives from the Afghan-Pak region to Yemen and Somalia.

*It should be noted that reports of Awlaki's death were subsequently proved to be untrue.

Special Report

Summary:

Yemen's al-Qaida connection has become the focus of geopolitical anxiety in the aftermath of an attempted bombing of a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day. A Nigerian national charged with attempting to bomb the aircraft said he received explosives and training from al-Qaida in Yemen. Fears of terrorist attacks emanating from that country have led to increased anti-terrorism support for Yemen.

The Foiled Attack:

On Dec. 25, 2009, a Nigerian national on a flight from Amsterdam in the Netherlands to Detroit in the United States attempted to carry out a bomb attack. The Christmas Day incident occurred when Northwest Airlines Flight 253, carrying 278 passengers and 11 crew, was less than half an hour from arriving at its destination.

The incident ensued when the suspect, identified as 23-year old Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, tried to ignite an incendiary device, and burnt his leg in so doing. No one else was hurt in what United States officials described as a failed terrorist attack. Passengers on the aircraft described a scene of panic in the cabin after they detected smoke and flames. There were some suggestions that the attempted bomb attack was thwarted when one passenger, Dutch tourist Jasper Schuringa, jumped across several rows of seats to tackle the suspect, and other passengers then helped to fully subdue him. Water, blankets and a fire extinguisher were used to put out the fire. A report by the Associated Press noted that the lives of the passengers and crew about Flight 253 were actually saved because the explosive device failed to detonate due to an apparent malfunction. Nonetheless, Schuringa was hailed as a hero for his quick reaction to the unfolding crisis aboard the flight.

The aircraft was soon cleared for emergency landing at Detroit Metropolitan Airport where Abdulmutallab was taken into official custody and treated for the aforementioned burns at the

University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor. While there, United States District Judge Paul Borman officially charged Abdulmutallab with placing a destructive device on an aircraft, and attempting to destroy a passenger jet by detonating a bomb. According to the Associated Press, Abdulmutallab was asked in English if he understood the charges being brought against him and responded, "Yes, I do." Abdulmutallab's lawyer later said he had been transferred to a federal prison in Milan, Michigan.

Abdulmutallab reportedly told United States authorities that he was acting on behalf of the notorious terrorist enclave, al-Qaida. Indeed, ABC news reported that Abdulmutallab told authorities that he spent one month being trained by al-Qaida in Yemen. Abdulmutallab also apparently explained that he acquired the explosive powder from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, which he attached to his leg and mixed in a concoction with liquid chemicals, with the intent of causing an explosion. Subsequent media reports indicated that the highly explosive substance was pentaerythritol (PETN) -- the same substance used by the failed show bomber, Richard Reid, exactly eight years earlier in December 2001, when he attempted to bring down a flight from France to the United States. CNN reported that the amount of PETN in this 2009 case was certainly enough to destroy the aircraft, presumably killing all those on board.

Counter-terrorism authorities in the Netherlands confirmed that Abdulmutallab first boarded a KLM flight in Lagos, Nigeria, bound for Amsterdam. It was not known at the time of writing if Abdulmutallab had the explosives attached to his body when his originating flight departed from Nigeria at the very start of the journey. In fact, the logistical details were complicated by the revelation that Abdulmutallab actually flew from Ghana to Nigeria on a one-way ticket.
Nevertheless, once Abdulmutallab arrived in the Netherlands, he transferred to the Northwest flight headed to the United States. According to the Justice Department in the United States, Abdulmutallab at that point had "a device attached to his body" when he boarded the flight in Amsterdam bound for Detroit. He presumably was allowed to board that flight because he had a valid United States visa.

There were serious questions being raised regarding the ease with which the transportation of explosives was able to elude detection. It was possible that security conditions in Nigeria helped in this regard. That is to say, the Lagos airport has long held the dubious distinction of being one of the least efficient travel centers in the world, where lax security runs rampant, largely as a result of widespread corruption. On the other hand, later evidence showing the explosives had been carried in a specially-made pouch within the alleged bombers undergarments would suggest that detection would be almost impossible using a regular magnetometers, and would require more intrusive body scanning techniques.

Accordingly, security at airports worldwide was expected to increase. For his part, United States President Barack Obama ordered that air travel be subject to heightened security measures. Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration in the United States warned

that additional screening procedures would be implemented, however, they declined to specify particulars, suggesting that the intent was to preserve the element of surprise for obvious security reasons. Certain international aircraft carriers, though, such as Air Canada and British Airways, noted on their websites that passengers on international flights would be subject to much more intense security, and would be prevented from accessing carry-on luggage or getting up from their seats at certain points during flights. Delays, particularly on trans-Atlantic flights, were being anticipated.

White House spokesperson Robert Gibbs announced that a review of air safety was underway. On one front, there would be an investigation into the systems in place for detecting explosives before passengers board flights. On another front, there would be an examination of the terrorist identification protocols, in light of the revelation that Abdulmutallab was already listed in a broad terrorist database and yet allowed to board a flight. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano explained in an interview with CNN that despite the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father had warned the United States' embassy in Nigeria that his son might have jihadist inclinations, it was not sufficient actionable information to have moved him to the terrorism "no fly" list. The actual criteria for inclusion in these various databases -- some overseen by the Director of National Intelligence and some by the Federal Bureau of Investigation -- was not made known to the public.

Nevertheless, the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father -- a well-known Nigerian banker -- had gone to such lengths to notify United States officials of his suspicions, along with revelations that Abdulmutallab had purchased a ticket from Ghana using cash and was carrying only one carry-on piece of luggage, were matters expected to be subjects of grave critique in the coming weeks. Typically, such actions would be flagged as suspicious and indicative of a possible terrorist threat and so Secretary Napolitano's assurances that flying was still "very, very safe" were unlikely to go unchallenged. However, despite the perception of breaches in the air transport security system, preliminary examinations in the Netherlands -- where Flight 253 originated -- found that existing security procedures were correctly followed. The obvious conclusion, therefore, has been that current security technology does not facilitate the easy detection of explosive devices and substances. Indeed, as indicated above, most passengers in airports have to pass through only magnetometers, which detect metal and not explosives. Accordingly, there was likely to be intensified focus in the future on equipping airports with "puffer" machines that detect explosive powder residue, manual hand swabs to the same end, bomb-sniffing dogs, as well as body scanners.

Meanwhile, attention was on Abdulmutallab himself, who was born into a life of relative privilege. He once studied engineering at a prestigious school in the United Kingdom, but his Islamic views had caught the attention of his own family, including his father, Alhaji Umaru Mutallab. Indeed, media reports suggested that he was estranged from his family, actually losing touch with them in the months he may have been living in Yemen. The official Saba News Agency in Yemen

subsequently reported that Abdulmutallab had, in fact, been living in that country from August 2009 to the start of December 2009 while he attended the Sanaa Institute for the Arabic Language (SIAL). Nigerian authorities suggested that Abdulmutallab used surreptitious means to re-enter Nigeria before departing on the trip that would span three continents.

Yemen and al-Qaida:

The United States government has been reticent about drawing conclusions about a global terrorist plot in this case. Nevertheless, this attempt to carry out an in-flight bombing on Christmas Day appeared to be in keeping with al-Qaida's latest terrorist directives. The NEFA Foundation published an October 2009 al-Qaida article calling for operatives to use "small explosives" to kill "apostates" and Westerners at airports and in aircrafts. Moreover, Abdulmutallab -- the man at the center of the Christmas Day attempted terror attack -- has expressly conjured up al-Qaida in his interrogations with authorities. Finally, a Yemen-based branch of the network removed some prevailing doubts about the orchestration of the failed terrorist attack by claiming responsibility.

It should be noted that al-Qaida was not the only meaningful reference point offered by Abdulmutallab to the authorities during initial interrogations. Also of significance was his mentioning of Yemen as being the place he garnered the PETN, as well as the venue of his Islamic militant training. Yemen -- the ancestral home of Osama Bin Laden -- is strategically located at the end of the Arabian peninsula and stretches from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. It is also located in close proximity to another emerging al-Qaida haven -- Somalia. Accordingly, Yemen has increasingly factored into the discussions of global terrorism.

Al-Qaida's satellite base in Yemen may be attempting to gain ascendancy at a time when global attention is on the Afghan-Pak region. To this end, Anwar Eshki, the head of the Middle East Center for Strategic and Legal Studies, has argued that al-Qaida in Yemen "is stronger than it was a year ago" and intent on turning that country into a major base of operations against the West. Part of that strength may be derived from the fact that Saudi and Yemeni elements of al-Qaida have joined forces to form the merged entity, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The Saudi authorities, who have carried out a crackdown on its elements, have suggested that many Saudi operatives have fled to Yemen. The Saudi authorities have sometimes accused Yemen of not doing enough to round up its own bastions of extremism.

In the aftermath of the failed terror plot aboard the airliner discussed above, the government of Yemen indicated that while it had the will to deal with al-Qaida, it was hampered by a lack of support. Nonetheless, the Yemeni authorities insisted that they have been working with regional and Western powers to crush militancy within its borders, noting that such action was in the country's own best interests since Islamic extremists pose a grave national security threat. It should also be noted that in the latter part of 2009, faced with the threat that Yemen was becoming a stronghold for Islamic extremists, United States intelligence was credited with helping Yemeni forces carry out military offensives against major al-Qaida bases in that country, much to the

consternation of al-Qaida itself. But the Yemeni authorities have to contend with not only the al-Qaida threat, but also a secessionist movement in the south and a Shi'a Zaidi rebellion in the north. This complex political terrain has left large isolated swaths of land vulnerable for use by extremists of many stripes in Yemen.

Meanwhile, Evan Kohlmann, a senior investigator for the NEFA Foundation, warned that rivalry among al-Qaida's branches could be a driving force behind the uptick in Yemen-based al-Qaida activities. He said, "There's now a competition in the world of al-Qaida between various al-Qaida factions, with each trying to prove themselves and prove their worth." There could therefore be an attempt by Yemen-based al-Qaida to distinguish itself as an active base of anti-Western and Jihadist militancy.

This threat was amplified when, a week after the aforementioned attempted terrorist attack, the Yemeni authorities warned that hundreds of al-Qaida operatives were present in Yemen and could be plotting further terrorist attacks. This claim appeared to coincide with warnings made by Abdulmutallab -- the man behind the attempted Christmas Day attack -- who said that there were other al-Qaida operatives who stood ready to strike with fresh attacks.

Some of those al-Qaida operatives could well be among the hundreds already present in Yemen, as noted by the Yemeni authorities. But Yemen's location close to Somalia might also be a factor. The militant extremist Islamist group, al-Shabab, which has held sway in portions of Somalia, has warned it would send its fighters to assist fellow Islamic militants in Yemen. Sheikh Mukhtar Robow Abu Mansour of al-Shabab reportedly said: "We tell our Muslim brothers in Yemen that we will cross the water between us and reach your place to assist you fight the enemy of Allah."

With attention now focused on the Islamic extremist threat emanating from Yemen, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for a summit to be convened in London at the end of January 2010 simultaneously with a pre-scheduled conference on the future of Afghanistan. The objective of the summit on Yemen would be identify Yemen's counter-terrorism requirements and to determine ways of dealing with the thrust towards extremism via aid and reform. Prime Minister Brown also urged all key international partners to be involved in this endeavor saying, "The international community must not deny Yemen the support it needs to tackle extremism." He also announced that the United Kingdom would commit 100 million British pounds and intelligence support to Yemen -- the most significant outlay by any global power to that Middle eastern country.

Meanwhile, General David Petraeus, head of United States military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia, visited the president of Yemen, Ali Abdallah Saleh, to pledge American support in the fight against al-Qaida. One day earlier, Petraeus announced that the United States would double its counter-terrorism aid to Yemen in 2010.

Across the globe, clearly there was increasing anxiety about Yemen becoming a failed state -- the very environment within which violent extremist groups often find safe haven. To that end, Mark

Pritchard, a British parliamentarian and the vice chairman of the Parliamentary Yemen Group, said: "If Yemen does become a failed State it will provide a safe haven for terrorists with close proximity to important shipping routes and neighboring oil-producing Saudi Arabia. The stakes for the region and the West are very high indeed."

For its part, the government of Yemen appeared to give tacit sanction for greater assistance from the Western powers with the Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi saying in an interview with the BBC, "We need more training. We have to expand our counter terrorism units and this means providing them with the necessary training, military equipment, ways of transportation - we are very short of helicopters. The United States can do a lot, Britain can do a lot, the European Union can do a lot in that regard."

Such help would be of paramount importance given the reports in the early days of 2010 that al-Qaida was planning an attack on the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. In an interview with ABC News, John Brennan, the top counter-terrorism adviser to United States President Obama, said, "We know that they [al-Qaida operatives] have been targeting our embassy, our embassy personnel." Because of this threat, Brennan announced that the United States was temporarily closing its embassy in Sanaa. The British and French governments reportedly moved to do the same. Brennan's claims were consistent with a call from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula encouraging Muslims to assist in "killing every crusader who works at their embassies or other places."

Latest Developments:

On Jan. 5, 2010, it was reported that Yemeni security forces killed several suspected al-Qaida militants as part of its ongoing effort to crush al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. According to reports, the Yemeni forces ambushed a cadre of militants in the Arhab district -- about 40 miles north of the Yemeni capital -- effectively igniting a violent clash with the militants, ultimately yielding the aforementioned deaths.

But even as this offensive operation was taking place, the Yemeni president was signaling that it was interested in engaging with al-Qaida in an effort to end the violence in his country. President Ali Abdullah Saleh suggested he would grant leniency to members of al-Qaida who were willing to enter talks with his government and renounce violence. In an interview that was broadcast on Abu Dhabi TV, he said: "Dialogue is the best way ... even with al-Qaida, if they set aside their weapons and return to reason." The move was essentially an extension of the Yemeni president's previous stance in dealing with al-Qaida. Accordingly, it was expected to be met with grave disapproval from Western powers who have viewed it as a failed strategy, given the terrorist threat emanating from Yemen.

Yemen is the base of both foreign and local al-Qaida fighters. The local fighters are often aided by relatives, typically as a result of tribal loyalty more than ideology. However, when these fighters are killed or arrested by government forces, these heavily-armed tribes often are emotionally driven

to increase support of the militants. Meanwhile, Yemen has also been home to thousands of Islamic militants who are veterans of several "holy wars" in other countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. While most of these Islamic militant veterans are no longer active, they nonetheless maintain their extremist views in keeping with al-Qaida ideology. As noted by Ali Saif Hassan, the manager of a Yemeni group that mediates between the government and opposition: "It is difficult to draw the line between who is a fundamentalist and who is al-Qaida. It's a spectrum." As constituents of the country, these elements form part of the broader anti-American and anti-Western base of the country, over which President Saleh has only fragile control.

It is this matter of fragile control that informs President Saleh's stance. With a rebellion in the north, a secessionist movement in the south, extremists in other parts of the country, and actual control over only Sanaa, Yemeni President Saleh has moved cautiously in the fight against al-Qaida. This wary and cagey positioning has been largely due to President Saleh's concern that working closely with the United States and the West on anti-terrorism efforts could spark a backlash.

In fact, the Yemeni leader has to walk a political tightrope of sorts. He has had to crack down on the rebels, secessionists and militants in order to maintain national security, while simultaneously demonstrating anti-terrorism efforts for geopolitical reasons. Yet, in so doing, President Saleh cannot afford to alienate significant elements of Yemeni society. To this end, he must demonstrate the precise amount of cooperation with the Western powers to assuage them, while currying favor with the extremist elements of his own country. In many senses, it has been the same challenge facing other leaders in the region who must contend with a volatile population base while attending to the geopolitical and national security threats posed by militant Islamic terrorism.

The other territorial battles in Yemen have also factored into the country's complex landscape and challenging security situation. In January 2010, Yemeni security forces entered into the sixth month of conflict with Shi'ite rebels in the northern part of the country. This was part of the government's ongoing "Operation Scorched Earth" offensive aimed at ending the Houthi rebellion. The situation in the north has intersected to some degree with the increasing global attention on Yemen as an emerging base of al-Qaida extremist militants. The government of Yemen has had to balance fighting terrorism and rebellion with appeasing extremist elements of the society, amidst a country with rebels in the north and secessionists in the south. To satisfy these contradictory objectives, the Yemeni government has at times aligned itself with controversial Islamists. Among them has been Sheik Abdul-Majid al-Zindan whom the United States has classified as a terrorist due to his alleged connection to al-Qaida, and who has gained notoriety for his anti-Western rhetoric. But the Yemeni government has relied on its alliance with cleric like al-Zindani in the fight against the Shi'ite rebels in the north, to oppose the secessionists in the south, and to hold onto its tenuous grip on power.

Cast along the complicated landscape has been the growing international call for the government to take a harder stance against al-Qaida, and the reality that such a move could ignite a fierce and

deleterious repercussions from the Islamic fundamentalist and tribal factions of Yemeni society. Indeed, as noted by Ali Mohammed Omar, a Yemeni who, according to a report by the Associated Press, fought in Afghanistan in the early 1990s and met Osama Bin Laden: "Any movement against al-Qaida will lead to the fall of the Yemeni regime." He went on to note that if the United States or its allies were to become too directly involved in Yemen, "the whole (Yemeni) people will become al-Qaida. Instead of 30 or 40 people, it would become millions."

Clearly aware of this potentiality, while the United States and the United Kingdom have increased support for anti-terrorism efforts in Yemen in the form of increased funding and training for counter-terrorism forces (noted above), there is no indication of an overt military presence in that country. In fact, in an interview with People magazine, United States President Obama made clear that he had no intention of deploying American troops to Yemen (or Somalia), despite the nations' growing importance as emerging centers of terrorism on the global landscape. To this end, President Obama said: "I have no intention of sending U.S. boots on the ground in these regions." Instead, he suggested that working with international partners on the situation in Yemen would be the best course. President Obama also emphasized that the main center of al-Qaida activity was still in the Afghan-Pak region.

The president's sentiment was reflected in statements by General David Petraeus, who has been directing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In an interview with Christiane Amanpour on CNN, he said of the Yemeni government that it was "quite clear that Yemen does not want to have American ground troops there. And that's a ... good response for us to hear, certainly." He continued, "We would always want a host nation to deal with a problem itself. We want to help. We're providing assistance." Echoing what was clearly the Obama administration's position on the matter, Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an interview with Fareed Zakaria on CNN, "Right now, as far as any kind of boots on the ground there, with respect to the United States, ... that's not a possibility."

In late January 2010, the Obama administration in the United States said that in addition to expanding military support to Yemen in the fight against al-Qaida, it would also bolster its economic assistance program in that country, with an eye on decreasing the influence of Islamist extremists. In this way, the United States Pentagon would provide increased military cooperation, training and counter-terrorism forces, while the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development would work on preparing a development plan that targeting tribal youth who are particularly vulnerable recruits to al-Qaida.

Another Foiled Attack with Connections to Yemen:

In late October 2010, bombs were found hidden in cargo planes originating in Yemen and bound for Jewish synagogues in the city of Chicago in the United States. The devices containing

pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) and plastic explosives mixed with lead azide (used to detonate explosives) were inserted into printer cartridges and mailed via cargo shipment from Yemen.

In one case, a printer was found on a cargo plane in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates equipped with a circuit board linked to a mobile phone card. In another case, a explosive device was intercepted at the East Midlands Airport in the United Kingdom only after an initial search yielded no results. Authorities in the United Kingdom were then told that the explosives found in Dubai had been hidden in the printer, thus a more thorough secondary search, this time with positive results.

British Prime Minister David Cameron issued the disturbing news that the explosive device was designed to be detonated on the aircraft, although it was not known when it was intended to explode. In practical terms, this meant that it was unknown as to whether the bombs could be detonated remotely whileairliners were in flight, or, when the packages were opened at their destinations in the United States. John Brennan, counter-terrorism adviser to United States President Barack Obama, warned that the bombs were "sophisticated" and "self-contained" devices, intended to be detonated by the terrorists according to their chosen schedules. Given the use of the particular explosives within the printer cartridges, it would have been difficult for any bomb-sniffing dogs or x-ray machines to discover them.

Both discoveries were made thanks to intelligence passed on from Saudi Arabian authorities as well as a British M16 agent working in Yemen. The Saudi-based intelligence was linked to a tip received from a repentant al-Qaida member, Jabr al-Faifi, once held at Guantanamo Bay. Blame was quickly placed on al-Qaida in Yemen, which has been known to attempt bomb attacks using PETN. Attention was also focused on a well-known al-Qaida explosives expert, Ibrahim Hassan al-Asiri, who was believed to be the bomb maker from Saudi Arabia now living in Yemen.

In that country, now regarded as an emerging base of radical jihadist Islamists such as al-Qaida, a female student was arrested in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa on suspicion of dispatching the explosives-laden packages. The woman's location was traced via the telephone number she furnished to the cargo company. Given the threat, local offices of the cargo firms, UPS and FedEx, shut down freight operations in Yemen, while several countries placed a halt on cargo transported from Yemen. Yemeni officials were additionally on the hunt for additional suspects believed to be involved in procuring forged documents and identification cards. Also under suspicion were two language institutions in Yemen believed to be linked with the orchestrator of the mail bomb plot.

Meanwhile, cargo airliners were not the only ones involved in what appeared to be thwarted terror attacks. News reports indicated that at least one of the packages containing a bomb traveled on passenger flights. To that end, one package was transported on a Qatar Airlines flight from Yemen to Qatar, and then transferred to another Qatar Airlines flight onto Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. This revelation raised questions about the safety of global travel, given the

transportation of cargo in civilian airliners.

Under fire for yet another terrorist attempt emanating from his country, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh said that his country would keep up its fight against al-Qaida "in co-operation with its partners." However, the Yemeni leader intimated that his country would balk at the notion of intervention by foreign powers saying, "But we do not want anyone to interfere in Yemeni affairs by hunting down al-Qaeda."

It was yet to be seen how foreign powers would respond to this call since in December 2009, a Nigerian national tried to detonate explosives on a flight destined for the American city of Detroit. That plot was thwarted by a vigilant passenger on the same flight but the plot was traced back to al-Qaida in Yemen. (See above for more details related to that attempted act of terrorism.)

For its part, the Obama administration in the United States was making it clear that it wanted to assist President Saleh in the fight against al-Qaida. Indeed, the United States government was sending inspectors to Yemen to investigate cargo security practices, given the ostensible assumption that further bombs could be transported in the same way as the two currently at issue. The United States was also reiterating its commitment to destroying the terror enclave, al-Qaida.

Special Report

Wikileaks Revelations --

The notorious website, Wikileaks, in the fall of 2010 published hundreds of thousands of secret United States documents dealing with the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its aftermath. Earlier, Wikileaks published tens of thousands of secret documents dealing with the war in Afghanistan. The United States military analyst responsible for originally leaking the documents was himself awaiting trial for charges related to the illegal release of the materials. As well, the director of Wikileaks, Julian Assange, was wanted by the Swedish authorities in connections with rape allegations. These two legal cases aside, at the close of 2010, further secret documents were being revealed, this time with possible implications for sensitive diplomatic relations around the world. Some of the key leaks revealed in secret cable correspondence included the following with regard to Yemen--

As published by the Guardian, secret dispatches dated September 2009 revealed far more involved United States military involvement in Yemen than had been previously believed, largely a result of United States fears that Yemen was becoming a haven for al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The cables suggested that Yemen allowed the United States to carry out secret air strikes against suspected al-Qaida terrorists, while Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh claimed that the strikes were being carried out by Yemen's military as part of its own anti-militancy offensive. Following a

second strike in 2009, President Saleh told General David Petraeus, the head of United States Central Command at the time, "We'll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours." A December 2009 dispatch had United States Stephen Seche rAmabssador explaining that "Yemen insisted it must maintain the status quo regarding the official denial of U.S. involvement." Seche also noted that Saleh supported continued operations until the threat of militant Islamic terrorism emanating from Yemen was fully eradicated.

Special Report

Drone strike kills al-Qaida in Yemen terrorist orchestrator, U.S.-born al-Alwaki.

At the close of September 2011, it was reported in the international media that a United States drone strike had killed Anwar al-Alwaki -- a United States-born terrorist orchestrator and propaganda communicator for al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The Yemeni Defense Ministry confirmed the deaths of Alwaki and a number of his associates in the Yemeni province of Jawf.

As an English-speaking United States citizen, Alwaki used his command of language and biculturalism, along with modern media, to reach out to young Muslims in across the world with the objective of radicalizing them and urging them to turn to terrorism. He was also believed to have been responsible for orchestrating a number of attempted attacks, including the recruitment of infamous Nigerian "underwear" bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried but failed to blow up a United States-bound airliner on Christmas Day in 2009. Alwaki was also blamed for inspiring United States Major Nidal Malik Hasan to carry out a 2009 attack on an army base in Texas that left more that a dozen people dead. He was additionally linked with the failed bombing in New York's Times Square in 2010.

United States President Barack Obama hailed the death of Awlaki in Yemen as a "major blow" to the terror enslave, al-Qaida. President Obama said that the AQAP figure was instrumental in the "planning and directing efforts to murder innocent Americans" and was "directly responsible for the death of many Yemeni citizens." President Obama also used the occasion to emphasize the United States' commitment to fighting terrorism. He said, "This is further proof that al-Qaida and its affiliates will find no safe haven anywhere in the world."

At home in the United States, there were some challenges to the legitimacy of eliminating a United States citizen without a trial. That being said, the United States government could well argue that it was operating within legal bounds by targeting an enemy of the state, and a leader of a terror enclave that had declared war on the United States.

Update on the threat of al-Qaida and terrorism from Yemen:

In a separate but related development on April 15, 2012, joint United States-Yemen air raids on al-Qaida hideouts in Abyan province eliminated at least 16 militants. Air strikes were also launched on al-Qaida targets in neighboring province of Shabwa, ultimately disposing of about eight militants. As has been the case in the past, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula denied that any of its fighters died in the air raids.

Regardless of the actual casualty list, it was clear that the resurgent al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula was taking advantage of the year-long political conflict that has plagued Yemen, ultimately leading to the resignation of long-serving Marshal Ali Abdallah Saleh in late 2011 and the election of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in early 2012. Despite the installation of new leadership in Yemen, it was apparent that the fight against al-Qaida terrorists was continuing in Yemen, and that al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula -- locally known as Ansar al-Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law) -- remained a threat to regional stability. Indeed, the terror enclave has recently taken control of significant swaths of territory in Yemen's restive southern provinces, leading newly -elected President Hadi to assert that the fight against al-Qaida is at the forefront of his political agenda on a daily basis.

On April 18, 2012, the terror enclave, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a Saudi diplomat in Yemen, which apparently ensued a month prior. In an interview with Voice of America, a spokesperson for the government of Saudi Arabia said the terrorist group threatened to kill the diplomat if Saudi authorities refused to release jailed militants and pay a ransom. The Saudi government said the demands were made over the telephone by a terror suspect known as Mashaal Rasheed al-Shawdakhi. Further attacks were also threatened against Saudi interests during the call.

A day later on April 19, 2012, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said it wanted to actively target threats emanating from al-Qaida in Yemen. CIA Director David Petraeus was calling for authority to conduct "signature strikes" against al-Qaida targets in Yemen, according to a report by the Washington Post. At issue was a desire to move forward with surgical strikes against those who might "have a direct interest" in attacking the United States. Such action would be of the type that resulted in the CIA drone strike in 2011 that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. Since the election of Abdu Rabo Mansour Hadi as president of Yemen, activity by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula has increased, presumably due to a desire by the terror enclave the test the new leadership of the country. To that end, Yemeni authorities have warned that an attack on the country's capital could be in the offing. With such threats pending, there has been a desire by both the new leadership of Yemen, as well as the United States, to neutralize the group as much as possible.

On May 6, 2012, an al-Qaida leader linked with the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole died in an air strike in Yemen. The al-Qaida militant was apparently killed as a result of missiles fired from a

drone. The details of the death of Fahd al-Quso were confirmed by tribal leaders in Yemen, the embassy of Yemen in the United States, as well as al-Qaida. United States officials expressed satisfaction over the elimination of Fahd al-Quso, noting that the man was a "senior terrorist operative" who was planning further attacks against the United States and Yemen. More than a dozen years ago, al-Qaida militants used a boat laden with explosives to attack the United States warship in the Yemeni port of Aden.

On May 7, 2012, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said that it foiled a new "underwear bomb plot" by al-Qaida in Yemen. According to United States authorities, an upgraded version of the failed 2009 "underwear bomb" was disrupted and the improvised explosives device (IED) was now in the hands of United States intelligence officials. The bomb plot did not reach the advanced planning stages -- such as selection of a target and the purchase of airplane tickets -- and, accordingly, did not pose a direct threat to the public. That being said, the very development of the IED was a clear indication of the intent to carry out a terrorist attack.

A statement released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation read as follows: "As a result of close co-operation with our security and intelligence partners overseas, an improvised explosive device (IED) designed to carry out a terrorist attack has been seized abroad. Initial exploitation indicates that the device is very similar to IEDs that have been used previously by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in attempted terrorist attacks, including against aircraft and for targeted assassinations."

It was soon disclosed that the foiling of the plot involved a double agent who infiltrated an al-Qaida terror cell, volunteered for the suicide mission, but who then delivered the IED to joint United States and international authorities. The double agent -- a British national of Saudi background -- supplied crucial intelligence information to United States and other foreign intelligence agencies, which allowed the CIA to successfully direct a recent drone strike in Yemen that killed Fahd al-Quso -- a senior figure in al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Al-Quso was linked with the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen.

Meanwhile, with the IED in the hands of the CIA, it could now undergo technical and forensic analysis. Of concern was the degree of technological advancement garnered by al-Qaida terrorists as they attempt to evade conventional airport security measures, such as metal detectors and body scans. The "custom fit" device was reportedly difficult to detect in current airport security checks, and is believed to be the work of master bomb-maker and member of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula -- Ibrahim Hassan Tali al-Asiri.

Overall, the operation was an extraordinary intelligence coup for joint United States, British, and Saudi authorities. The identity of the double agent/informant has not been disclosed although, according to the New York Times, the British national was recruited by United Kingdom intelligence and has been functioning under the aegis of Saudi intelligence service, and in close cooperation with the CIA for several years.

Update

On Sept. 11, 2012, protests erupted in the Egyptian capital city of Cairo with the United States embassy being the main target. The unrest was sparked by a film of amateur quality, which was produced by a United States citizen, and which some Muslims have determined to be insulting to the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. The protests soon spread to embassies of Western countries located in various other Muslim countries including Lebanon, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Sudan, Nigeria, as well as the Palestinian territory of Gaza, while unrest persisted in Egypt and Yemen. German and British embassies were attacked in Tunisia and Sudan; in Lebanon, atleast one person died. The government of Yemen, like the government of Libya, was quick to express condemnation over the attacks on the United States' embassies. However, there has been concern over the weakness of the new Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's response, prompting United States President Obama to characterize Egypt as neither an ally nor an enemy, effectively placing relations with post-Nile Revolution Egypt in the category of "to be determined." Egyptian authorities soon stepped up their efforts to repel the protesters in that country.

United States orders closure of embassies in Middle East, Asia, and Africa amidst security worries

At the start of August 2013, the Obama administration in the United States ordered the closure of several of its embassies in the Middle East and North Africa due to threats of a possible terrorist attack by militant extremists. At issue were interceptions of messages from the senior leadership of the terror enclave, al-Qaida, indicating that a major terrorist attack was in the works. The messages involved conversations between al-Qaida leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Nasser al-Wuhayshi, the leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, discussing a plan to carry out a major terrorist attack on an embassy. The closures were initially supposed to be enforced for a few days but were extended in many cases for up to a week with the United States authorities noting there was a strong possibility of an al-Qaida inspired attack in the Middle East and North Africa.

Meanwhile, the United States Department of State issued a global travel alert, which it said would remain in effect until the end of the month. Like the embassy closures, the travel alert was also issued due to security concerns. Explaining the rationale for the travel alert, the United States Department of State said: "Current information suggests that al-Qaida and affiliated organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks both in the region and beyond, and that they may focus efforts to conduct attacks in the period between now and the end of August." The travel alert urged American citizens to be vigilant and warned against "the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems and other tourist infrastructure."

Given this guidance, several other Western countries moved to close select diplomatic missions in

the region of the Middle East and North Africa, with the United Kingdom (and the United States) paying particular attention to Yemen. The United Kingdom Foreign Office was advising British nationals to leave that Middle Eastern country and urging its citizens to avoid travel to Yemen, noting that there was "a high threat from terrorism throughout Yemen." Several European countries also temporarily shut missions in Yemen. The United States had itself withdrawn its diplomatic staff from Yemen and urged United States citizens to depart that country amid concerns over security threats. At issue were emerging concerns that al-Qaida operatives were arriving in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, and were preparing for a major terror incident that would target both the Yemeni military and international diplomatic interests.

Separately, Yemeni authorities claimed success in foiling an al-Qaida plot to seize two of the country's main ports and blow up oil pipelines. In the first week of August 2013, Rajeh Badi, a spokesperson for the Yemeni government, said in an interview with international media that the al-Qaida plot involved taking over two ports in the south of the country that are used in exporting Yemeni oil, seizing control of the Canadian-administered al-Dhaba oil terminal, and killing or kidnapping foreign workers. The plot also involved plans to bomb and destroy oil pipelines at Balhaf. The entire plot appeared to be driven by revenge for the killing of senior al-Qaida figure, Said al-Shihri, in a drone strike months prior.

According to BBC News, this audacious scheme -- if executed -- would have been highly dangerous to the security of Yemen as it would have provided al-Qaida -- the notorious terror enclave -- with control over key parts of Yemen's vital infrastructure. But the attacks, which were intended to take place at the conclusion of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, were seemingly uncovered with the assistance of Western and Arab powers. Despite foiling this plot, Yemen's capital city of Sanaa remained tense with armored vehicles deployed around the city, and troops and tanks deployed to guard high interest targets, such as government offices, foreign missions, public areas, and the airport.

It should be known that both the United States and the United Kingdom withdrew their diplomatic staff from Yemen, and urged their citizens to leave the country, due to a separate security threat. In that case, intercepted conversations between senior al-Qaida leaders discussing an imminent terrorist attack led to a massive shutdown of United States' diplomatic missions across the Middle East and North Africa. That move was made out of an abundance of caution and appeared to be separate from this plot against the Yemeni ports and pipelines.

Meanwhile, the United States appeared to be stepping up its drone attacks on Yemen with seven suspected Islamic extremist militants reported to have been killed in one strike in the southeastern part of the country. It was one of several strikes in a two-week period.

Foreign Relations Note: Yemen turns into proxy war between Shi'a Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia

On March 20, 2015, the notorious and blood-thirsty terror group, Islamic State (also known as Islamic State in the Levant or ISIL), carried out double deadly suicide bombings in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, killing close to 140 people and injuring 300 others.

The terror group, Islamic State has held sway in large portions of Syria and Iraq and been responsible for some of the most barbaric acts of murder, slavery, abduction and abuse seen in recent history. While its aim to establish an ultra-hardline Sunni Islamic caliphate has concentrated on the Syria-Iraq region (known as the Levant), an attack earlier in the week in Tunisia, as well as recently announced alliances with other Islamist terror groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, indicate an emerging global Jihadist agenda.

Already, Yemen has been dealing with exactly this threat of global Jihadism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) from within its own borders. But now, with large swaths of Yemen under the control of the Shi'ite Zaidi Houthis, and with the country fracturing, Islamic State was exploiting the power chasm by making Yemen a terror target. The fact that the suicide bombings ensued in Houthi-controlled Sanaa made clear that Islamic State was deliberately targeting the Shi'ite rebels, whom they consider to be apostates.

For their part, the Houthi rebel movement (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs) had been engaged in fierce gun battles with Yemeni armed forces in 2014, ultimately gaining control of the capital of Sanaa and forcing the resignation of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, whose supporters were resisting the Houthis from their base in Yemen's second city of Aden.

In the backdrop of these developments was a spate of vicious attacks by the Yemen-based terror group, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as they railed against the perceived ascendancy of the Houthis. Angered by the political gains of the Houthis, the terror enclave, AQAP commenced a campaign of violence and bloodshed in response. These developments heralded an emerging power struggle between the Houthis and AQAP, with the people of Yemen likely to be the ultimate victims. The main question in the immediate future was if this fight between the Houthis and AQAP would be limited to a power struggle for influence in Yemen where President Hadi was being increasingly sidelined, or if it would metastacize into a civil war.

The developments in March 2015, marked by the entrance of Islamic State into the equation, served only to destabilize the Yemeni landscape even further. The situation was morphing into a geopolitical morass, with the advance of the Iranian-backed Houthis on the second city Aden, the decision by President Hadi to flee the presidential palace, and the commencement of air strikes by Saudi Arabia on Yemen.

Meanwhile, with Yemen embroiled in an escalating crisis, and as Western powers moved to distance themselves, regional powers were now signaling their entrance to the Yemeni landscape.

Already, Shi'a Iran was being blamed for backing the Houthis. But soon Sunni Saudi Arabia was warning that it would intervene into Yemen to act as a countervailing power against Iran. Prince Saud Al Faisal promised to protect Yemen's sovereignty, saying, "We are against Iran's intervention in Yemen ... it is actually an act of aggression... We are keen on protecting Yemen's sovereignty, the legitimacy of Yemen represented by President Hadi." He continued, "We are ready to take the necessary measures if needed."

Saudi Arabia's possible intervention was welcomed by the internationally-recognized Hadi government of Yemen. President Hadi himself had called for the United Nations Security Council to authorize military intervention into Yemen. Also of note was a call by the Yemeni foreign minister, Riyadh Yaseen, for Arab neighbors to assist militarily to stop the advance being made by Houthi fighters. He said, "We have addressed both the [Gulf Cooperation Council] and the U.N. for the need of [imposing] a no-fly zone and banning the use of warplanes at the airports controlled by the Houthis." Of course, that intervention was aimed at stemming the advanceof the Houthis and not necessarily at addressing the terror threats posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula or Islamic State.

In the early hours of March 26, 2015, following the news the day before that President Hadi had fled the presidential palace in Aden, Saudi Arabia announced it had commenced air strikes in Yemen. In fact, Saudi Arabia said its military operation was being conducted in coordination with a coalition of several regional partner countries. The Saudi effort was aimed at stemming the Houthi tide and restoring the internationally-recognized "legitimate" Hadi government to the helm in Yemen. But with the Houthis -- a Zaidi Shi'ite rebel movement -- being backed by Iran, and with Sunni Saudi Arabia now entering the fray, Yemen was quickly turning into a sectarian and geopolitical proxy war.

Note that the United States soon announced that while it was not one of the partner countries carrying out air strikes in Yemen, it was nonetheless providing logistical and intelligence support to the Saudi-led operation in Yemen.

After only a few days of air strikes, the Saudi-led regional forces had not yet overpowered the Houthis; however, they were limiting movement of the Shi'ite Zaidi rebellion and were successfully imposing a naval blockade. As March 2015 was coming to a close, Saudi and Houthi fighters were embroiled in fierce fighting along the Saudi-Yemeni border. Fighting was also taking place in Aden between Houthi fighters and pro-Hadi loyalist forces.

At the start of April 2015, despite the air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition, the Houthis were actually making gains on the southern port city of Aden -- the one time stronghold of President Hadi. With fighting increasing, a humanitarian crisis emerging, and the death toll increasing (almost 200 people were killed from late March through the first few days of April 2015 alone), several countries began the process of evacuating its citizens from Yemen, while the Red Cross was

bringing in humanitarian aid supplies.

It should be noted that in an interview with the Arabic television channel al-Arabiya Hadath, Yemeni Foreign Minister Riyadh Yasseen sanctioned the intervention of Arab powers into Yemen, calling for an actual Arab regional force help restore the elected goverment of President Hadi to power in Yemen and save the country from its slippage into chaos. He said, "Yes, we are asking for that, and as soon as possible, in order to save our infrastructure and save Yemenis under siege in many cities."

Evidence of the Iranian-Saudi proxy war in Yemen was manifest in the second week of April 2015 when Iran called for the formation of a new Yemeni government, and even said it would be willing to offer its assistance in Yemen's political transition. The statement came at a time when the Iranian-backed Houthis advance on the city of Yemen. For its part, Saudi Arabia has been involved in air strikes on Yemen, with the intent aim of restoring President Hadi (who had taken refuge in the Saudi capital of Riyadh) to the helm of government. It was apparent that the two countries were not only a military collision course but also on a parallel political one.

Note that on April 14, 2015, the United Nations Security Council imposed an arms embargo on the Iran-backed Houthis. The resolution was overwhelmingly backed by security council members, although Russia abstained from the vote.

As the Yemeni conflict escalated, the United States dispatched an aircraft carrier, the USS Theodore Roosevelt, and a guided-missile cruiser, the USS Normandy, to the maritime waters close to Yemen. The general consensus was that the presence of the USS Theodore Roosevelt and the USS Normandy was for strategic reasons, and intended to ensure that the United States was positioned to take rapid action if the situation necessitated it. For its part, the United States Pentagon said that its presence in the Arabian Sea was not to intercept Iranian arms shipments to Yemen, but rather to "ensure the vital shipping lanes in the region remain open and safe."

In a surprise move on April 21, 2015, Saudi Arabia announced that it was ending its bombing campaign against the Houthis. Saudi authorities declared the joint alliance had achieved the military goals of the operation. An official statement read as follows: "Operation Decisive Storm has achieved its goals...(including) removing the threat to Saudi Arabia and neighboring countries, especially in terms of heavy weapons." The joint alliance would thus transition its efforts to a new mission called "Restoring Hope." The new operation would be aimed at counter-terrorism and security, and would look towards a political resolution in Yemen. Nevertheless, Saudi authorities warned that it reserved the right to go after the Houthis, with Saudi Brigadier General Ahmed Asseri saying, "The coalition will continue to prevent the Houthi militias from moving or undertaking any operations inside Yemen."

Yemen's internationally-recognized leader, President Hadi, offered his thanks for the Saudi-led

regional effort, saying, "I express the deepest gratitude and respect to our Arab and Muslim brothers and friends in this exceptional strategic alliance in my name and on behalf of the Yemeni people."

While Iran welcomed the end of "Operation Decisive Storm," the fact of the mater was that the fighting continued to plague Yemen, with around 1,000 people dying in the four week period from late March to the third week of April 2015. Indeed, Houthis and factions loyal to President Hadi continued to engage in battles across the country, while infrastructure was being destroyed, and food and aid supplies were being depleted. Accordingly, there was an increasing call for United Nations negotiations to resume, with an eye on finding a peaceful political solution to the conflict in Yemen.

For their part, the Houthis intimated that a diplomatic process was underway, and there was an attempt to forge an agreement that would bring an end to the fighting. But the Houthis were unsure whether the Saudi announcement regarding an end to "Operation Decisive Storm" was part of that agreement. Indeed, the news emerged on April 22, 2015 that even though an end to "Operation Decisive Storm" was over, Saudi-led strikes were still taking place in southern Yemen. It seemed that a mission remained in place to protect the port city of Aden from the Houthis. Saudi Arabian ambassador Adel al-Jubeir explained the situation, saying, "When the Houthis or their allies make aggressive moves there will be a response. The decision to calm matters now rests entirely with them."

Meanwhile, Iran was calling for "urgent humanitarian assistance" in Yemen, with Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif stating via the social media outlet Twitter, "Positive developments in Yemen should be followed by urgent humanitarian assistance, intra-Yemeni dialogue and broad-based govt. Ready to help." Iranian President Hassan Rouhani was meanwhile urging negotiations and a peaceful end to the bloodshed in Yemen, as he said, "We believe that sustainable peace can prevail if military intervention is ceased and proper conditions are prepared for talks and dialogue among all political groups." The Houthis themselves were signaling an interest in a return to United Nations-brokered negotiations, along with an end to the Saudis' aerial bombardment campaign. Via the social media outlet Facebook, the Houthis' spokesperson, Mohammed Abdul-Salam, declared: "We call for -- after the complete cessation of the brutal aggression on Yemen and the total dismantling of the blockade on its people -- the resumption of political dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations."

As April 2015 came to a close, the marine waters surrounding Yemen saw some de-escalation when the aforementioned Iranian flotilla, which was believed to be carrying arms to the Houthis, sailed past Yemen and to the north. The general consensus was that the presence of the USS Theodore Roosevelt and the USS Normandy in the area, may have had an effect. However, in a separate incident, Iranian forces fired warning shots and boarded a Marshall Islands-flagged cargo ship, the MV Maersk Tigris, with a Danish crew in the Strait of Hormuz. The vessel was reported

to be following a normal commercial route between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates when the shots were fired, thus spurring the crew to issue a distress call that was picked by by United States forces. While Iranian authorities downplayed the incident, the United States Pentagon characterized the incident as a provocation.

In early May 2015, the hotspot in Yemen continued to be the southern city of Aden where Houthi fighters battled forces loyal to President Hadi, despite continued Saudi-led strikes. The fighting was quite fierce with more than 120 people killed on May 6, 2015, alone. Among the dead were people trying to flee the violence in a boat that was struck by shelling from Houthi fighters. The situation in Aden was quite dire with Houthis advancing in the historic district of al-Tawahi -- the location of the presidential palace.

Meanwhile, in the north, close to the border with Saudi Arabia, mortar and rocket fire killed five Saudi civilians, prompting retaliatory strikes by Saudi-led forces in that region.

By mid-May 2015, Saudi Arabia was reported to be sending a "strike force" to its own border zone with Yemen. The move came after fierce artilery clashes with Houthi rebels in the area and was intended to reinforce the zone. Also in mid-May 2015, Saudi Arabia was launching air strikes on Sanaa. One strike on a rocket base left 90 people dead and hundreds others injured. It should be noted that these strikes were ensuing weeks after Saudi Arabia announced that it was ending its bombing campaign in Yemen, known as "Operation Decisive Storm," and only days before a fresh ceasefire.

It was apparent that despite the intervention of regional forces, and occasional announcements of breakthroughs, the Yemeni landscape continued to be one marked by chaos and turmoil in the spring of 2015.

By the start of June 2015, regional coalition forces, led by Saudi Arabia, were striking Houthi targets in Yemen, with scores of people dying as a result. A significant number of the dead included women and children in their own homes in the rural north of Yemen, close to the border with Saudi Arabia, which has long been the center of the Houthi rebellion. Strikes were also taking pace elsewhere in Yemen -- in Sanaa, at Yemen's naval command base at the port city of Hodaida on the Red Sea, at a customs office in the northern province of Haradh, and even in the southern city of Aden.

Despite the fatal effects of the strikes on Houthi civilians, Saudi Arabia and its allies were resolute in their efforts to stabilize Yemen and return the country to a state of legal governance -- ideally with President Hadi at the helm. In an interview with Reuters News, Khaled al-Attiyah, the foreign minister of Qatar, agued that the Saudi-led coalition strikes on the Houthis in Yemen had prevented the rebel movement from completely taking over the country. He said, "If there had not been (Operation) Decisive Storm, we would have seen the Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh's people

all over Yemen. I think Decisive Storm ... has restored legitimacy in Yemen."

It would seem that Foreign Minister Khaled al-Attiyah's claims held some truth given the Houthis' interest in returning to the negotiating table. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of this latest spate of strikes, the Houthis were signaling their willingness to participate in United Nations-sponsored peace talks in Switzerland set for June 14, 2015. Daifallah al-Shami, a member of the Shi'ite Zaidi leadership, said in an interview with Reuters News that the Houthi movement was ready to support "without preconditions the efforts of the United Nations to organize Yemeni-Yemeni dialogue." With rival groups, including those supportive of President Hadi and former President Saleh, also set to attend the peace talks, it seemed there was a genuine opportunity ahead to bring an end to the chaos rocking Yemen. South seccessionist factions, however, would not likely be in attendance and could function as the proverbial "fly in the ointment."

By mid-June 2015, there were fews signs that United Nations-sponsored talks in Switzerland would produce anything substantial, or that the warring sides were willing to make the hard compromises needed for peace and reconciliation. Of note was the fact that as the talks were convened, the Saudi-led Arab coalition was striking Houthi targets in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. Also of note was the intransigence of the pro-Hadi wing and the Houthis respectively. While Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed - the United Nations envoy to Yemen -- cast the talks as an opportunity to end the conflict in Yemen, he nonetheless acknowledged that a massive gulf divided the two sides. He said, "All the parties are still barricaded behind their positions and continue to bet on war rather than a political settlement."

Indeed, there was no reason for either side to buy into the benefits of peace when the facts on the ground were as follows: 1. Despite an aggressive air campaign, the Saudi-led coalition had failed to dislodge the Houthis; and 2. Any peace agreement would likely be to the detriment of pro-Hadi forces in Yemen. For both sides, war offered a more promising path to power.

In July 2015, Saudi authorities announced a ceasefire after air strikes hit a residential area of the Red Sea town of Mokha, killing approximately 120 people and injuring as many as 150 others. Children were among the casualties, prompting the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch to respectively warn the Saudi-led coalition that indiscriminate bombardment of populated areas was a violation of international law. It was not guaranteed that the Saudi-led coalition would heed this admonishment; however, the coalition did respond to a call by Yemeni President Hadi to halt the military activity long enough for humanitarian aid to be rendered. To this end, the cessation of the air campaign was to last for five days to allow emergency response teams to offer assistance and to deliver supplies to the victims.

Although attention was focused at this time on the ceasefire, the Saudi-led coalition targeting the Houthis in Yemen warned that it would, nevertheless, reserve the right to retaliate against any military activity taken by the Houthis. Of related significance was that the ceasefire did not bring a

complete end to hostilities. Clashes erupted in the city of Taiz as a result of shelling by Shi'a Houthis rebels several districts. As well, fighting was reported the the north of the restive port city of Aden and in the provinces of Marib and Lahj.

In September 2015, with the sectarian conflict between Iranian-backed Houthis and the Saudi-backed Hadi government forces still raging on, the landscape was complicated by the decision by Qatar to deploy 1,000 ground troops to Yemen. The move came ahead of a massive offensive operation by regional Sunni Arab forces against the Iranian-backed Houthis who continued to hold sway in the Yemeni capital city of Sanaa. Qatar was already part of the Saudi-led regional operation carrying out air strikes on Houthi-controlled regions of Yemen; however, its decision to deploy ground forces marked a notable shift in a campaign that has been stalled for several months, although some progress was made in driving Houthis and forces allied with former President Salleh from Aden.

In the same period, Saudi-led air strikes continued to pound Houthi targets in Yemen. The air battle actually increased in strength after a particularly deadly attack in the first part of September 2015 when a Houthi missile attack killed scores of Gulf Arab troops stationed to the east of Sanaa. In retaliation, the air strike campaign by Sunni Arab states on the capital intensified and deployments of troops were increased. These developments came ahead of an offensive operation discussed above, which was being billed as a "decisive battle to liberate Sanaa." Of course, Saudi ground forces were already "in country" and carrying out an offensive in the province of Marib, aimed at driving out the Houthis. The Sanaa offensive was to be understood as a continuation of that operation.

Meanwhile, even as plans for a final battle for Sanaa was in the works, the United Nations was planning to broker peace talks on the Yemeni crisis. But those plans hit a snag in mid-September 2015 when Yemen's government in exile, headed by President Hadi, said it would not participate unless the Houthis withdrew from the terrain it captured. Of note was the fact that Hadi and his stalwarts were simply articulating the need to make good on a provision already enshrined in the prevailing United Nations Resolution 2216.

A few days later, Yemen's exiled government modified its stance, saying it would join the United Nations-sponsored talks, but under the condition that the Houthis publicly accepted the terms of the United Nations resolution, which called for them to withdraw from the main cities of Yemen and recognize Hadias the elected president of the country. As noted by Yemeni government spokesperson Rajeh Badi in an interview with Reuters News, "If the Houthis are serious about sitting down for negotiations about implementing resolution 2216, they must publicly announce their recognition of this resolution."

In the last week of September 2015, the capital city of Sanaa was the site of bloodshed and violence due to double suicide bombings at a mosque that left at least two dozen people dead and

scores more seriously injured. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack at the al-Balili mosque, which ensued just as worshippers were celebrating the Eid al-Adha festival.

In the same period of late September 2015, the Red Sea port city of Mocha was struck by tragedy when suspected air strikes hit a wedding party, killing at least 130 people. The Saudi-led coalition operating in Yemen and charged with targeting the Houthi rebellion quickly dismissed any charges of culpability as follows: "There have been no air operations by the coalition in that area for three days. This is totally false news." Yet even as the Saudi-led coalition denied any responsibility for the incident, there were few other plausible explanations for a fatal air strikes in the area. It was unknown, however, as to whom was actually responsible for the deaths of more than 130 people at a wedding party. Not surprisingly, the United Nations expressed condemnation for the incident, noting that the air strikes were emblematic of "the disregard shown by all sides for human life" in Yemen.

On October 6, 2015, members of the Yemeni government were targeted in a terror attack on the Qasr hotel where they were staying in Aden. Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and members of his government escaped the double bombing at the hotel unharmed. But a series of attacks at two military installations housing coalition forces from the United Arab Emirates also took place on the same day with different results. The violence at the military outfits exacted a death toll as 15 pro-government and Saudi-led coalition forces were killed. While initial blame for the spate of attacks fell on the Houthis, the terror group, Islamic State, soon claimed responsibility. Clearly the Islamist terror group was taking advantage of the power vacuum created as a result of the power struggle between the Saudi-backed government and the Iranian-backed Houthis.

Meanwhile, also in late September 2015, President Hadi returned from exile in Saudi Arabia to his stronghold in the southern city of Aden. By the start of October 2015, President Hadi's government moved to sever its diplomatic ties with Iran. While there was no detailed explanation offered for the move, the general consensus was that the legitimate government of Yemen objected to Iran's backing of the Houthis, and viewed Iran's actions as overt acts of interference in its sovereign affairs. Of course, as discussed here, the fact remained that several countries, including a Gulf Arab alliance, were now intervening into the affairs of Yemen.

By October 2015, there was a glimmer of hope on the turmoil-etched Yemeni landscape as the Houthi rebels finally committed to the United Nations-brokered peace process, although it was not known if they officially accepted the terms of a prevailing United Nations resolution. In a letter, the Houthi leadership declared: "We, from our side along with other parties, commit to these seven points as one unified bundle. We welcome the UN call for all sides to return to the table of dialogue." At issue was the seven-point Muscat peace plan that was forged in Oman and which stalled for some time, but was now being revived with the Houthis signing on to the deal.

Should the Houthis actually move forward by implementing the provisions of the Muscat

agreement -- specifically, enacting a ceasefire, withdrawing from the cities, and accepting the return of the legitimate government to the capital city of Sanaa -- Yemen could well be backing away from the precipice of the crisis that has rocked the country for some time.

Note that at the start of November 2015, the United Nations envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, said in an interview with Reuters News that he expected negotiations between the rival sides to commence by the middle of the month (November 2015).

NOTE:

See "Special Report" on the 2011 "Season of Unrest" gripping Yemen in the "Political Conditions" of this Country Review, including the hardline crackdown on anti-government protesters by the Saleh regime, the end of Saleh's time in power, and the geopolitical repercussions, since then, including the Houthi movement's ascendancy in 2015, and the escalation of a proxy war between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shi'a Iran on Yemen soil.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com . See Bibliography for list of general research sources.

National Security

External Threats

While no foreign nation poses an immediate threat to Yemen, it is involved in minor disputes with Saudi Arabia and Eritrea. In 2000, the governments of Yemen and Saudi Arabiasigned an agreement that ended a longstanding disagreement over their mutual border. Yemeni nomads that reside near the Saudi border have resisted the imposition of an official boundary, despite progress on the demarcation of the boundary. Also, the Yemen 's government has expressed disapproval of a concrete barrier that Saudi Arabiaconstructed in the summer of 2004 to curb illegal permeation of its border. Eritrean officials continue to protest the incursion of Yemeni fishermen into the waters surrounding the Hanish Islands, which the International Court of Justice (ICJ) awarded to Eritrein

1999.

Crime

While Yemenhas a generally low crime rate, armed carjacking is prevalent, especially in more remote regions of the country.

Insurgencies

Insurgent violence continues to threaten Yemen's security. The country owes its origin to the 1990 unification of two independent states, north and south Yemen. In 1994, separatists in the southern part of the country launched an armed insurgency. The central government quickly suppressed the movement, however. The Islamic Army of Aden (IAA) emerged in mid-1998. The group espouses views similar to those held by al-Qaida, to which IAA is reportedly closely linked. One of its stated objectives is to overthrow Yemen's government. Also like al-Qaida, IAA condones the use of terrorist tactics to further its political agenda (see below section on terrorism). The Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has also been of concern since 2004; see "Special Entry" below for details. As discussed in the "Update" below, the year 2011 saw turbulence on the political landscape with a popular uprising that started in Tunisia and spread the region, landing notably in Yemen.

Terrorism

The risk of terrorist attacks against targets in Yemenremains high. Recent incidents there include the October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in the Port of Aden (17 killed, 37 injured), the December 2002 shootings of three Americans in Jibla, and a June 2003 attack on a medical convoy in the southern region of Abyan (seven injured). Several transnational Islamic extremist organizations maintain a presence there, most notably al-Qaida. Yemeni authorities have arrested numerous al-Qaida operatives, diminishing the organization's operational capacity in Yemen. Ten convicted terrorists, including al-Qaida members involved in the Cole bombing, escaped from an Adenprison in April 2003, however. In addition to al-Qaida's presence, affiliates of Egyptian Islamic Jihad and al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya are believed to be in Yemen. HAMAS and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), both recognized as legal organizations in Yemen, have offices there. Neither group has been linked to terrorist violence there, however.

In addition to transnational organizations, a domestic group also threatens Yemen's security. As mentioned in the above "Insurgencies" section, the Islamic Army of Aden (IAA) emerged in mid-1998. The group espouses views similar to those held by al-Qaida, to which IAA is reportedly closely linked. One of its stated objectives is to overthrow Yemen's government. IAA has perpetrated several terrorist attacks to further its political agenda, including the December 1998

kidnapping of 16 American, Australian and British tourists - four of whom died during a rescue attempt - in southern Yemen, the October 2000 bombing of the British Embassy in Sanaa (no deaths or injuries), as well as the more recent attack in Abyan. In the aftermath of the latter, Yemeni Central Security Forces (CSF) raided an IAA stronghold, reportedly killing and/or capturing between 20 and 30 operatives.

Yemenis party to eight of the twelve international conventions and protocols pertaining to terrorism.

Special Entry:

At the start of August 2013, the Obama administration in the United States ordered the closure of several of its embassies in the Middle East and North Africa due to threats of a possible terrorist attack by militant extremists. At issue were interceptions of messages from the senior leadership of the terror enclave, al-Qaida, indicating that a major terrorist attack was in the works. The messages involved conversations between al-Qaida leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Nasser al-Wuhayshi, the leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, discussing a plan to carry out a major terrorist attack on an embassy. The closures were initially supposed to be enforced for a few days but were extended in many cases for up to a week with the United States authorities noting there was a strong possibility of an al-Qaida inspired attack in the Middle East and North Africa.

Meanwhile, the United States Department of State issued a global travel alert, which it said would remain in effect until the end of the month. Like the embassy closures, the travel alert was also issued due to security concerns. Explaining the rationale for the travel alert, the United States Department of State said: "Current information suggests that al-Qaida and affiliated organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks both in the region and beyond, and that they may focus efforts to conduct attacks in the period between now and the end of August." The travel alert urged American citizens to be vigilant and warned against "the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems and other tourist infrastructure."

Given this guidance, several other Western countries moved to close select diplomatic missions in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, with the United Kingdom (and the United States) paying particular attention to Yemen. The United Kingdom Foreign Office was advising British nationals to leave that Middle Eastern country and urging its citizens to avoid travel to Yemen, noting that there was "a high threat from terrorism throughout Yemen." Several European countries also temporarily shut missions in Yemen. The United States had itself withdrawn its diplomatic staff from Yemen and urged United States citizens to depart that country amid concerns over security threats. At issue were emerging concerns that al-Qaida operatives were arriving in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, and were preparing for a major terror incident that would target both the Yemeni military and international diplomatic interests.

Separately, Yemeni authorities claimed success in foiling an al-Qaida plot to seize two of the country's main ports and blow up oil pipelines. In the first week of August 2013, Rajeh Badi, a spokesperson for the Yemeni government, said in an interview with international media that the al-Qaida plot involved taking over two ports in the south of the country that are used in exporting Yemeni oil, seizing control of the Canadian-administered al-Dhaba oil terminal, and killing or kidnapping foreign workers. The plot also involved plans to bomb and destroy oil pipelines at Balhaf. The entire plot appeared to be driven by revenge for the killing of senior al-Qaida figure, Said al-Shihri, in a drone strike months prior.

According to BBC News, this audacious scheme -- if executed -- would have been highly dangerous to the security of Yemen as it would have provided al-Qaida -- the notorious terror enclave -- with control over key parts of Yemen's vital infrastructure. But the attacks, which were intended to take place at the conclusion of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, were seemingly uncovered with the assistance of Western and Arab powers. Despite foiling this plot, Yemen's capital city of Sanaa remained tense with armored vehicles deployed around the city, and troops and tanks deployed to guard high interest targets, such as government offices, foreign missions, public areas, and the airport.

It should be known that both the United States and the United Kingdom withdrew their diplomatic staff from Yemen, and urged their citizens to leave the country, due to a separate security threat. In that case, intercepted conversations between senior al-Qaida leaders discussing an imminent terrorist attack led to a massive shutdown of United States' diplomatic missions across the Middle East and North Africa. That move was made out of an abundance of caution and appeared to be separate from this plot against the Yemeni ports and pipelines.

Meanwhile, the United States appeared to be stepping up its drone attacks on Yemen with seven suspected Islamic extremist militants reported to have been killed in one strike in the southeastern part of the country. It was one of several strikes in a two-week period.

Special Entry

On March 20, 2015, the notorious and blood-thirsty terror group, Islamic State (also known as Islamic State in the Levant or ISIL), carried out double deadly suicide bombings in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, killing close to 140 people and injuring 300 others.

The terror group, Islamic State has held sway in large portions of Syria and Iraq and been responsible for some of the most barbaric acts of murder, slavery, abduction and abuse seen in recent history. While its aim to establish an ultra-hardline Sunni Islamic caliphate has concentrated on the Syria-Iraq region (known as the Levant), an attack earlier in the week in Tunisia, as well as

recently announced alliances with other Islamist terror groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, indicate an emerging global Jihadist agenda.

Already, Yemen has been dealing with exactly this threat of global Jihadism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) from within its own borders. But now, with large swaths of Yemen under the control of the Shi'ite Zaidi Houthis, and with the country fracturing, Islamic State was exploiting the power chasm by making Yemen a terror target. The fact that the suicide bombings ensued in Houthi-controlled Sanaa made clear that Islamic State was deliberately targeting the Shi'ite rebels, whom they consider to be apostates.

For their part, the Houthi rebel movement (also known as Zaidis due to their Shi'ite Zaidi beliefs) had been engaged in fierce gun battles with Yemeni armed forces in 2014, ultimately gaining control of the capital of Sanaa and forcing the resignation of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, whose supporters were resisting the Houthis from their base in Yemen's second city of Aden.

In the backdrop of these developments was a spate of vicious attacks by the Yemen-based terror group, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) as they railed against the perceived ascendancy of the Houthis. Angered by the political gains of the Houthis, the terror enclave, AQAP commenced a campaign of violence and bloodshed in response. These developments heralded an emerging power struggle between the Houthis and AQAP, with the people of Yemen likely to be the ultimate victims. The main question in the immediate future was if this fight between the Houthis and AQAP would be limited to a power struggle for influence in Yemen where President Hadi was being increasingly sidelined, or if it would metastacize into a civil war.

The developments in March 2015, marked by the entrance of Islamic State into the equation, served only to destabilize the Yemeni landscape even further. The situation was morphing into a geopolitical morass, with the advance of the Iranian-backed Houthis on the second city Aden, the decision by President Hadi to flee the presidential palace, and the commencement of air strikes by Saudi Arabia on Yemen.

In April 2015, there was a glimmer of hope in Yemen as Saudi Arabia and its regional allies ended their military campaign in Yemen, declaring they were transitioning their mission to one focused on anti-terrorism and security, along with the pursuit of a sustainable political solution in Yemen. As well, both Iran and the Houthis were signaling an interest in United Nations-brokered talks aimed at ending the conflict in Yemen peacefully. However, by May 2015, the unrest in Yemen continued to plague the country.

Editor's Note:

Yemen is now on the radar of powerful nation states as an emerging base of radical jihadist

Islamists seeking to carry out terror attacks against targets in the West. From 2009 to the present, Yemen has become a a stronghold for Islamic extremists and militants, many of whom belong to the al-Qaida terror enclave, and thus giving rise to the Yemen-based al-Qaida entity known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). An attempted terror attack on an airliner on Christmas day in 2009, as well as a cargo plane terror plot in 2010 led to fears of Yemen going down the road of Afghanistan a decade earlier as the world's new base of Islamic Jihadish terrorism. As such, the United States has become more involved in Yemen and has been credited with helping Yemeni forces carry out military offensives against major al-Qaida bases in that country, much to the consternation of al-Qaida itself. That being said, there is no visible American military presence in Yemen, which prefers to achieve its anti-terrorism effort in Yemen using targeted anti-terrorism techniques, including drone strikes and intelligence sharing.

For his part, (now-resigned) President Ali Abdullah Saleh had to establish a delicate balancing act of working with the West to deal with the threat of terrorism from within Yemen's borders, while not alienating the Yemeni citizenry, many of whom sympathize with Islamic extremism. But in fact, Yemen is the base of both foreign and local al-Qaida fighters. The local fighters are often aided by relatives, typically as a result of tribal loyalty more than ideology. However, when these fighters are killed or arrested by government forces, these heavily-armed tribes often are emotionally driven to increase support of the militants. Meanwhile, Yemen has also been home to thousands of Islamic militants who are veterans of several "holy wars" in other countries and regions, including Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. While most of these Islamic militant veterans are no longer active, they nonetheless maintain their extremist views in keeping with al-Qaida ideology. As noted by Ali Saif Hassan, the manager of a Yemeni group that mediates between the government and opposition: "It is difficult to draw the line between who is a fundamentalist and who is al-Qaida. It's a spectrum." As constituents of the country, these elements form part of the broader anti-American and anti-Western base of the country, over which the government has only fragile control.

Meanwhile, the government of Yemen has had to deal with other rebellions and threats to national security, such as the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion, which led to the rise in violent attacks in certain regions of the country since 2004. Known as the Houthis, the Shi'a Zaidi rebels have said they seek greater autonomy. At the core of the Shi'a Zaidi rebellion has been the claim that the government of Yemen is too closely aligned with the United States, which has provided supplies and training to Yemen's security forces under the aegis of the "war on terror." The rebels also blame the government for both corruption and discrimination. But Yemen's government has accused the northern Shi'ite rebels, led by Abdul Malik al-Houthi, of trying to oust the democratic government and advancing Shi'a theocratic rule in the country. Indeed, the government has accused the rebels of seeking to re-establish clerical rule that ended with the 1962 Yemeni revolution that yielded the republic. The situation has sometimes spilled over the border into Saudi Arabia and has illuminated the challenges facing the Yemeni government in terms of national security.

Specifically, even as the Yemeni government has had to deal with this rebel threat in the north of the country, there has been another territorial battle against secessionists in the south, as well as the emerging threat posed by al-Qaida terrorists operating from its terrain.

Apart from these political challenges, Yemen is also plagued by an unemployment rate that some estimate is as high as 40 percent, chronic poverty, increased food prices, high levels of illiteracy, and malnutrition. In these ways, Yemen's political, economic and human development challenges are illustrative of complicated terrain that is ripe for further exploitation by extremist, militant, and terrorist elements. It was hoped that the election of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi in 2012 would shift Yemen onto more positive footing.

The developments in 2014 with the Houthi Zaidi rebels grabbing control over Sanaa, coupled with the intensified campaign of aggression from rival al-Qaida terrorists, presented a genuine challenge to President Hadi and the government of Yemen. That challenged morphed into a security crisis at the start of 2015 as the Houth Zaidi movement attempted to topple the government of Yemen. Of course, in the backdrop of effort was the continuing threat posed by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, which was carrying out attacks in Yemen in a bid to wrest influence away from the Houthis. The fresh threat posed by Islamic State against the Houthis in March 2015, manifest in a destructive attack on Sanaa, made the dire security situation significantly worse. The situation was morphing into a geopolitical morass, with the advance of the Iranian-backed Houthis on the second city Aden, the decision by President Hadi to flee the country, and the commencement of air strikes by Saudi Arabia on Yemen.

Indeed, Yemen in the year 2015 was the site of a dangerous power struggle between these various players and disparate factions, and headed by weakened leadership, which was made distinctly worse by the the exit of President Hadi. Yemen was thus alarmingly close to slipping off the proverbial cliff into the abyss of being a failed state.

*** Please see "Political Conditions" of this Country Review for more information about the recent threat of terrorism emanating from Yemen, as well as the effects of the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011 that led to the resignation of President Saleh. Also included in the coverage of the "Political Conditions" is an overview of the tumultuous landscape in 2014 and into 2015 in Yemen as Houthi Zaidi Shi'ite rebels took control of the capital and forced the resignation of the government. ***

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Land Forces, Naval and Coastal Defense Forces (includes Marines), Air and Air Defense Force (al-Quwwat al-Jawwiya al-Yemeniya), Border Guards, Strategic Reserve Forces

Eligible age to enter service:
18 is the legal minimum age for military service

Mandatory Service Terms:
No conscription; 2-year service obligation

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:
N/A

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:
N/A

Military Expenditures-Percent of GDP:

4.02%

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East, with about 35 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Its economy depends heavily on crude oil production, which is the mainstay of government revenue and exports. But crude oil output has been in decline since 2000, and exploitable oil reserves could be exhausted in a relatively short period without major new discoveries. A new liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility that began production in late 2009 will provide some cushion for dwindling oil, and recent discoveries of natural gas may prolong the life of the hydrocarbon sector as a whole. Although the global economic crisis had limited impact on Yemen's economic growth and the financial sector, risks to macroeconomic stability have increased. Lower oil prices and production, weaker foreign direct investment, and falling remittances have put pressures on the fiscal and external accounts. These pressures are likely to continue as oil reserves decline, while uncertainties in the security situation also pose challenges to economic development. In January 2010, the international community established the Friends of Yemen group in an effort to support Yemen's efforts towards economic and political reform. Then, in August 2010 the IMF approved a three-year, $370 million program to further the initiative.

In 2011, Yemen became the third Arab nation to experience a season of unrest (following Tunisia and Egypt), which led to the June departure of President Ali Abdullah Saleh to Saudi Arabia where he was recuperating after an operation to remove shrapnel from his chest. The country had experienced weeks of fighting between Saleh's forces and angry tribesman, which led to hundreds of people being killed and thousands being forced to flee. In March, an explosion on the country's main oil pipeline - thought to have been carried out by angry tribesmen - resulted in the closure of a refinery and the shortage in fuel supplies. Fuel shortages in many parts of Yemen had worsened in June 2011 as the country's main oil pipeline remained shut and tight funding hit imports. After nearly a year of demonstrations and negotiations, an agreement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council was reached in late November 2011, leading to the formation of a national unity government in December 2011 and the election of a new president in February 2012. Still, by April 2012, it was clear that Yemen's political crisis had taken a serious toll on the economy. The year-long political crisis had led to policy paralysis, shortages of basic commodities, and the collapse of economic activity. It also worsened the already high poverty and unemployment levels. In April, the International Monetary Fund's executive board approved a $93.75 million interest-free emergency loan for Yemen to support the country's recovery - making Yemen the first "Arab Spring" country to secure a loan from the IMF. The main goal of the loan was to cushion foreign exchange reserves and maintain macroeconomic stability, while scaling up social and capital

expenditures.

Also in 2012, the Friends of Yemen pledged over $7 billion in assistance to Yemen but the funds were slow to arrive. Saudi Arabia also loaned the country $1 billion in 2012 in a move aimed at boosting Yemen's central bank reserves. The Yemeni Government also endorsed a Mutual Accountability Framework to facilitate the efficient implementation of donor aid. Overall, the unrest that began in early 2011 caused GDP to plunge more than 15 percent in 2011, and about 2 percent in 2012.
Between October 2012 and February 2013, Yemen's central bank slashed interest rates by 5 percent to a three-year low of 15 percent in an effort to encourage a recovery in the economy. Meanwhile, inflation dropped from a peak of 25 percent in October 2011 to 5.5 percent in November 2012.

In 2013, the economy saw a marked improvement although the recovery remained fragile. By September 2013, Yemen officials announced that annual inflation had inched up to a 16-month high of 14.5 percent in June, largely due to increases in the cost of tobacco and the stimulant qat, while foreign currency reserves dropped to their lowest level for nearly a year in July. As of July 2013, the country's oil exports were down 15.6 percent from the year prior. Looking ahead, the International Monetary Fund expected Yemen's GDP to grow around 6 percent in 2013. Still, Yemen continues to face difficult long-term challenges, including declining water resources, high unemployment, and a high population growth rate.

Indeed, Yemen's macroeconomic situation continued to be relatively stable in 2013, and growth remained moderate. Non-hydrocarbon growth was steady at about 4 percent, while hydrocarbon growth picked up strongly, reversing part of the oil output decline in the preceding two years. As a result, real GDP growth is estimated to have doubled while average inflation edged up slightly and the exchange rate remained stable. Inflation moderated in the first half of 2014, but oil production declined due to sabotage activities, leading to severe fuel and electricity shortages.

In late July 2014, protests erupted in the country after the government – under pressure from the IMF - announced a hike in fuel prices after spending about $3 billion on energy subsidies in 2013. The reform became more urgent in recent months because frequent militant attacks on oil pipelines have negatively impacted Yemen's export earnings. Also in July 2014, Yemen's president undertook a feasibility review of state-owned companies and implemented a ban on all but economy class travel for ministers as part of a broader reform program. Also during the month, the government eliminated some fuel subsidies that accounted for approximately 25 percent of government spending in 2013. Then in August 2014, the IMF approved a three-year, $570 million Extended Credit Facility for Yemen. Yemen produced a mere 130,000-barrels per day in 2014, and poverty levels stood at an estimated 42 percent.

In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and nine regional allies launched air strikes on Yemen in an effort to defeat Shiaa Houthi militia forces that were determined to take over the country. Oil prices

temporarily surged after the Saudi strikes. But by April, oil production had ground to a halt.

By June 2015, it was being reported that the civil war unfolding in Yemen had created a humanitarian and political catastrophe. This was also having an impact on its economy. Yemen's seaports were being periodically blockaded, threatening the food supply of an estimated half of the population of 24 million. By the second half of 2015, oil and gas exports in Yemen had been suspended. The economy was devastated. In early September 2015, The Economist reported that millions of Yemenis were on the brink of a famine caused by a lack of available staple foods such as wheat and rice, access to clean water and mounting fuel shortages, according to Ertharin Cousin, the head of the UN's World Food Programme. UNICEF, the UN children's rights and emergency relief organization, warned that 1.2 million children - more than one in ten - were suffering acute malnutrition and 500,000 were severely malnourished, making Yemen's hunger crisis one of the worst in the world. On top of that, more than one million people had been displaced by the fighting.

Economic Performance

Real GDP growth decelerated in 2006 and 2007, reflecting declining oil production. The start of a new liquefied natural gas project helped sustain the hydrocarbon production with real GDP growing strongly in 2009 and 2010. But the global economic crisis contributed to a decline in the non-hydrocarbon growth in 2009, due to slower activity in construction, manufacturing, and real estate.

According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 3.4 percent
The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: -6.1 percent
Inflation was measured at: 13.2 percent

Updated in 2015

**Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.*

Supplementary Sources: International Monetary Fund, The Century Foundation, Financial Post, CNN, The Economist and Reuters

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	6,644.66	6,875.25	7,726.26	8,682.61	7,957.34
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	-2.0946	3.470	12.378	12.378	-8.3532
Consumption (LCU billions)	3,721.01	3,850.14	4,326.71	4,862.26	6,192.37
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	996.699	1,031.29	1,158.94	1,302.39	1,658.67
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	1,661.16	1,718.81	1,931.57	2,170.65	185.088
Exports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	1,993.40	2,062.58	2,317.88	2,604.78	2,156.82
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	1,727.61	1,787.57	2,008.83	2,257.48	2,235.61

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Population, total (million)	25.130	25.884	26.660	27.460	28.284
Population growth (%)	3.000	3.000	2.998	3.001	3.001
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	264,411.46	265,617.87	289,807.31	316,191.18	281,337.08

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	323.248	315.852	325.017	340.832	262.196
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	-17.1091	-2.2880	2.902	4.866	-23.0719
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	2,055.59	2,176.73	2,377.19	2,547.47	3,034.88
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	18.114	5.893	9.209	7.163	19.133

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	2,087.88	2,747.70	2,674.69	2,580.60	1,571.76
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	1.855	31.603	-2.6569	-3.5179	-39.0932
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	26.676	32.997	26.865	25.296	11.281
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	1,772.54	2,268.59	2,075.69	2,196.38	897.667
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	-315.3330	-479.1040	-599.0030	-384.2170	-674.0930
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	-4.7457	-6.9685	-7.7528	-4.4251	-8.4713

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	2,174.39	2,652.92	3,017.19	3,431.48	3,144.84
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	0.4035	22.007	13.731	13.731	-8.3532
Lending Interest Rate (%)	25.000	24.500	22.083	12.464	20.116
Unemployment Rate (%)	2.000	1.800	2.000	1.900	1.734

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/$US)	203.039	194.211	191.173	200.852	227.815
Trade Balance NIPA ($US billions)	1.309	1.416	1.617	1.729	-0.3459
Trade Balance % of GDP	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	-0.9902
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves ($US billions)	4.525	6.151	5.344	4.644	7.942

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Nominal GDP ($US billions)	32.726	35.401	40.415	43.229	34.929
Exports ($US billions)	9.818	10.620	12.124	12.969	9.467
Imports ($US billions)	8.509	9.204	10.508	11.240	9.813

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Consumption (TBPD)	135.355	129.940	134.000	132.514	133.330
Petroleum Production (TBPD)	216.784	167.860	130.552	122.564	120.801
Petroleum Net Exports (TBPD)	81.430	37.920	-3.4478	-9.9498	-12.5291
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	31.077	26.839	24.720	24.655	25.654
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	340.062	269.268	364.492	334.864	356.396
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	308.984	242.429	339.771	310.209	330.743
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Production (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (1000s st)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	0.2890	0.2775	0.2861	0.2830	0.2847
Petroleum Production (Quads)	0.4628	0.3609	0.2797	0.2677	0.2062
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	0.1738	0.0834	-0.0065	-0.0153	-0.0785
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	0.0317	0.0274	0.0252	0.0251	0.0262
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	0.3465	0.2738	0.3710	0.3465	0.3111
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	0.3148	0.2464	0.3458	0.3213	0.2850
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum-WTI ($/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub ($/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian ($/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	20.394	21.625	22.501	19.391	20.241
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	0.5042	0.4354	0.4011	0.4000	0.4162
Coal Based (mm mt C)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	20.898	22.061	22.902	19.791	20.657

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	492.431	537.049	527.178	548.395	480.067
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	67.242	78.295	74.871	66.330	61.820
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-425.1889	-458.7538	-452.3073	-482.0641	-418.2470
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	10.200	0.7750	0.4033	0.3445
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	-10.2000	-0.7750	-0.4033	-0.3445
Rice Total					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Consumption (1000 metric tons)	17.332	18.220	11.833	17.149	14.613
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-17.3316	-18.2201	-11.8326	-17.1495	-14.6132
Coffee Total Consumption (metric tons)	16,830.00	16,897.00	17,386.00	17,714.28	15,921.12
Coffee Production (metric tons)	18,650.43	19,168.45	19,569.68	20,112.13	18,936.85
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	1,820.43	2,271.45	2,183.68	2,397.85	3,015.73
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Net Exports (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Wheat Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	2,917.58	4,291.69	3,330.69	3,414.22	2,749.71
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	231.823	251.589	231.826	192.849	160.503
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-2685.7611	-4040.0982	-3098.8677	-3221.3759	-2589.2079

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Corn Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary ($/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary ($/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	609.498	265.839	358.400	411.246	411.246
Copper Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	-609.4980	-265.8390	-358.4000	-411.2457	-411.2457
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	1.261	1.261	1.261	1.356	1.165
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	-1.2606	-1.2606	-1.2606	-1.3560	-1.1651
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	60.000	7.122	10.041	8.616	7.660
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	-60.0000	-7.1220	-10.0410	-8.6158	-7.6600
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	0.1150	0.1725	0.2300	0.1725	0.1725
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	-0.1150	-0.1725	-0.2300	-0.1725	-0.1725
Gold Consumption (kg)	61.972	1,246.59	860.348	1,517.06	1,275.38
Gold Production (kg)	136.301	140.537	145.156	154.892	149.485
Gold Exports (kg)	74.329	-1106.0501	-715.1927	-1362.1687	-1125.8979
Silver Consumption (mt)	33.110	33.110	33.110	37.000	29.219
Silver Production (mt)	248.630	260.879	265.096	274.341	252.127

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Silver Exports (mt)	215.520	227.769	231.987	237.341	222.907

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Copper ($/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc ($/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin ($/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead ($/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel ($/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold ($/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver ($/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Background

Yemen is a low income country that is highly dependent on declining oil resources for revenue. Petroleum accounts for roughly 25 percent of GDP and 70 percent of government revenue. Yemen has been largely unaffected by and insulated from the effects of the global economic crisis because its financial system is underdeveloped and not well integrated into the international community, but the drop in oil prices since mid-2008 slashed government oil revenues. Yemen has tried to counter the effects of its declining oil resources by diversifying its economy through an economic reform program initiated in 2006 that is designed to bolster non-oil sectors of the economy and foreign investment. To that end, in 2009, Yemen exported its first liquefied natural gas as part of this diversification effort. The Yemen government has reaffirmed its commitment to reforms in a plan detailing the country's top ten development priorities. Despite these ambitious plans, Yemen faces difficult long term challenges, including declining water resources and a high population growth rate.

Foreign Investment Assessment

The Yemeni government is committed to attracting foreign investors through the improvement of its overall investment climate. To this end, it adopted a new policy of uniform treatment for all investors, domestic and foreign. Also noteworthy is the fact that the General Investment Authority, established in March 1992, has worked with the World Bank's Foreign Investment Advisory Service to update Yemen's Investment Law. That said, it should be noted that although Yemen has fundamentally sound investment laws, the enforcement of labor laws, customs tariff regulations, and tax laws, are elusive. Moreover, the overall transparency of the regulatory system is lacking. Health and safety standards are basic and often not enforced. The labor force is often lacking necessary skills.

Labor Force

Labor force: 5.79 million

Labor force - by occupation: most people are employed in agriculture and herding; services, construction, industry, and commerce account for less than one-fourth of the labor force

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture - products: grain, fruits, vegetables, pulses, qat (mildly narcotic shrub), coffee, cotton; dairy products, livestock (sheep, goats, cattle, camels), poultry; fish
Industries: crude oil production and petroleum refining; small-scale production of cotton textiles and leather goods; food processing; handicrafts; small aluminum products factory; cement

Import Commodities and Import Partners

Imports - commodities: food and live animals, machinery and equipment, chemicals
Imports - partners: UAE 12.9%, Saudi Arabia 10.2%, China 8.9%, US 4.9%, Kuwait 4.4%, France 4.1%

Export Commodities and Export Partners

Exports - commodities: crude oil, coffee, dried and salted fish
Exports - partners: China 31.7%, Thailand 20.3%, India 15.6%, South Korea 4.9%, Malaysia 4.3%

Telephone System

Telephones - main lines in use: 542,200
Telephones - mobile cellular: 411,100
general assessment: since unification in 1990, efforts have been made to create a national telecommunications network

domestic: the national network consists of microwave radio relay, cable, tropospheric scatter, and GSM cellular mobile telephone systems

international: country code - 967
satellite earth stations - 3 Intelsat (2 Indian Ocean and 1 Atlantic Ocean), 1 Intersputnik (Atlantic Ocean region), and 2 Arabsat; microwave radio relay to Saudi Arabia and Djibouti

Internet Users

Internet hosts: 138
Internet users: 100,000

Roads, Airports, Ports and Harbors

Highways: total: 67,000 km
Ports and harbors: Aden, Al Hudaydah, Al Mukalla, As Salif, Ras Issa, Mocha, Nishtun
Airports: 44; with paved runways: 16

Legal System and Considerations

The legal system is based on Islamic law, Turkish law, English common law, and local tribal customary law. Business disputes are generally handled by informal arbitration or within Yemen's court system. However, the court system is widely regarded as both inefficient and corrupt. While Yemen's investment-related laws are basically sound, as noted above, enforcement remains elusive. Moreover, the special commercial courts which provide a mechanism for commercial dispute resolution are generally considered ineffective. Most investors are advised to either establish a partnership with a Yemeni who has an intimate understanding of the system, or by including international arbitration clauses in their contracts.

Corruption Perception Ranking

See full list, as reported by Transparency International, elsewhere in this Country Review; typically, Yemen is ranked as one of the more corrupt countries in the world.

Cultural Considerations

This is a Muslim country where Islamic codes of conduct dictate culture and behavior.

For more information see:

United States Department of State Country Commercial Guide

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5
Armenia	5

Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	5.5

Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	8

Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	6
Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5

Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5
France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5
Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5
Ghana	5.5
Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5
Honduras	5.5

Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5
India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4
Iraq	3
Ireland	8
Israel	8.5
Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9
Kosovo	4.5

Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5
Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5
Libya	3
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	5

Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	5.5
Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5

Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8
Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6
Peru	6
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7

Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5
Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6
Serbia	6
Seychelles	5
Sierra Leone	4
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4
Suriname	5

Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4
Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5
Thailand	7.5-8
Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5
United Arab Emirates	8.5

United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the United Kingdom, Iceland, Switzerland and Austria. However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy, suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and Latvia have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern Ukraine fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring Russia.

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in Japan in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the

resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for Mali and Nigeria versus the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, and Burundi. Mali was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in Nigeria generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the Central African Republic was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of Burundi and Burkina Faso to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eybrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in Libya and Algeria have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these countries as well. Syria incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. Iraq saw a similar downgrade as a result of the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. Yemen, likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, Egypt and Tunisia saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe maintaining their low ratings.

The United States continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of Mexico, there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In Argentina, a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: Corruption Perceptions Index

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0
8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0

8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4
11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8
14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4
16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3
17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1

27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9
27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5
32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6
34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7
35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9
43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9

45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8
46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6
49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5
52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6
52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1
61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9

63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3
65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7
66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6
69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4
71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4
79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2

79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3
83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9
84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7
84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8
89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8
97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4

99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2
99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6
99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1
106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2

111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1
120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3
120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0
120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2
130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3

130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7
130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8
139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7
139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7
143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6
146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6

146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d´Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4
154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5
158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2
158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6
158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9
168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8

168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9
168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7
176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7
178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8
179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

Note:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of Serbia, is not listed above. No calculation is available for Kosovo at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, China claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a United States domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

Source:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL: http://www.transparency.org

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

Editor's Note:

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010
Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0
United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2
Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0
France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1

Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1
Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7
Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3
Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8
Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7

Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5
Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7
Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1
Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2
India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6

Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9
Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6
Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16
Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1
Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2

Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5
Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2
Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5
Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3
Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8

Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9
Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3
Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4
Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12
Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8

Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12
Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0
Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13
Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9
Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3

Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a
Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13
Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2
Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum

together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The United States falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by Sweden and Singapore in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of China continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- Germany moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- Switzerland tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: http://www.weforum.org

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

The general corporate tax rate in Yemen is 36 percent. Yemen has no bilateral tax treaties with any other country. Tax holidays of five to ten years are available for enterprises in some sectors. A 10 percent withholding tax applies to interest and dividends.

Free zone incentives include exemption from taxation on industrial and commercial profits for 15 years with a possible extension for an additional 10 years. One hundred percent foreign ownership is permitted and encouraged. Free transfer of capital and profits outside of the Aden Free Zone, not subject to exchange controls, is permitted; and there is an exemption from income tax on salaries, wages and bonuses of non-Yemeni employees working on Aden Free Zone projects.

Stock Market

The Central Bank of Yemen (CBY), with guidance from the World Bank, has been considering the establishment of a stock market in Yemen within the next few years. However, the consensus of most observers both inside and outside government (Yemeni and foreign) is that the country lacks the expertise to establish such a market any time soon. It is also doubtful that there are sufficient numbers of Yemeni investors with enough capital to spare for a stock market.

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

Cultural Demography

Unlike other people of the Arabian peninsula who have historically been nomads or semi-nomads, Yemenis are almost entirely sedentary and live in small villages and towns scattered throughout the highlands and coastal regions.

Yemenis are mainly of Semitic origin, although African strains are present among inhabitants of the coastal region. Yemen's population, totaling over 23 million, is predominantly Arab in its ethnic make-up.* Afro-Arabs are also represented, concentrated in western coastal locations. In addition, South Asians are represented in southern regions, while small European communities can be found in the metropolitan areas. Historically, Yemen was home to a greater number of minority groups. When the former states of north and south Yemen were established, however, most resident minority groups departed.

Yemenis are divided into two principal Islamic religious groups: the Zaidi sect of the Shi'a, found in the north and northwest, and the Shafa'i school of Sunni Muslims, found in the south and southeast. Although Islam is the dominant religion in Yemen, there are also small communities of Jews, Christians and Hindus.*

Arabic is the official language spoken in Yemen, although English is increasingly understood in major cities. In the Mahra area (the extreme east), several non-Arabic languages are also spoken.

*Note that it is difficult to find specific demographic numbers for the ethnic and religious groups in Yemen; the reliable sources used consistently by CountryWatch note that Arabs comprise the majority of the population, and Islam is the major religion.

Human Development

In terms of health and welfare, Yemen's infant mortality rate is high at 65.02 deaths per 1,000 live births. Yemen's almost constant state of civil instability has contributed to its high infant mortality rates, and its lower life expectancy and literacy rates. Life expectancy at birth for the total

population is also somewhat lower than other Middle Eastern countries at 60.97 years for the total population-59.16 years for males and 62.87 years for females.

The population growth estimate in recent years was 3.8 percent, mainly due to a high fertility rate of 6.82 children per woman. In July 2002, an annual report of the Ministry of Planning and Development revealed that Yemen's rate of population growth is increasing at a shocking rate. The MOPD report indicated that average annual population growth for the early 2000s reached five percent, an increase from previous statistics indicating Yemen's already alarming growth rate stood around 3.8 percent (as noted here).

Officially, the functional literacy rate was said to be lower than most other Middle Eastern countries at 50 percent. This figure is not gender balanced, however, as approximately 70.5 percent of males are literate while the number for females is only 30 percent, according to latest estimates.

But recently, a report released by the government-controlled Social Fund for Development revealed that education levels in Yemen were the worst in the Middle East and North Africa. According to the report, more than 2 million children receive no education at all in Yemen, where illiteracy is estimated at 55 percent. In rural areas, illiteracy is estimated to be as high as 80 percent -- much higher than the average rate of 50 percent. In Juf, the rate is 88 percent for girls. The report blamed the low level of education on a lack of resources and expertise in exploiting the available means. The high level of illiteracy apparently has resulted from an unequal distribution of educational institutions and the poor quality of teaching.

Complicating matters is the fact that the World Bank reports that growth of Yemen's Gross National Product has been a mere 1.6 percent in recent years, far surpassed by the rate of population growth. This disparity directly correlates to long-term increases in unemployment, lowered average income, and ultimately poverty. The quickened rate of population growth in Yemen means that these already serious problems will be amplified.

Note that access to water and sanitation in this country is regarded to be average, with notable obstacles in rural areas.

A notable measure of human development is the Human Development Index (HDI), which is formulated by the United Nations Development Program. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main areas of human development: longevity, knowledge and education, as well as economic standard of living. In a ranking of 169 countries, the HDI places Yemen in the low human development category, at 133rd place. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI, which is calculated and updated annually, offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com . See Bibliography for list of general research sources.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The Human Development Index (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human Development	High Human Development	Medium Human Development	Low Human Development
1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh
3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana
4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon
5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)

6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen
7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Surname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea
11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda
17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal
18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti
19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti
21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania
22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire

23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia
24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan
28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	159. Central African Republic
33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali
34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia
36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad
37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau

38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	123. Solomon Islands	165. Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
42. Barbados	84. Algeria	127. Sao Tome and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index available at URL: http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260
4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67
6	Finland	256.67
7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33
9	Brunei	253.33
10	Canada	253.33

11	Ireland	253.33
12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67
17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67
22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67
24	Vanuatu	246.67
25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33
27	Barbados	243.33
28	Belgium	243.33

29	Dominica	243.33
30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240
35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240
40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67
42	Dominican Republic	233.33
43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33
45	Qatar	233.33
46	Spain	233.33

47	Saint Lucia	233.33
48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230
53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33
58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33
60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33
61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220
63	Hong Kong	220
64	Indonesia	220

65	Kyrgyzstan	220
66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220
71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67
76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33
78	Philippines	213.33
79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33
81	Brazil	210
82	China	210

83	Cuba	210
84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67
89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33
94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33
96	Bhutan	200
97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67
99	Poland	196.67
100	Cape Verde	193.33

101	Kazakhstan	193.33
102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190
107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67
112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67
114	Morocco	186.67
115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67
117	Bolivia	183.33
118	Haiti	183.33

119	Nepal	183.33
120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180
125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180
130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67
132	Mauritania	176.67
133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33
135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33
136	Romania	173.33

137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170
138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170
143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33
148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160
150	Djibouti	160
151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67
153	Ethiopia	156.67
154	Latvia	156.67

155	Lithuania	156.67
156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150
161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33
166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33
168	Swaziland	140
169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33
171	Turkmenistan	133.33
172	Armenia	123.33

173	Sudan	120
174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Burundi found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. Japan was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as Brunei and Malaysia were in the top tier, while Pakistan was close to the bottom with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bad with Saudi Arabians reporing healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? Psychtalk 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the United States will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1
2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1

4	Guatemala	68.4
5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5
9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7
14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9
17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3
20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8

22	Sri Lanka	56.5
23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6
27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1
32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5
35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9
38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2

40	Algeria	51.2
41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4
45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2
50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1
53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8
56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7

58	Serbia	47.6
59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2
63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5
68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9
71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5
74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3

76	Spain	43.2
77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3
81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2
86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4
89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5
92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2

94	Iceland	38.1
95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5
99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2
104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0
107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3
110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7

112	Republic of the Congo	32.4
113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3
117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5
122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1
125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2
128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9

130	Angola	26.8
131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6
135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8
140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8
143	Zimbabwe	16.6

Source: *This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).*

Methodology: *The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: http://www.happyplanetindex.org/*

Status of Women

Overview

Since the unification of North and South Yemen in 1994, women have faced new obstacles and opportunities in public life. While growth in Muslim values has served to push women back into traditional domestic roles, the emergence of more democratic values is fostering their political participation.

Yemen trails most nations with regard to female education and family planning issues. The contraceptive usage rate is extremely low. As a result, total fertility rate (TFR) is very high. At 7.0, Yemen's TRF is one of the highest in the world. Most women have little access to basic healthcare and must obtain permission from a male relative to receive medical attention. The female adult illiteracy rate is more then double that of men. However, foreign assistance programs have implemented a multimillion-dollar project to increase reproductive health and education in the nation.

Yemeni women can vote and hold public office. However, most political parties fail to put forth female candidates. In the most recently election, only one independent woman candidate captured a seat in Parliament.

Women currently constitute 30 percent of the labor force. Since unification, higher levels of unemployment (overall) and increasing social discrimination have worked to weaken women's position in the economic sector.

The Shari'a, or Islamic law, is the determinant for the personal status of women in Yemeni society. Under this law, women must receive permission from a male guardian to travel outside of the nation, to work outside of the home, and in some instances leave the house. Prior to unification, the Shari'a was enforced in the North. However, since unification, women in the South have come under the purview of the Shari'a as well.

Domestic violence in Yemen is widespread. Since violence against women is considered a family affair, it typically goes unreported to authorities. An abused woman is expected to take her complaint to a male relative if intercession or sanctuary is required.

According to 2003 government statistics, approximately 72 percent of all women were illiterate, compared with approximately 40 percent of men.

The law stipulates that women are equal to men in conditions of employment and employment rights; however, social and economic discrimination is a common practice in both the public and private sectors. To date, government mechanisms to enforce equal protection are inefficient at best.

Yemen has been a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) since May 1984.

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:
121st out of 140

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:
80th out of 80

Female Population:
10.6 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:
62.87 years

Total Fertility Rate:
7.0

Maternal Mortality Ratio (2000):
570

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:
N/A

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):
27%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:
21

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):
21%

Female Adult Literacy Rate:
30%

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:

41%

Female-Headed Households (%):
10%

Economically Active Females (%):
30.9%

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):
26%

Female Estimated Earned Income:
$413

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):
Lower or Single House: 0.3%
Upper House or Senate: N/A

Year Women Received the Right to Vote:
1967 (partial recognition)
1970 (full recognition)

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:
1967 (partial recognition)
1970 (full recognition)

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation levels)
2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)
3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)
4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

	2010 rank	2010 score	2010 rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank

Country								
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4
Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1
New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9
Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8
Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10
South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19
United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15

Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13
United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46
Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17
Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22
Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62
Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a
Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50

Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14
Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38
Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32
Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49
Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45
France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86
Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25

Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36
Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77
Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72
Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78
Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53
Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64
Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47

Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63
Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65
Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84
Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80
Brueni Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66
Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100
Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71

Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82
Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48
Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93
Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94
Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83
Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59
Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56

United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97
Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a
Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106
Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115
Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111
Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109
Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108

Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119
Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120
Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121
Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122
Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123
Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112
Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, France has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the United States has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. Canada has continued to remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. Lesotho and South African ranked highly in the index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite Lesotho still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The Philippines and Sri Lanka were the top ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context. The Philippines has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the United Arab Emirates held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Cultural Considerations

As Yemen is generally a conservative Muslim culture, Islamic behaviors and practices should be respected. For example, one should always be aware of how Islamic law, which is delineated in the Shari'a, is used as the basis for the legal and juridical structure in Islamic countries. While the violation of traditions may simply be rationalized as ignorance in other countries, they take on far greater meaning in countries where the Islamic religion textures all aspect of society and culture. Yemenis speak Arabic while the most commonly used foreign language is English.

One of Yemen's most prized art forms is the recitation of poetry in classical and colloquial styles. For centuries poetry has been spoken, sung, and also improvised during social events, at special performances, and in competition. Poetry events are also recognized as occasions where normally taboo topics can be addressed without concern. . Traditional performances include musical-poetical improvisations called dan in the Hadhramaut, during which singers chant a tune without words and poets offer them a freshly created text line by line.

Rich traditions of decorative art, such as silver jewelry, embroidered garments, handwoven textiles, and architectural decor, are still practiced. There are art galleries in large cities with modern drawings, paintings, and sculptures.

The chewing of khat, or qat, the leaves of a flowering shrub that grows locally, is very common among the male population. Juice from the leaves gives people a sense of euphoria, stimulation and at times sleeplessness. Saudi clergy have imposed a strict ban on khat but authorities in Yemen consider it harmless.

Yemen is basically a poor country. This is partly due to a rigid caste-like system rules the Yemeni social hierarchy. Members of the population who can trace their lineage back to Muhammad occupy the highest levels while the poorly educated with less certain genealogy make up the lower strata. The latter tend to work in low-status jobs that in most cases are hereditary.

Resource sources include:
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Yemen
http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/Yemen.html

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. The handshake is an acceptable form of greeting, however, men and women who are not related may choose not to shake hands with each other.

2. Stick to formal forms of address, complete with titles, unless invited to do otherwise.

3. Always respect the Islamic codes of behavior.

4. The visitor should respect the five times of daily prayer.

5. One should always remove his or her shoes before entering houses or mosques.

6. Never expose the bottom of the foot to anyone.

7. The left hand is taboo. Never take anything, give anything, drink or eat with the left hand.

8. No flirting and no public affection, even between married couples.

9. Women and men may be separated during meals and public places such as movie theatres.

10. Alcohol and pork products (even footballs) are forbidden to Muslims.

11. A leaf called *qat* may be chewed during business meetings. This mild stimulant is an important aspect of social behavior and it may be offered to the visitor

12. Dress should always be modest. Women should take special care not to wear revealing clothing so as to avoid harassment and hostility from the predominantly Muslim population. Women should were loose fitting clothes that cover shoulders, midriffs, chests and calves. Neither sex should wear

shorts.

Travel Information

Please Note:

This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the United States Department of State's listings available at URL:
http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, Philippines areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

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Please Note:

The U.S. Department of State urges U.S. citizens to defer travel to Yemen and for those U.S. citizens currently living in or visiting Yemen to depart.

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the high security threat level in Yemen due to terrorist activities and civil unrest. On February 11, 2015 due to the deteriorating security situation in Sanaa, the Department of State suspended embassy operations and U.S. Embassy Sanaa American staff have been relocated out of the country. All consular services, routine and/or emergency, have been suspended until further notice.

The level of instability and ongoing threats in Yemen remain severe. There are no plans for a U.S. government-coordinated evacuation of U.S. citizens at this time. We encourage all U.S. citizens to shelter in a secure location until they are able to depart safely. U.S. citizens wishing to depart should do so via commercial transportation options when they become available. Keep vital records and travel documents close at hand; U.S. citizens should be prepared to depart at a moment's notice. The airports are currently closed, but may open unexpectedly; other unforeseen opportunities to depart may also suddenly arise.

Additionally, some foreign governments may arrange transportation for their nationals and may be willing to offer assistance to others. There is no guarantee that foreign governments will assist U.S. citizens in leaving Yemen. U.S. citizens who choose to seek foreign government assistance in leaving Yemen should only do so if they can safely make their way to the point of embarkation and have received confirmation that there is space available. Even if assured there is space aboard transportation, U.S. citizens should be aware that there is no guarantee that they will be permitted to board the transport, or may have to wait an indefinite period until they can do so. There is also no guarantee of where travelers will go.

Terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), continue to be active throughout Yemen. The U.S. government remains extremely concerned about possible attacks on U.S. citizens (whether visiting or residing in Yemen), and U.S. facilities, businesses, and perceived U.S. and Western interests. In addition, piracy in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean is a security threat to maritime activities in the region.

The U.S. government is concerned about the risks to civil aircraft operating in Yemen's Sanaa Flight Information Region (FIR) due to ongoing military operations, political instability, and violence from competing armed groups involved in combat operations and other military-related activity associated with the unrest.

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International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

1. Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even

private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.
2. Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.
3. Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.
4. Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.
5. Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.
6. Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy, travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.
7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.
8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.
9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these complexities and subtleties before you travel.
10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.
11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.
12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male of female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.

13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.
14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.
15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Note to Travelers

The Republic of Yemen was established in 1990 following unification of the former Yemen Arab Republic (North) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South). A President, prime minister and cabinet, and an elected parliament govern the country. Islamic and traditional ideals, beliefs and practices provide the foundation of the country's customs and laws. Yemen is a developing country, and modern tourist facilities, except in the major cities, are not widely available. The capital city is Sanaa.
Please see the "Safety and Security" section below before traveling to Yemen.

Tips for Travelers

• Check with your embassy, consulate, or appropriate government institution related to travel before traveling.

• Get adequate travel insurance, including medical insurance.

• Enter next of kin details into your passport.

• Women should wear loose clothing - trousers, long skirts, loose tops, head scarf necessary if visiting mosques. Do not wear shorts.

• You should bring all personal medication and carry tissues/toilet paper, feminine hygiene items, lip salve for higher areas and plenty of moisture creams as the atmosphere is very dry at altitude.

• Credit Cards can be used in very few places.

• Carry a water bottle on all trips.

• Do not get involved in drugs; penalties are severe

Note: This information is directly quoted from the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sources: *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

Personal relationships are the key to improving business ties in Yemen. Although Yemeni law does not require an agent, businesses rarely succeed without a Yemeni working on their behalf. While Yemenis will agree to formal business meetings, most effective discussions occur at "qat chews" after lunch. These events are held at businessmen's homes where guests sit on cushions on the floor. Chewing qat is not obligatory but your host will be gratified if you give it a try. Chemically related to amphetamines, qat is a controlled substance in many countries and may not be brought into their borders. Individuals with heart problems, high blood pressure, insomnia, or gastro-intestinal problems should not chew.

Yemenis have been engaging in commerce for millennia and have refined the art of negotiation. Delay is a favorite tactic, but it can also be a polite refusal. The use of the phrase "Inshallah" (God willing) should not be interpreted as approval or agreement. Corruption and red tape within the government is endemic.

Most private sector business offices open in the mornings, close for lunch and qat, and reopen in the early evening.

Sources: *United States Department of State Commercial Guides*

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom
http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/

Visa Information from the Government of Australia
http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html

Passport Information from the Government of Australia
https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx

Passport Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro
http://www.visapro.com

Sources: United States Department of State, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia

http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/

Travel Tips from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist

Your trip abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broch

Medical information for travelers from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information
http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Sources: United States Department of State; United States Customs Department, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia; Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers
http://www.travlang.com/languages/

http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm

World Weather Forecasts
http://www.intellicast.com/
http://www.wunderground.com/
http://www.worldweather.org/

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock
http://www.timeanddate.com/
http://www.worldtimezone.com/

International Airport Codes
http://www.world-airport-codes.com/

International Dialing Codes
http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm
http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/

International Phone Guide
http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm

International Mobile Phone Guide
http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm

International Internet Café Search Engine
http://cybercaptive.com/

Global Internet Roaming
http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm

World Electric Power Guide
http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm
http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm

World Television Standards and Codes
http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm
International Currency Exchange Rates
http://www.xe.com/ucc/

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World
http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator
http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/
http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html

International Chambers of Commerce
http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html

World Tourism Websites
http://123world.com/tourism/

Diplomatic and Consular Information

United States Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.usembassy.gov/

United Kingdom Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/
http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions
http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World
http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/

Travel Warnings and Alerts from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll

Sources: United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United States Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

United States Department of State Information on Terrorism
http://www.state.gov/s/ct/

Government of the United Kingdom Resource on the Risk of Terrorism
http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926

Government of Canada Terrorism Guide
http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia
http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety
http://www.faasafety.gov/

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer Anna Warman)
http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information
http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp

Information on Human Rights
http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/

Sources: The United States Department of State, the United States Customs Department, the Government of Canada, the Government of United Kingdom, the Government of Australia, the

Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, the reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

Guinea - Ebola
Liberia - Ebola
Nepal - Eathquake zone
Sierra Leone - Ebola

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

Cameroon - Polio
Somalia - Polio
Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone
Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

Australia - Ross River disease
Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles
Brazil - Dengue Fever
Brazil - Malaria
Brazil - Zika
China - H7N9 Avian flu
Cuba - Cholera
Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu
Ethiopia - Measles
Germany - Measles
Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
Kyrgyzstan - Measles
Malaysia -Dengue Fever
Mexico - Chikungunya
Mexico - Hepatitis A
Nigeria - Meningitis
Philippines - Measles
Scotland - Mumps
Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya
Throughout Central America - Chikungunya
Throughout South America - Chikungunya
Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing available at URL:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices

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Health Information for Travelers to Yemen

The preventive measures you need to take while traveling in the Middle East depend on the areas you visit and the length of time you stay. You should observe the precautions listed in this document in most areas of this region. However, in highly developed areas of Israel, you should observe health precautions similar to those that would apply while traveling in the United States.

Travelers' diarrhea, the number one illness in travelers, can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or

parasites, which can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). A low risk for malaria exists in parts of Iran, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Travelers to risk areas of Oman, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen should take mefloquine for malaria prevention. Travelers to risk areas of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey should take chloroquine. For specific locations, see Malaria Information for Travelers to the Middle East (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/mideast.htm).

A certificate of yellow fever vaccination may be required for entry into certain of these countries, but only if you are coming from a country in tropical South America or sub-Saharan Africa. (There is no risk for yellow fever in the Middle East.) For detailed information, see Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm).

Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and plague are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent these diseases.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):
See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.
• Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
• Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
• Meningococcal vaccine is required for pilgrims to Mecca for the annual Hajj. However, CDC currently recommends the vaccine for all travelers to Mecca, including those traveling for the Umra. (For more information, please see Meningococcal Disease Among Travelers to Saudi Arabia at URL http://www.cdc.gov/travel/saudimenin.htm.)
• Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
• Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
• As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles, and a one-time dose of polio for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11-12 years who have not completed the series.

All travelers should take the following precautions, no matter the destination:
• Wash hands often with soap and water.
• Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid travel at night if possible and always use seat belts.

• Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
• Don't eat or drink dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
• Don't share needles with anyone.
• Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
• Never eat undercooked ground beef and poultry, raw eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products. Raw shellfish is particularly dangerous to persons who have liver disease or compromised immune systems.

Travelers visiting undeveloped areas should take the following precautions:
To Stay Healthy, Do:
• Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
• If you visit an area where there is risk for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
• Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals), and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.
• To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.

To Avoid Getting Sick:
• Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
• Don't drink beverages with ice.
• Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page at URL http://www.cdc.gov/travel/safety.htm.)
• Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

What You Need To Bring with You:
• Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis).
• Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children.
• Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
• Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See Do's above for more details about water filters.
• Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
• Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy

of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:
If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.
If you become ill-even as long as a year after your trip-tell your doctor the areas you have visited.

For More Information:
Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about protecting yourself against diseases that occur in the Middle East, such as:

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects
Dengue, Malaria, Plague

Carried in Food or Water
Cholera, *Escherichia coli,* diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Schistosomiasis, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact
Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, please check the Diseases (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm) section and the Health Topics A-Z (http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm).

Note:

Yemen is located in the Middle East health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:
http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinat.htm

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

General Overview:

Most of Yemen 's environmental challenges are related to the country's limited water resources, and its arid geomorphology. Of particular concern is the country's increasing problem of desertification – an issue that is exacerbated by the country's already-arid natural conditions.

Current Issues:

-very limited natural fresh water resources
-inadequate supplies of potable water
-overgrazing
-soil erosion
-desertification

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc):

6.7

Country Rank (GHG output):

97th

Natural Hazards:

-sandstorms
-dust storms

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Yemen is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- The National Council for Environment Protection in Yemen
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources
- The Ministry of Electricity and Water
- The Ministry of Health.

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

N/A

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Environmental Modification
- Hazardous Wastes
- Law of the Sea
- Nuclear Test Ban
- Ozone Layer Protection

Signed but not ratified:

- None

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

2004

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	**Country**
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia
5	Japan
6	India
7	Germany
8	United Kingdom
9	Canada

10	Korea, South
11	Italy
12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa
15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland
23	Taiwan
24	Turkey
25	Thailand
26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan

28	Malaysia
29	Egypt
30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan
33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria
41	Austria
42	Iraq
43	Finland
44	Philippines
45	Vietnam

46	Korea, North
47	Israel
48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus
51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya
59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore
61	Switzerland
62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan

64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh
66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman
69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia
77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic
79	Lebanon
80	Estonia
81	Yemen

82	Jordan
83	Slovenia
84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina
87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar
95	Sudan
96	Kenya
97	Macedonia
98	Mongolia
99	Ghana

100	Cyprus
101	Moldova
102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei
105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia
113	Senegal
114	Uruguay
115	Gabon
116	Albania
117	Nicaragua

118	Botswana
119	Paraguay
120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia
123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea
131	Zambia
132	Suriname
133	Iceland
134	Togo
135	Benin

136	Uganda
137	Bahamas
138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana
141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso
149	Malawi
150	Swaziland
151	Belize
152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone

154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda
156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia
159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau
167	Central African Republic
168	Palau
169	Burundi
170	Grenada
171	Lesotho

172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands
174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru
177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati
Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor
Not Ranked	Holy See
Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein

Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia
Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia
Not Ranked	Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd
Cook Islands are ranked 184th
Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation. Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike, are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the

Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure

systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many

Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalinization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks, contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the

late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies-a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results

with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation, nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

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1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the

sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the United

States, the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the United States. It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural

photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chloroflorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term. Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation."

As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for

the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to

sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western United States, current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant

on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots. Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.

- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.

- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionucleides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater

supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas, forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionucleides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial chemicals, the most prevalent remediative approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment. Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have considerable support in the United States, how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in

North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in China, elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "Biodiversity Assessment"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The United Kingdom identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas

occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the interrelationship between agrodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

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Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/

Global Warming Information Page. URL: http://globalwarming.org

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

<http://www.unep.net/>

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

<http://climatechange.unep.net/>

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>

World Resources Institute.

<http://www.wri.org/>

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discusssions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in Kyoto, Japan in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990 levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the United States (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and Japan, are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on

developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries -- with the obvious exceptions of India and China -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and Japan, are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto

Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, in Bonn, Germany, in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, Morocco, to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as Russia, Japan and Canada agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the

Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia 's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto , Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and United States President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in Mexico City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as South Africa, had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico and Norway -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. Bangladesh identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico and Norway also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But Australia went even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant developing nation states, such as China and India. Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of emerging economies like China and India, with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, China -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, China had announced it would reduce the

intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, China was now accusing the United States and the European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the United States -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with Japan for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, China demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on India -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in India, who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in India was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and India were joined by Brazil and South Africa in the crafting of a draft document calling for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in Denmark would be

classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts everyone on the planet."

Likewise, Tuvalu demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. Tuvalu also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from Kiribati joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned that the people of Kiribati could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as Tuvalu and Kiribati in the Pacific, and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant Saudi Arabia was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the United States demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. United States President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the United States Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the United States Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, United States Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the United States was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009. The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of Sweden -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by China and India, appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to shore up support for a new climate change, United States President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the United States and China. At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its

expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The United States argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being cultivated. A draft text called for $100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in Qatar extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of Nauru, a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: “We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us.”

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with United States President Barack Obama's request for $60 billion from Congress to deal with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the United States and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around $10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Tonga, and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in Qatar (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: http://aosis.org/

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP) in Paris, France, ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence

was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The United States leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have. "

Former United States Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accompishments ensconced in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing

energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold
- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years
- $100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as China and India, objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the $100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around $44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the $100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the United States, which would have to ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be

anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto, China and India were not held to the same standards as the United States and European countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centrigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in seal level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future … is already bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of Tuvalu. No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find cnsensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its responsibility for this irreversible damage.. Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the United States and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as Russia, China and India, there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, and the Marshall Islands, called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy

and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of Kiribati, "Imagine living in a place where you know it's going to go away someday, but you don't know what day that wave's going to come over and wash your home away." He added, "It's a disaster we know is going to happen." Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as Kiribati. Stone explained, "For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion," Stone explained. "So it's not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it's also about the day that there's just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island." Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, "If you look ahead 50 years, a country like Kiribati could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere."

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the Marshall Islands emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the United States. He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: "We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival." Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, "Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era."

Debrum of the Marshall Islands espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, "Climate change won't stop overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer."

Editor's Entry on Environmental Policy:

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Fiji, among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and cimate change, derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover, because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being unihabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in France, with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1079

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1002

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), Basel, 1989

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Helsinki, 1992

Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention), Waigani, 1995

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), Geneva 1957

FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, Rome, 1985

2. Major International Marine Accords:

Global Conventions

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention 1972), London, 1972

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by Protocol of 1978 relation thereto (MARPOL 73/78), London, 1973 and 1978

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1969 (1969 CLC), Brussels, 1969, 1976, and 1984

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Nature Conservation and Terrestrial Living Resources

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5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANEA)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

The demographic numbers for cities and national populations listed in CountryWatch content are derived from the Geoba.se website, which analyzes data from the World Bank. The current demographic numbers displayed on the Countrywatch website are reflective of the latest available estimates.

The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

derived from a mix of sources including the Altapedia, Central Intelligence Agency Factbook, Infoplease, and State Department Background Notes.

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Note on Edition Dates:

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Methodology Notes for Economic Data:

Estimates by CountryWatch.com of GDP in dollars in most countries are made by converting local currency GDP data from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook to US dollars by market exchange rates estimated from the International Monetary Fund International Financial Statistics and projected out by the CountryWatch Macroeconomic Forecast. Real GDP was estimated by deflating current dollar values by the US GDP Implicit Price Deflator.

Exceptions to this method were used for:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nauru
- Cuba
- Palau
- Holy See
- San Marino
- Korea, North
- Serbia & Montenegro
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Liechtenstein
- Tonga
- Monaco
- Tuvalu

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Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the Human Development Index (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: http://www.undp.org

Note on History sections

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Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

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Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL: http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.
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This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

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Web address: http://www.countrywatch.com
Email: support@countrywatch.com

ISBN: 1- 60523- 804-X Yemen Country Review 2016

ISSN: 1- 60523- 893-5

Printed in the United States of America