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Summary Article: **Yemen**

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(yĕm'ĕn), officially Republic of Yemen, republic (2015 est. pop. 26,916,000), 207,300 sq mi (535,800 sq km), SW Asia, at the southern edge of the Arabian peninsula. The present nation of Yemen was formed in 1990, when the Yemen Arab Republic (the former Yemen or Northern Yemen) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (the former Southern Yemen) were unified. Yemen is bordered on the north by Saudi Arabia, on the east by Oman, on the south by the Gulf of Aden, and on the west by the Red Sea. The islands of Kamaran, in the Red Sea, Perim, in the Bab al-Mandeb, and Socotra, in the Arabian Sea, are part of Yemen. Sana is the capital; the port of Aden is the country's commercial capital. Other important cities are Hodeida, Mukalla, Taiz, Ibb, and Abyan.

Land and People

Yemen has a narrow coastal plain, stretching more than 700 mi (1,130 km), along the southern edge of the Arabian peninsula. It also has interior highlands and an eastern desert. The highlands, which are actually a section of the upturned Arabian plateau, are the highest part (rising to more than 12,000 ft/3,660 m) of the Arabian peninsula. They receive an annual average rainfall of c.20 in. (50 cm), making them also the wettest part of the peninsula; most of the precipitation occurs during the summer rainy season. The remainder of Yemen is hot and virtually rainless in the coastal regions. Numerous wadis radiate from the highlands, but there are no permanent streams; oases and springs provide local water needs.

Yemen is the most populous country on the Arabian Peninsula. The population is predominantly Arab, but there are also Afro-Arabs, South Asians, and Europeans. The north of Yemen is nearly 100% Muslim, both Sunni and Zaydi Shiite; the south is predominantly Muslim, but also has Christians and Hindus. Between 1948 and 1950 about 50,000 Yemeni Jews emigrated to Israel; only a handful remain. Arabic is the nation's principal language. The tribal social structure is still prevalent in the country, although its importance diminishes along the coast, due to more foreign contact.

Economy

Most Yemenis are engaged in agriculture and herding. N Yemen produces grain, fruits, vegetables, khat (a stimulant-containing shrub), coffee, cotton, and livestock (sheep, goats, cattle, and camels) but is dependent on imports for most of its essential needs. Terraced agriculture, dating from ancient times, is still practiced. S Yemen is one of the poorest areas of the Arabian peninsula. The climate is arid, and only a fraction of the land is arable. Pastoralism is prevalent in the south, and the greatest amount of industry is located in Aden. There is fishing, food processing, salt mining, and small-scale manufacturing, including cotton textiles, leather goods, handicrafts, and aluminum products. The country produces and refines petroleum, and oil export revenues have boosted the economy since the late 1980s, but oil reserves are now being depleted. Imported oil is also processed into petroleum products for export. Other exports include coffee and processed fish. Foodstuffs, live animals, machinery, and chemicals are imported. Important trading partners include China, the United Arab Emirates, India, and Switzerland. Yemen's GDP is supplemented by remittances from Yemenis working abroad and by large amounts of foreign aid. One of the principal reasons for Southern Yemen's merger with (Northern) Yemen in 1990

was the steady decline of its economy and the loss of Soviet political and economic support. Pervasive corruption, however, has hindered new economic development in unified Yemen.

Government

Yemen is governed under the constitution of 1991 as amended. The president, who is head of state, is elected by popular vote for a seven-year term. The government is headed by the prime minister, who is appointed by the president. The bicameral legislature consists of the Shura Council, whose 111 members are appointed by the president, and the House of Representatives, whose 301 members are popularly elected to six-year terms. Administratively, the country is divided into 19 governorates.

History

Northern Yemen

The earliest recorded civilizations of S Arabia were the Minaean and Sabaeen. The Sabaeen kingdom (see Sheba) flourished from c.750 B.C. to c.115 B.C., with Marib (located east of Sana) the capital after c.600 B.C. Sabaeen society was highly developed technically, as witnessed by the remains of a great dam at Marib that was the center of a large irrigation system. The Himyarites, who followed the Sabaeans, were invaded by the Romans (1st cent. B.C.) and were occupied by the Ethiopians (c.A.D. 340–A.D. 378). During the second Himyarite kingdom Christianity and Judaism took root in Yemen. Ethiopia again conquered the country in 525. After a Persian period (575–628), Islam came to Yemen, which was soon reduced to a province of the Muslim caliphate.

After the breakup of the caliphate, Yemen came under the control of the rising Rassite dynasty, imams of the Zaidi sect who built the theocratic political structure of Yemen that lasted until 1962. The Fatamid caliphs of Egypt occupied most of Yemen from c.1000 until c.1175, when it fell to the Ayyubids, who ruled until c.1250. By 1520, Yemen formed part of the Ottoman Empire, which exercised at least nominal sovereignty until the end of World War I. A turbulent wave of Wahhabism, a puritanical sect of Islam, swept across the Arabian peninsula at the opening of the 19th cent. and drove out the Zaidi imams. Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt, acting in the name of the Ottoman sultan, drove out the Wahhabis in 1818, and the Egyptians remained until 1840. The Ottoman Turks then replaced the Egyptians, giving the imam full autonomy in the interior.

After the Ottoman evacuation (1918), Imam Yahya moved to expand Yemen's territory, but his only gain was the port and surrounding area of Hodeida. In 1934, after a brief Saudi Arabian invasion and skirmishes with Great Britain (which had the protectorate of Aden), Yemen's boundaries were fixed by treaty with Saudi Arabia and Great Britain. However, clashes on the Aden border continued sporadically. Modifying its traditional policy of isolation, Yemen became more active in foreign affairs after World War II; it joined the Arab League in 1945 and the United Nations in 1947 and established diplomatic relations with other nations. However, the imam, as both king and spiritual leader, continued to rule along theocratic lines.

Dissatisfaction, hitherto rapidly suppressed, grew, and in 1948 a palace revolt broke out, and the old Imam Yahya was assassinated. Crown Prince Ahmad drove out the insurgents and succeeded as imam. The new ruler accepted technical and economic assistance from both the West and the Communist bloc. From 1958 to 1961, Yemen joined with the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria) to form the United Arab States, which in reality was a paper alliance. Disorders broke out in 1959, and Imam Ahmad survived an assassination attempt in 1961. After his death in 1962, Imam Ahmad was succeeded by Crown Prince Muhammad al-Badr (later Imam Mansur Billah Muhammad), who favored a neutralist foreign

policy. Soon afterward a revolt headed by pro-Egyptian army officers deposed the imam, but he escaped and led royalist tribes against the new government.

The ruling junta, commanded by Col. Adallah al-Salal, proclaimed a republic, and the army contained the imam's forces. Yemen then became an international battleground, with Egypt supporting the republicans and Saudi Arabia and Jordan the royalists. The Yemeni republicans split into opposing factions on the issue of Egyptian support. In an administrative reorganization in 1966, the independent government of Premier Hassan al-Amri was ousted by a strongly pro-Egyptian regime, with al-Salal assuming the office of premier. Many of al-Amri's supporters were arrested or removed from office. In 1967, by mutual agreement, Egyptian troops were withdrawn from Yemen, and Saudi Arabian aid to the royalists was halted. In Nov., 1967, al-Salal's government was overthrown while he was abroad, and a three-man republican council was formed with Qadi Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani (one of the anti-Egyptian leaders) as chairman; al-Amri resumed the premiership.

Fighting between the republicans and the royalists continued until 1970, when Saudi Arabia formally recognized the republican regime and stopped aid to the royalists. Between 1967 and 1972 frequent border clashes occurred between Yemen and Southern Yemen, until an accord was signed (1972) to merge the two countries. However, by 1974 the agreement had not been implemented, and fighting continued between the two states. On June 12, 1974, Chairman al-Iryani resigned after a period of internal political tension, and the next day a group of army officers led by Col. Ibrahim al-Hamidi staged a nonviolent coup. The officers established a command council to govern the country, suspended the constitution, and reestablished civilian rule.

Al-Hamidi was assassinated in Oct., 1977, and was succeeded by Lt.-Col. Ahmad al-Ghashmi, who continued civilian administration until his assassination in June, 1978. Lt.-Col. Ali Abdullah Saleh then was elected president. In early 1979 border fighting with neighboring Southern Yemen erupted into full-scale war. Peace was soon established, however, and another unification agreement was devised. Saleh was elected to a second term in 1983 and a third term in 1988.

Southern Yemen

A number of ancient empires, including the Minaean, Sabaeen, and Himyarite, flourished in southern Yemen. The region came under Muslim influence in the 7th cent. In the 16th cent. it became part of the Ottoman Empire and came under the suzerainty of the imams of Yemen. (For a more detailed history, see above history of Northern Yemen or see Arabia.)

The British presence in Southern Yemen began in 1839, when forces of the British East India Co. occupied Aden. In 1854 and 1857 the Kuria Muria and Perim islands were ceded to the British, and other mainland areas were purchased by them. Between 1886 and 1914, Britain signed a number of protectorate treaties with local rulers. In 1937 the area, which by then consisted of 24 sultanates, emirates, and sheikhdoms, was designated the Aden Protectorate and was divided for administrative purposes into the East Aden protectorate and the West Aden protectorate. In 1959 six small states of the West Aden protectorate formed the Federation of the Emirates of the South; it was later enlarged to 10 members. Despite considerable opposition from its population, the Aden colony proper was made part of the federation (1963), which was then renamed the Federation of South Arabia (see South Arabia, Federation of).

By 1965, 16 tribal states had joined the federation. However, nationalist groups in Aden remained

adamantly opposed to the federation and began a terrorist campaign against the British. Two rival nationalist groups emerged: the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY). Although Britain had promised to withdraw from the region by 1968, the NLF, which had emerged as the dominant group by 1967, forced the collapse of the federation after taking control of the governments of all the component states. Britain accelerated its withdrawal, and Southern Yemen became independent in Nov., 1967, with Qahtan al-Shaabi of the NLF the first president. In June, 1969, he resigned, and was succeeded by Rubayi Ali. In 1970 the country received a new constitution and was renamed the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

Following independence border disputes arose with Oman and the Yemen Arab Republic, some of which led to armed clashes. An accord was signed with the Yemen Arab Republic in 1972 calling for the end of fighting and the merger of the two countries. However, the agreement was not to be implemented for several years. In Apr., 1972, the government of Southern Yemen suffered a severe blow when 25 of its top officials were killed in an airplane crash. Rubayi Ali was ousted in June, 1978, by Abdalfattah Ismail, a radical rival who in 1979 signed a 20-year relation treaty with the Soviet Union. Soviet influence, including the presence of naval bases, became predominant in Southern Yemen, which was the Arab world's only Marxist state. Fighting with Northern Yemen again broke out in Feb., 1979, but was resolved one month later by a peace treaty.

In 1983, Ali Nasser Muhammad, Ismail's successor as president, restored relations with Saudi Arabia and Oman. In Jan., 1986, Muhammad tried to eliminate internal party opposition by killing party leaders and former president Ismail, but rival political fighting erupted for two weeks, after which Muhammad fled to Ethiopia. His supporters were mostly eliminated by the administration of Haider Abu Bakr al-Attas, Muhammad's successor. In Oct., 1988, Attas visited Oman, the first Southern Yemen leader to do so.

Unified Yemen

The leaders of the two Yemens met in Dec., 1989, when final unification agreements were made, and the borders were opened in Feb., 1990. On May 22 of that year, the two Yemens were officially united. North Yemen president Saleh became the leader of a unified Yemen, and Sana became the nation's capital. By 1993, however, relations between north and south had again grown tense. Fighting between northern and southern army units in 1994 erupted into a civil war between southern secessionists and Yemen's northern-based government. The war lasted for nine weeks and was decisively won by northern forces. Subsequently, Saleh was officially elected by parliament as president of the country, and a coalition government that excluded the leading southern party was established. The new government imposed unpopular economic austerity measures. Muslim extremists committed sporadic acts of violence in the south, and armed tribespeople from remote areas staged kidnappings of foreign tourists.

Yemen's armed forces clashed with Eritrea over control of the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea in the early 1990s; the Hague Tribunal awarded the islands to Yemen in 1998. The president's party won nearly two thirds of the seats in the 1997 legislative elections. In Sept., 1999, in Yemen's first direct presidential election, Saleh was returned to office; candidates from opposition parties were not approved to run, and the government was charged with fraudulently inflating the vote count. In Oct., 2000, the U.S.S. *Cole* was damaged by a suicide bombing while anchored at Aden and the British embassy was bombed. Also in 2000, a border treaty ending disputes with Saudi Arabia that dated to the 1930s was signed.

President Saleh announced support for the U.S. "war on terror" in 2001 and subsequently received

American aid and made some moves against Muslim extremists, but the terror attacks also continued. Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) won more than two thirds of the seats in the 2003 legislative elections. In June, 2004, government forces began raids against supporters of Shiite cleric Hussein al-Houthi, who was accused of sedition and extremism. The cleric had denounced the government's pro-American policies and government corruption. Several months of fighting in NW Yemen, in which hundreds died, followed, and in September Sheikh Houthi was killed and a cease-fire mediated. Fighting erupted again in Apr., 2005, when the government attacked his followers, commonly referred to as Houthis or Hawthhis, after unsuccessful negotiations. Almost a year later some 600 rebels were released in an amnesty, but attacks continued spordically until June, 2007, when a cease-fire was agreed to. There were, however, additional attacks by Jan., 2008, and in subsequent months, and fighting with the rebels intensified in the second half of 2009, displacing some 200,000 persons. In Nov., 2009, a rebel incursion into Saudi Arabia led also to fighting between Saudi forces and the rebels. The conflict extended into Feb., 2010, when a truce was established; the rebels also withdrew from Saudi Arabia. The truce largely held, although there were clashes in July, 2010. There also have been clashes with Islamic militants linked to Al Qaeda, with an increase in operations against them in E Yemen in early 2010 after an attempted bombing (Dec. 25, 2009) of a plane in the United States by a Nigerian with ties to the Yemeni Islamists.

Meanwhile, in July, 2005, fuel price increases sparked protests and riots across Yemen, leading the government to roll the increases back somewhat. That same month the president said he would not seek a new term in Sept., 2006, a position he reversed a year later. In the 2006 presidential Saleh was reelected with more than three-fourths of the vote, but the opposition rejected the results. Despite irregularities, the election was generally regarded as an improvement over the previous presidential poll.

By early 2008, S Yemeni unhappiness with unification was again becoming pronounced, as protests and riots occurred in parts of S Yemen; sporadic unrest continued into 2010. Amid protests in early 2011 against his rule (which echoed similar protests in Tunisia and Egypt against entrenched rulers there), the president promised in February not to seek reelection. Recurring demonstrations, however, were stoked by the killings of demonstrators, which also split the ruling party and the military. By April, the widespread protests had crippled the country.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) attempted to negotiate Saleh's resignation, but the president several times reneged on agreements. The unsettled situation invigorated militant Islamists, who mounted attacks in S Yemen and were able to seize control of some areas; fighting with the Islamists continued into 2012. In late May tribal militias became increasing active in opposing Saleh, and fought with government forces in Sana and Taiz. In early June Saleh was severely wounded in an attack on the presidential compound and went to Saudi Arabia for treatment; he returned in September. A truce with the tribal militias largely held during the summer, but beginning in September there were more serious outbreaks.

In November, Saleh agreed to transfer his powers to Vice President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi under a GCC-brokered plan, remaining on as titular president until an election (later were called for Feb., 2012). An interim government, with cabinet posts divided equally between the government and opposition and headed by Prime Minister Mohammed Basindwa, an opposition politician, was appointed in Dec., 2011; the new government subsequently approved a law granting immunity to Saleh. In Feb., 2012, Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi was elected president in an election in which he was the only candidate, but

Saleh remained a political force and attempted to undermine the interim government through his supporters in it and the military. The military subsequently mounted an offensive against the militant Islamists in S Yemen, and by mid-2012 had largely reestablished government control there, but the area continued to be the scene of sporadic fighting.

In August and in December, Hadi ordered armed forces reorganizations designed to reduce the influence of Saleh and others in the military. Not all the changes, however, came into effect in subsequent months. In Apr., 2013, Hadi ordered further changes and removed Saleh's relatives from military command positions. A national dialogue conference intended to help develop a new constitution for Yemen began in Mar., 2013, and ended in Jan., 2014; it approved a six-region federal system for the country and extended Hadi's term by a year.

In Sept., 2013, the prime minister was the subject of an assassination attempt. Houthi Shiites attacked in a Sunni Salafist school in NW Yemen in October and November, accusing the Salafists of running a training camp for foreign fighters. Fighting continued into 2014, spreading to other areas in the northwest as the Houthis expanded the area under their control with increasing support from Yemen's Shiites. They captured Amran (Omran), N of Sana, in mid-2014. In Apr., 2014, government forces began a new offensive against Al Qaeda–aligned militants in S Yemen; the militants launched a number of attacks in the capital in retaliation.

In August, the Houthis mounted protests around Sana against the government. When a peace deal was signed ending the conflict in September they secured control of the capital and then expanded in October W into Hodeida and, fighting Al Qaeda–aligned Sunni militants, S into central Yemen, but the Sunni militants subsequently mounted a violent retaliatory campaign. The prime minister, whom the Houthis objected to, resigned in September, and after appointment of a new prime minister (Khaled Bahah), they objected to the makeup of the cabinet, which was re-formed in December. They also seized control of a number of ministries. The Houthis received support from Saleh and military forces that continued to support him, and in November the United Nations sanctioned Saleh.

By Feb., 2015, the Houthis had formally seized control of the government, and Hadi, who they had placed under house arrest, had fled to Aden, where he attempted to rally progovernment forces. Houthi and Saleh forces advanced south toward Aden, seizing Taiz (subsequently contested by progovernment forces), and by March the opposing forces were fighting for control of Aden; that month Hadi left Yemen for Saudi Arabia, and subsequently he stayed mainly abroad (it was reported the Saudis prevented him from returning to Yemen in 2017). Also in March, Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations began an air campaign and naval blockade against the Houthis, there were clashes with the Houthis along the Saudi border, and the Houthis began sporadic ballistic missile attacks against Saudi Arabia. The Houthis and their allies meanwhile received financial and matériel support from Iran. The civil war in W Yemen allowed the Al Qaeda–aligned forces to seize Mukalla, a port on the central Gulf of Aden coast, in April, and that same month the United Nations imposed an arms embargo on the Houthis and their military allies.

Progovernment forces and allied Saudi-led coalition forces subsequently cleared Aden (but at least initially did not effectively reestablish order there), regained much of the south, and began an advance toward the capital. Attempts at peace negotiations and to establish a cease-fire have been generally unsuccessful. In Apr., 2016, President Hadi dismissed the prime minister and named Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr to succeed him, and progovernment forces regained control of Mukalla. Al Qaeda–aligned

forces remained active, however, in parts of S Yemen.

In July, 2016, the Houthis and Saleh's GPC established a formal alliance, sharing control of governing council overseeing much of N Yemen, and in November they announced the formation of a government. Progovernment forces seized control of the port of Mocha from Houthi forces in early 2017. In May, a former governor of Aden announced a S Yemen secessionist government; its forces were formed from elements that had been part of the progovernment forces and were supported by the United Arab Emirates.

By the second half of 2017 there were tensions between Yemeni allies on both sides of the conflict, leading at times to clashes between ostensible allies. In Dec., 2017, Saleh was killed during several days of fighting between his supporters and the Houthis. Southern secessionists seized control of much of Aden from other progovernment forces in Jan., 2018, before a cease-fire was negotiated. An estimated 10,000 people had been killed as a result of the civil war by the end of 2016; forces on both sides of the conflict have been accused of war crimes. The conflict has also brought economic collapse in the north and threatened many there with famine, due to the blockade by the Saudi-led coalition. In 2017 a cholera outbreak rapidly grew to become the most severe such outbreak worldwide; by the end of the year 1 million were believed to have been affected.

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