SHIFTING LIGHT IN THE QAMARIYYA: THE REINVENTION OF PATRONAGE NETWORKS IN CONTEMPORARY YEMEN

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By

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the dynamics of regimes that combine the external trappings of democracy with the substance of authoritarian rule is a central puzzle facing comparative political scientists. Thus far, much of the literature addressing hybrid regimes has focused on the importance of elections, while neglecting variations in the underlying practice of autocracy. This dissertation moves beyond the focus on elections to explore processes of institutional change and renewal within a particular type of hybrid regime: those dominated by neopatrimonial politics. It asks: Under what conditions do elites in neopatrimonial regimes, who are embedded in networks of patronage, defect by building formal political institutions? And, what impact does their defection have on the existing mode of autocracy? To address these questions, the project inductively constructs a typological theory using comparative and within-case analysis of individual elites in the context of the Yemen. It argues that five variables combine to determine if included elites are likely to defect: 1) the degree of patronage inclusion 2) the type of patronage extended, 3) elite identity, 4) life-cycle position, and 5) an ease of defection index. The details of the typological theory do not travel beyond Yemen, yet the study provides analytical insights that inform the analysis of neopatrimonial regimes more broadly. First, it suggests that not all types of patronage are created equal. Scholars wishing to
understand the micro-politics of elite bargaining must look beyond an inclusion/exclusion dichotomy to include distinctions in both the degree and type of patronage. Secondly, the project offers a cautionary tale for policymakers and researchers who view defection as a source of democratic change. Powerful elites may choose to defect, but they may do so as a bargaining tactic to reposition themselves in networks of patronage. In these cases, defection may serve to reinvent, rather than attenuate, the existing mode of autocracy.
This dissertation is the product of a year and three months of fieldwork in the Republic of Yemen. During that time, countless Yemenis opened their hearts, minds, homes, offices, and qat chews to me as I sought to understand their political system. Without their generosity, this project would not have been possible. I am particularly grateful for the insight and assistance of Abdul Ghani al-Iryani, Dr. Saadaldeen Talib, and Dr. Muhammad al-Maitami. In addition to Yemeni friends, I would like to thank my family.

To my grandparents who opened their home during the writing process, and to my parents for their steadfast support throughout a long academic journey. Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband David, whose overwhelming love, patience, and support have been my foundation and inspiration.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Understanding the dynamics of regimes that combine the external trappings of democracy with the substance of authoritarian rule is a central puzzle facing comparative political scientists. Thus far, much of the literature analyzing “hybrid” regimes has focused on the importance of elections, because it is in these instances that contradictions and tensions are most acute. However, the focus on elections has sidelined questions dealing with the organization of power that animated earlier analysis of non-democratic regimes: i.e. – who rules, how do they rule, and why do they rule? While many contemporary non-democratic regimes combine the façade of democracy with the reality of authoritarianism, the underlying practice of autocracy varies, with potentially profound consequences for processes of institutional change and renewal.

This dissertation attempts to move beyond the focus on elections to explore the internal dynamics of a particular type of hybrid regime: those dominated by neopatrimonial politics. Here, neopatrimonialism is defined as a mode of organizing public authority. More specifically, it is a political system “in which the customs and

* A Qamariyya is a type of traditional window design found in the old city of Sana’a. The window is composed of multi-colored geometric pieces of glass. Qamariyyas are similar to stained glass windows, but they only contain geometric patterns.

1 The term hybrid regime is used by Larry Diamond and others to describe regimes that maintain the external trappings of democracy, but lack the substance of meaningful competition and participation. See, Larry Diamond, “Elections without Democrats: Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (April 2002): 21-35.


3 I will use the term “hybrid regime” to refer to a combination of autocracy and democracy. The term neopatrimonialism is used in this study to specify a sub-type of hybrid regimes.
patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions. In order to understand both the potential for change at critical junctures (such as elections), and more subtle processes of renewal and maintenance in neopatrimonial systems, it is necessary to disaggregate and analyze the informal patterns of politics, particularly patronage networks, that undergird and often trump formal institutional arrangements.

The third wave of democracy brought with it a short-lived optimism that elite bargaining could produce democracy without democrats. In the transitions paradigm, elite defection cracked authoritarian regimes, opening the door for pact-making between regime soft-liners and moderates in the opposition and sometimes moving the process of liberalization beyond the original intent of elites. The limitations of this model are well known and empirical reality has shown that political change is a highly endogenous process, fraught with history and old institutions.

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Neopatrimonial regimes are by no means stagnant, but they are not marching towards a transparent, democratic future. In fact, the case of Yemen suggests that elite defection does not always crack the authoritarian system; it could perpetuate the existing power structure. Powerful elites sometimes choose to defect from informal patronage networks by strengthening formal democratic institutions, but they may do so as a bargaining chip to reinvent and advance their place within a patronage based political system. In some cases, defection serves to sustain existing patterns of autocracy. In others, it may result in intended or unintended consequences that strengthen formal democratic institutions in relation to informal patronage arrangements.

This project seeks to explain when and why elites in neopatrimonial systems, who are included in networks of patronage, defect by building formal political institutions, and whether or not their defection sustains or alters the authoritarian system. The research puzzle has two distinct parts: the when and why of elite defection, and the impact of defection on the survival of autocracy. The first component is intimately related to the latter, but ultimately they are distinct questions that require different research designs and case selection priorities. As such, this project intentionally places the former at the center of analysis, while providing anecdotal evidence and preliminary hypotheses to address the latter.

Developing a framework for understanding when and why elites defect is particularly useful from a policy perspective. Scholars studying neopatrimonial systems
agree that elite defection is a critical variable in analyzing regime survival and dynamics.\textsuperscript{8} But for this information to be useful, scholars must be able to determine who is likely to defect and who is likely to remain loyal. Currently the literature relies on an inclusion/exclusion dichotomy that obscures important variations among elite actors, especially in highly inclusive neopatrimonial systems. By looking at both the degree and type of patronage inclusion, this project will identify more precisely who is likely to defect and who is likely to remain loyal.

The when and why of elite defection is intimately related to the second component of the research puzzle: the consequences of defection for the survival of autocracy. By analyzing why elites defect in the context of Yemen, this project helps scholars understand the motivations and complex incentive structures that guide elite behavior. Uncovering these incentive structures provides a cautionary tale for policymakers who view defection as a possible source of democratic change. In fact, anecdotal evidence from Yemen suggests that elites may use defection as a bargaining tactic to reposition themselves in networks of patronage. Under these circumstances, defection may actually perpetuate the existing mode of autocracy rather than encourage democratic development. Again, this study cannot fully address the impact of defection on the survival of autocracy across an array of neopatrimonial regimes. A thorough

investigation of this question would require a multi-country study, or at least a longer timeframe in the context of Yemen. The study does however provide preliminary hypotheses and anecdotal evidence that can serve as critical building blocks for scholars wishing to investigate the question in more detail.

Research Puzzle

Under what conditions do elites in neopatrimonial regimes, who are included in networks of patronage, defect by building formal political institutions? Why do these elites defect? And finally, what impact do their actions have on the institutions under negotiation and on the survival of the neopatrimonial system?

This project is animated by an empirical puzzle. In contemporary Yemen, elites who are deeply embedded in networks of patronage sometimes choose to defect by building formal political institutions. The defection of “included” elites is puzzling because their actions would at first appear to undermine the very informal system of politics that provides for their position of privilege. The elites under consideration are not outsiders “left to languish in the wilderness,” but instead they are privileged benefactors of informal avenues to power. They risk losing their favored status if formal political institutions infringe upon existing informal arrangements.

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9 A rigorous investigation of the impact of defection on the survival of autocracy would ideally entail a multi-country study of neopatrimonial regimes that allows for variance on a number of factors, including but not limited to: the degree of international support for domestic defectors, the type of external support for these defectors, variations in the domestic political economy, and variance on the type of domestic opposition that could ally with defectors (it would be interesting for example to control for a strong Islamist opposition). At a minimum, a more thorough investigation would involve a longer timeframe in the context of Yemen.

10 Bratton and van de Walle, Democratic Experiments in Africa, 86.
Beyond explaining this empirical puzzle, it is also critical to examine what impact, if any, the defection of such elites has on the institutions under negotiation and on the neopatrimonial system in general. When does elite defection strengthen formal institutions by infusing them with real rational-legal authority, either as a result of intentional elite action or as a product of unintended consequences? If elite defection strengthens formal political institutions, do these institutions then strengthen democratic accountability or do they produce a new mode of autocracy? Alternatively, when does elite defection reinforce the existing authoritarian system by maintaining the importance of formal institutions as a bargaining chip, while failing to strengthen them in relation to informal patronage networks?

**Justification for the Project**

It is now well established that a subset of regimes combine aspects of democracy (such as elections) with the practice of autocracy. These regimes, which I will call “hybrid regimes,” are numerous, often stable, and not necessarily moving towards full autocracy or liberal democracy. The literature on hybrid regimes has made a significant contribution to our understanding of empirical reality by explicitly shifting the theoretical lens away from democratic transitions and consolidation, and towards the study of new forms of autocracy.\(^{11}\) However this literature has often fallen short of providing

frameworks and mid-ranges theories to explain the internal dynamics of hybrid systems: i.e. – how and why they survive, and how and why they are renewed or changed.12

Instead, scholars studying hybrid systems have produced a seemingly endless array of jargon in their quest to develop new typologies. Further, those who address hybrid regime dynamics often focus too heavily on moments of democratic contestation, while neglecting questions concerning the underlying organization of power.13

Scholars examining post Cold War regimes that combine aspects of democracy and autocracy have used a variety of labels to identify a similar phenomenon. Initially there was a strong bias towards labeling hybrid systems as diminished forms of democracy, or “democracy with adjectives.”14 More recently, scholars have eschewed the democratization bias in favor of categorizing hybrid systems as new forms of non-democratic regimes. Thomas Carothers argued that these regimes should be conceptualized as occupying a “gray zone” between liberal democracy and full autocracy.15 Marina Ottaway coined the term “semi-authoritarianism.” She emphasized that these regimes are not imperfect democracies, but are instead deliberately constructed systems designed to give the appearance of democracy while denying its substance.16

In what is probably the clearest classification of mixed systems, Larry Diamond used the term “hybrid regimes” to identify those authoritarian regimes that fall short of a

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12 There are of course exceptions, including Ottaway’s work as well as Brumberg’s theory of liberalized autocracy. These and others will be addressed below.
13 See: Andreas Schedler, ed. *Electoral Authoritarianism* for a review of this literature.
15 Carothers, 5-21.
16 Ottaway, 7.
minimal standard for electoral democracy, but possess democratic institutions and levels of participation and competition that distinguish them from full autocracy. Diamond then goes further to distinguish between “competitive authoritarianism” and “hegemonic electoral authoritarianism” within the broader category of hybrid regimes. Following Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way’s conceptualization, “competitive authoritarianism” is distinguished from “hegemonic electoral authoritarianism” by greater degrees of competitiveness and contestation.\textsuperscript{17} Others, including Andreas Schedler, prefer to label the entire spectrum between autocracy and democracy as “competitive authoritarianism.”\textsuperscript{18}

Analyzing hybrid regimes as types of non-democratic rule is a positive development that breaks the democratization bias of the transitions paradigm and opens new opportunities for developing theoretical frameworks to understand the dynamics of stable autocracy. Unfortunately, scholars focusing specifically on hybrid systems have produced few mid-range theories that capture the diversity of regime dynamics within this broad category. The problem is largely a result of the literature’s overemphasis on only part of the hybrid equation, the meaningfulness of democratic institutions, to the neglect of variations in the practice of autocracy.

For example, in their analysis of “competitive authoritarianism,” Levitsky and Way acknowledge that “different mixes of authoritarian and democratic features have distinct historical roots, and they may have different implications for economic performance,

\textsuperscript{17} Diamond, 21-35.
\textsuperscript{18} Schedler, ed., \textit{Electoral Authoritarianism}. 
human rights, and prospects for democracy.”¹⁹ Yet in practice, their analysis of hybrid regimes is based primarily on the meaningfulness of democratic institutions. These authors carve out a sub-set of hybrid regimes, “competitive authoritarianism,” in order to make a distinction between regimes that possess democratic institutions as a mere façade and those that possess flawed, but still meaningful avenues of contestation. Attention to variation in the practice of autocracy is conspicuously absent.

Scholars of “electoral authoritarianism” have also focused their analysis on the strategic interaction of incumbents and challengers during moments of democratic contestation. Andeas Schedler lays out a “menu of manipulation” used by incumbents to thwart meaningful electoral competition. Others explore when ruling parties split, when opposition parties coalesce, the effectiveness of electoral manipulation, the conditions under which incumbents steal elections, the conditions under which the military intervenes in the electoral arena, and why opposition groups boycott elections.²⁰

Focusing on issues of participation and competition, particularly in moments of election, may be useful when placing hybrid systems on a scale of autocracy and democracy: however, it is not the only variable that affects regime dynamics. Hybrid regimes vary not only with respect to the meaningfulness of democratic institutions, but also in the forms of authoritarian rule. Therefore, developing conceptual frameworks to examine stable autocracy requires systematically placing democratic institutions in the

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¹⁹ Levitsky and Way, 52.
context of non-democratic legacies and the underlying infrastructure of political authority.

Richard Snyder suggests that one way forward is to incorporate into the study of hybrid regimes “extra-electoral” factors that have long informed comparative studies of political regimes. These include questions concerning: “(1) Who rules? Party elites, a personal leader, the military, or the clergy [a class or a social or ethnic group]? (2) How do rulers rule? By means of patron-client networks, ethnic ties, or a mass-based party? (3) Why do rulers rule? Out of greed, ethnic hatred, or a commitment to a religion or ideology? And (4) How much do rulers rule?”

Without examining these factors, he argues, political scientists cannot understand variations in the dynamics and consequences of elections in the context of autocracy. Moreover, addressing these questions allows the current study of hybrid regimes to connect with prior typologies and categories of non-democratic regimes, preventing “conceptual amnesia” and encouraging theory building.

If elections are not the only source of power, as scholars of hybrid regimes claim, then variations in how power is produced and transmitted will affect the internal dynamics of these systems. Some hybrid regimes have a legacy of corporatism and rule of law, while others have a legacy of extreme personalism and exclusionary politics. Still others have a legacy of neopatrimonial politics. These differences should impact, among other things, what types of political players are important, the resources they bring to the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21}}\] Snyder, “Beyond Electoral Authoritarianism,” 220.
\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\] Ibid., 227.
political game, the strategies they use to obtain power, and even their political preferences.

Fortunately, some studies of hybrid regimes do move beyond a focus on elections to include variation in authoritarian legacies and analysis of the underlying organization of power. One of the early pioneers of hybrid regimes, Marina Ottaway, eschews a narrow focus on elections to analyze the ways in which power is generated and transferred in weakly institutionalized political systems. Unfortunately, her otherwise rich account fails to connect with prior typologies of non-democratic regimes, and her own typology of semi-authoritarian states is based on regime stability rather than the various institutional legacies and mechanisms of regime maintenance explored in her analysis.

More recently, Jason Brownlee asks why some autocrats are strengthened by elections, while others are vulnerable and sometimes fall to democratizing forces. While the central puzzle of Brownlee’s research is the impact of elections in the context of autocracy, he describes elections as the final act in a much longer drama, a drama driven by institutional legacies. Elections are, therefore, “symptoms, not causes, of regime change or regime durability.” According to Brownlee, the strength and cohesiveness of ruling parties accounts for variance in the durably or fragility of autocratic regimes when faced with limited elections. His analysis demonstrates the importance of incorporating attention to the organization of power, in this case the strength of ruling parties, into the study of hybrid regime dynamics.

23 Ottaway, 19-23.
Finally, political scientists addressing the dynamics of autocracy in the Middle East have also made a significant contribution to mid-range theorizing. A burgeoning body of literature focusing on the region addresses the dynamics of durable autocracy by comparing states with similar authoritarian characteristics. Of particular note are: Daniel Brumberg’s theory of liberalized autocracy, Nicola Pratt’s analysis of stable autocracy in Syria, Tunisia, Egypt and Iraq, Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist’s edited volume, *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, Oliver Schlumberger’s forthcoming edited volume, *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Non-Democratic Regimes*, and Steven Heydemann’s analysis of authoritarian “upgrading” in the region.\(^{25}\) For the purposes of this study, Steven Cook’s comparison of indirect military rule in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey is particularly informative. In his analysis, Cook explores how informal and formal rules allow the officer corps in these countries to effectively rule without governing.\(^{26}\) The organization of power in Yemen is significantly different from Cook’s cases: Yemen is a highly personalized, tribally based autocracy whereas Egypt, Algeria and Turkey are more institutionalized autocracies controlled by a professionalized officer corps. However, Cook’s explicit focus on informal rules and his effort to construct comparisons based on the underlying practice of autocracy are consistent with the goals of this project.

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Building on these works, and utilizing a historical institutionalist framework, this dissertation will suggest that in order to understand the politics of hybrid regimes, scholars must develop mid-range theories that account for differences in the underlying infrastructure of power. To this end, it will fill a lacuna in the literature by developing a framework for understanding the dynamics of regime maintenance and change in a specific type of hybrid regime: those dominated by neopatrimonial politics. A framework will be developed and refined in the specific context of the Republic of Yemen. However, the implications of the project are not necessarily limited to one country or region. Instead, it aims to raise questions and provide analytical insights for scholars studying neopatrimonial regimes and the dynamics of patronage networks more broadly.

Neopatrimonialism

Neopatrimonialism is a mode of organizing public authority that can characterize a sub-set of hybrid regimes. The term neopatrimonialism is a heuristic device derived from Max Weber’s discussion of three ideal types of political authority: rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic. Patrimonialism in Weber’s typology is a sub-type of traditional authority in which “an individual rules by dint of personal prestige and power; ordinary folk are treated as extensions of the ‘big man’s’ household, with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler.” Authority is thus highly personalized and the ruler maintains power by providing security and by distributing material benefits

28 Bratton and van de Walle, Democratic Experiments in Africa, 61.
and favors. By contrast, under rational-legal authority, the private sphere is sharply separated from the public sphere and leaders rule based on laws and bureaucratic institutions. Rational-legal authority is associated with the modern nation-state, while patrimonialism is the hallmark of authority in the smallest and most traditional polities.\textsuperscript{29}

In the 1970s, comparative political scientists applied Weber’s concept of patrimonialism to politics in the developing world. Working within this tradition, Samuel Eisenstadt was probably the first to coin the term neopatrimonialism to refer to the presence of patrimonial authority in a modern context.\textsuperscript{30} This study, however, will rely on Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle’s definition of neopatrimonialism as a system “in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions.”\textsuperscript{31} In other words, neopatrimonialism is precisely a combination of traditional and rational-legal authority in which the former takes precedence over the latter in practice. According to Bratton and van de Walle, three informal institutions characterize neopatrimonial politics: presidentialism (the concentration of political power in the hands of one individual), systemic clientelism, and (finally) the use of state resources for political legitimation.\textsuperscript{32} Here it is critical to note that neopatrimonial systems could be considered “hybrid” due to their combination of rational-legal and traditional modes of authority. This project however reserves the term “hybrid” for those

\textsuperscript{31} Bratton and van de Walle, \textit{Democratic Experiments in Africa}, 62.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 63-68.
regimes that combine democratic institutions with the practice of authoritarianism. Neopatrimonialism further qualifies hybrid regimes.33

A word of caution is in order before proceeding. The term neopatrimonialism potentially casts the analytical net too broadly, becoming “something of a catch-all concept, in danger of losing analytical utility.”34 As Christopher Clapham notes, neopatrimonialism is “the most salient type [of authority]” in the Third World because of “the natural human disinclination to distinguish between one’s private and official self.”35 If the tendencies of neopatrimonialism were confined to the developing world, its analytic usefulness would be easier to defend. In reality, all modern-nation states combine attributes of personalism, patronage, and corruption with rational-legal institutions. In fact, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph suggest that “patrimonialism is not only to be found in all bureaucracies, but since it provides an all important counterweight to the potentially alienating effect of bureaucratic rationality- is indispensable to their efficient operation.”36

Given its seemingly ubiquitous potential, Bratton and Van de Walle argue that “although neopatrimonial practices can be found in all polities, it is the core feature of politics in Africa, and in a small number of other states…”37 Still the problem of

33 Neopatrimonialism could also qualify full autocracies and even “electoral democracies,” although it would probably be incompatible with the ideal type of liberal democracy given the weakness of the rule of law in neopatrimonial systems.
34 Theobold, 555. Theobold made this statement with reference to patrimonialism, but it is equally applicable to the term neopatrimonialism.
35 Christopher Clapham, Third World Politics: An Introduction (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 49.
37 Bratton and Van de Walle, Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa, 62.
measurement remains. How does one know when neopatrimonial tendencies constitute the “core” of politics? As a partial answer to this problem, this project will emphasize the relationship between formal and informal institutions within neopatrimonial systems.

Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky suggest that the relationship between formal and informal political institutions can be conceptualized along two dimensions: first, the degree to which the outcomes of formal and informal institutions converge, and secondly, the effectiveness of formal institutions.\(^{38}\) Using this framework, neopatrimonial systems are those in which informal rules of the game are regularly enforced, while formal institutions are selectively enforced and rarely followed in practice. Moreover, adherence to informal rules of the game generally, although not always, subverts the intentions of formal institutional arrangements.

Treating neopatrimonialism as a set of informal institutions that interact with formal institutional arrangements to shape the incentives, opportunities, and preferences of actors clarifies its analytical usefulness and prevents the term from descending into a catchall concept.\(^{39}\) In practice, the relationship between formal and informal institutions in neopatrimonial regimes (or any regime for that matter) may be difficult to untangle. Formal institutions may be established, for example, to facilitate informal arrangements or vice versa. They are not mutually exclusive; strengthening of one type does not necessarily attenuate the other. The boundaries and interaction between formal and informal institutional arrangements.


\(^{39}\) At a minimum Helmke and Levitsky suggest that researchers studying informal institutions should specify: First, what are the actors’ shared expectations about the actual constraints they face? Second, what is the community to which the informal rules apply, and Third, how are informal rules enforced? Helmke and Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics,” 733. In Chapter Two, this project will use this framework for specifying and disaggregating Yemen’s informal patronage system.
informal institutions will only become clear in the context of empirical examples. Levitsky and Helmke’s model will serve as a rubric in this study to organize a dynamic, complex empirical reality.

Now that neopatrimonialism has been defined and defended as an analytical concept, it is useful to review how scholars have analyzed its impact on regime dynamics. Recently historical institutionalist scholars have explored how the informal institutions of neopatrimonialism, particularly patronage, affect the bargaining strategies of elite actors in the context of regime transitions. Bratton and van de Walle argue that neopatrimonialism in Africa led to a different modal path of democratization when compared with countries in Latin America. Of particular importance to this study, they suggest that while soft-liners and hard-liners in Latin America fracture ideologically over the issue of liberalization, elites in neopatrimonial systems split pragmatically over access to patronage. Elites divide pragmatically over access to patronage because the practice of neopatrimonialism produces a winner-take-all style of politics. More specifically, given the high turnaround of political office and the risk of exclusion, the system “simultaneously creates a defensively cohesive state elite and a potential pool of alternative leaders outside of the state.”40 According to Bratton and van de Walle, elites excluded from patronage support political reform, while elites inside the system tenaciously cling to the status quo.

Following Bratton and van de Walle’s critique, Snyder uses the insider/outsider distinction to build a comparative study of regime change across sultanistic states. In

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40 Bratton and Van de Walle, *Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa*, 86.
particular, Snyder focuses on the degree of patronage penetration into the military and civil society. He suggests that sultanistic regimes that effectively use patronage networks to co-opt elites inhibit the formation of both a maximalist and a moderate opposition, and therefore, tend to be stable.\textsuperscript{41} Again, elites who are included in networks of patronage support the status quo, while those who are excluded have incentives to agitate for change.

Historical institutional analysis of regime change in neopatrimonial and sultanistic systems offers a starting point for understanding how informal patronage networks structure elite bargaining, but it falls short on several accounts. It is clear that an inclusion/exclusion dichotomy can play a role in determining elite support for, or opposition to, regime change. However, if the dependent variable becomes elite defection that falls short of transition, it is not clear that a binary distinction is adequate. In broadly inclusive neopatrimonial regimes, for example, there may be significant differences among included elites based on how deeply they are included in patronage networks. Moreover, the literature fails to address differences in the type of patronage extended to individual elites. It is possible that inclusion in military or security patronage provides different incentives than inclusion in political or private sector patronage.\textsuperscript{42} In other words, while Bratton and van de Walle propose a rigid distinction between insiders and outsiders, with insiders being highly unlikely to seek political reform, there may be significant distinctions among insiders. When networks of patronage are extended

\textsuperscript{41} Snyder, “Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes” 49-81.
\textsuperscript{42} Bratton and van de Walle distinguish between state patronage (usually involving public sector office) and societal patronage (distribution of public resources through licenses, contract, and projects), but they do not take the next analytical step of hypothesizing how differences in the types of patronage may affect the strategic calculus of included elites. Bratton and Van de Walle, \textit{Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa}, 65.
broadly, the incentive structures of insiders may vary depending on both their degree and
type of patronage inclusion. These differences could affect the strategic calculus of elites
as they make decisions regarding political reform and the risks associated with bargaining
for better patronage positions.

In addition to relying too heavily on an inclusion/exclusion dichotomy to examine elite incentives, the literature on neopatrimonial regimes has yet to adequately incorporate the study of weak democratic institutions into the analysis of elite bargaining. The micro-politics of elite bargaining in hybrid, neopatrimonial systems is guided by both informal patronage ties and weak democratic institutions. The prospect of electoral competition, accountability through parliaments, and party mobilization provide new resources and constraints for competing elites as they vie for positions in informal networks of patronage. Elites may use a credible threat to strengthen democratic institutions as a bargaining chip to advance their position in informal networks of power. From an alternative perspective, the patron (usually the President) may successfully harness elections as a pretext to narrow networks of patronage inclusion.\textsuperscript{43} In sum, while much can be gleaned from the current literature on neopatrimonialism and transitions, many questions remain. This project will deepen our understanding of neopatrimonial regimes by developing a framework, in the context of Yemen, for understanding elite

\textsuperscript{43} According to Steven Cook, weak democratic institutions may also provide two other benefits to autocratic leaders: 1) they may "provide the capacity to satisfy certain demands emerging from society without fundamentally altering the character of the political order," and 2) they may insulate leaders from the "vicissitudes of everyday politics." Steven Cook, \textit{Ruling But Not Governing}, 9. The first use certainly applies in the Yemen context. Electoral institutions, the Parliament, and the parties are used as a safety valve for citizens to express and in some instances to satisfy political and social demands. To some extend the second observation applies. In the Yemeni context, a citizen can freely criticize members of the government as long as they stop short of attacking the President. However, in Yemen, democratic institutions do not always insulate the President. Unlike the cases of Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey, the president is both the military and civilian leader of the country.
bargaining and decision making at the crossroads of powerful informal patronage institutions and weak formal democratic arrangements.

Methodology

In an effort to address the research question, this project inductively constructs a typological theory using comparative and within-case analysis. Typological theories specify the relationship between specific clusters of independent variables and an expected outcome. Stated differently, they identify “generalized pathways” or “syndromes” associated with an outcome of interest,44 which in this case is elite defection from informal networks of patronage. The goal of the project is both heuristic theory building and also preliminary hypothesis testing and refinement. The unit of analysis under consideration is an individual elite. In this study, elites are defined as “national level agenda setters, figures who wield regular and substantial influence over a country’s political system.”45 The sub-set of elites under consideration are all included in networks of patronage extending from the President; however, given the weak institutionalization of the party system, it is important to note that they are not necessarily members of the ruling party. The project specifically focuses on tribal elites (although other elite actors

will be included in the full property space), as they constitute the core of political power in Yemen.  

The class of events under consideration is the choice of elites to: 1) engage in building formal political institutions, 2) not to engage in building formal political institutions, or 3) to exit the political arena. While most elites will constitute a single case, elites who change their behavior are divided into separate cases depending on their actions during a particular timeframe. This is not a single case study. While the typology is constructed specifically in the context of Yemen, each elite constitutes a case (or in some instances multiple cases). It is also important to note that the analysis focuses on first movers as opposed to joiners/followers. This distinction is important as the calculus, and the relevant independent variables, for first defectors may be different than it is for joiners. The timeframe under consideration is limited to the actions of elites between 2003 (the date of Yemen’s last Parliamentary election) and early 2007.  

Acknowledging a necessary movement between inductive and deductive logic, the concepts in the typological space, as well as the initial working hypotheses, were developed during preliminary fieldwork conducted in Yemen between the fall of 2005 and the fall of 2006. The initial hypotheses and concepts were then further refined and

46 Given the importance of blood relations in tribal societies, this project excludes close relatives of the President from the population of elites under consideration. The connection between the sons, brothers, close cousins, and nephews of the President creates a unique loyalty that is not shared by other included elites. In addition to remaining loyal because they are family, blood relatives of the President may also remain loyal to the informal system of authority around Saleh because they are so deeply implicated in the organization of power. If Saleh were to be replaced by another patron, or if he lost authority to a more institutionalized political order, these elites would almost certainly lose their privileged domestic status.

47 Had the timeframe been extended earlier, to include the period between 1994 and 1997 in particular, Islamist elites would have occupied a more prominent role. After 1997, the President began to systematically exclude Islamists from patronage arrangements. However, several key Islamists remain embedded in patronage networks and are included in the analysis.
tested through detailed within-case and comparative case studies during fieldwork in the summer of 2007. While falling short of the methodological ideal of deductive theory building and subsequent theory testing, a careful movement between data and theory refinement is a more realistic and equally fruitful approach to inquiry in the social world. As Charles Ragin notes:

“the folklore of mainstream social science is that investigators engage in research so that they can test theories..... this model of social science dictates that hypotheses be formulated in isolation from data used to test hypotheses. In practice, however, no such intentional gulf between hypothesis or concept formation and data analysis usually exists... [instead] the interplay between concept formation and data analysis lead to progressively more refined concepts and hypotheses.” 48

*Working Hypotheses*

**Hypothesis #1:**

Five main variables combine to determine if included elites are likely to defect from informal patronage networks by building formal political institutions: 1) the *degree* of inclusion in networks of patronage 2) the *type* of patronage extended, 3) elite identity, 4) life-cycle position, and finally 5) an ease of defection index. Values on each of these variables provide certain tendencies independently, but it is only their combination and interaction that produces parameters for expected elite behavior. 49

**Hypothesis #2:**

The decision of elites to engage in institution building behavior must be viewed from within the framework of existing patterns of politics. Elites rarely break completely...
with the past. While included elites may at times choose to step outside of the informal patronage paradigm, they generally have a bounded interest in formalizing the political arena. In fact, some may choose to build formal political institutions because they see an opportunity to reassert or strengthen their position within informal patronage arrangements. This is especially true of tribal elites whose status depends on kinship ties and informal networks of power. Changes to the underlying structure of political power are possible, but are not a guaranteed consequence of defection.

**Specification of Variables and the Relationship of Variance in Variables to Initial Hypotheses**

The dependent variable in this design can take three values:

1. **Loyalty** - an elite remains loyal to the existing system of informal patronage politics and does not build or strengthen formal political institutions;
2. **Defection** - an elite defects from the existing system of informal patronage politics by actively building or strengthening formal political institutions; or
3. **Exit** - an elite leaves the country or at a minimum disengages from political life.

Placing elites in one of these three categories is a matter of identifying “red lines” set by the regime for the use of formal political institutions. In Yemen, formal institutions (parliament, parties, courts, the media, etc) are an accepted part of the political game, although they are not the main locus of power. The President and his close allies strategically manipulate these institutions to shore up domestic and international support and to combat potential challengers. However, there are “red lines” governing how far individuals can go when using these institutions to agitate for democratic change or for

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50 Reference the Appendix A for more detailed information regarding the measurement of both the dependent and independent variables.
better positions within existing informal patronage arrangements. Defectors are those individuals who go beyond the acceptable boundaries. They take actions that could either intentionally or unintentionally infuse weak, formal institutions with rational-legal authority, authority that infringes upon the highly personalized nature of power around the executive. The concept of crossing “red lines” is not something that can be fully articulated in the abstract. It will be more fully addressed in Chapter Two and in the context of the case studies.

In analyzing the dependent variable, this project focuses on two main political institutions: the Parliament and parties.51 These two arenas were chosen because they are both core national institutions that are critical to a functioning democracy, and are chronically weak in neopatrimonial systems. Permanent changes that strengthen one or both of these institutions would alter the nature of political authority, either by creating a more institutionalized autocracy, or by encouraging democratic accountability.

**Independent Variables**

Five independent variables combine to set parameters for elite behavior. These variables are essentially measuring various types and degrees of dependency on the existing informal patronage arrangement. They capture the strategic decision making calculus of elites in Yemen’s neopatrimonial system as they weigh the costs and benefits of defection.

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51 In this study, political parties refer to the two main parties in Yemen: the ruling General People’s Congress (GPC) and the main opposition party, Hizb al-Islah (Islah).
The first independent variable is the degree of inclusion in networks of patronage. All elites in the proposed project are included in networks of patronage, but they experience various degrees of inclusion. For the sake of parsimony, a binary distinction is made between those elites who are “deeply included” and those who are only “included” in networks of patronage. Considered independently, “deeply included” elites are expected to be less likely than “included” elites to defect. Deeply included elites are extracting more political power and financial gain from the existing informal arrangement and therefore have more to lose if the system is altered.

However, the relative impact of this factor is tempered by values on other independent variables. For example, a value of “included” should provide only weak incentives towards loyalty for powerful elites who score high on the ease of defection index, and who are classified as “risk takers” on their life-cycle measurement. These elites are generally powerful players who expect prominent patronage inclusion and who have a relatively high risk tolerance for defection. By contrast, a value of “included” should have a stronger association with loyalty for elites who have lower values on their ease of defection index and who are classified as “risk averse” for their life-cycle measurement. These elites generally cannot expect to be included at the highest levels of patronage access and they have a relatively low risk tolerance. Therefore, they should be relatively more satisfied with their “included” status, and should not have strong incentives to risk defection for a better position.\footnote{Chapter Two explores in more detail the rules governing patronage distribution. It will explain the concept of an “acceptable range” of patronage distribution for each elite and what this range means for bargaining and conflict.}
The second independent variable, type of patronage, can assume four different values:

1. *Military/security patronage* (positions in the Yemeni Armed Forces or Security Apparatus, or leadership positions in the Yemen Economic Corporation (YECO));
2. *Public sector patronage* (appointments to government ministries and or positions in public sector companies);
3. *Private sector patronage* (access to government tenders, informal tax exemptions, access to state lands and semi-monopolistic licenses, and privileged access to the oil and gas sectors); and finally
4. *Political patronage* (positions in the ruling party and other political appointments, including the *Shoura* Council, governorships, positions in the Office of the President, etc).

Military/security patronage is expected to be most consistently associated with loyalty. The likelihood of defection from this type of patronage is lower for several reasons. First, while all defectors in the system are subject to economic sanctions, military/security clients are likely to face the threat of violence or even death upon defection. These individuals are simply too close to the nerve center of the President’s power base to defect without extreme consequences. Physical punishment raises the price of defection for this group relative to others. In addition to facing violent consequences, elites who are deeply included in military/security patronage also have strong political and financial disincentives. In Yemen’s current political system, the military/security apparatus is unaccountable to the civilian government. YECO, which supplies the military with subsidized goods, is solely accountable to the President and has become a lucrative source of corruption for military officers. In addition to YECO, military officers also participate in the black market through weapons, diesel, and alcohol smuggling.

Given these financial benefits, and their intimate association with the specific

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53 See the following section on endogeneity for a discussion of the difficulties involved in testing this hypothesis in the context of Yemen.
organization of power around President Ali Abdullah Saleh, military/security clients are highly unlikely to seek an institutionalized political system with the capacity to curtail their power and access.

In light of the high stakes of defection from networks of military/security patronage, if elites do defect, their defection will likely to be in the form of a coup or violent uprising with the intent of toppling the regime, rather than in the form of building formal political institutions. Again, military/security clients are likely to face physical punishment for perceived disloyalty. As a consequence, they are unlikely to engage in the type of defection that is the focus of this study. If they defect by making a credible threat to build or strengthen formal institutions, they could be killed. Under these conditions, and in the interest of self-preservation, their defection is more likely to be violent and decisive.

While military/security patronage should have a strong, independent effect on elite decision making, the other types of patronage require contingent generalizations. Of the three remaining types, public sector patronage is hypothesized to exert the most consistent incentives for loyalty. Top positions in the public sector are limited, lucrative sources of corruption, and access is highly dependent on personal relationships with the President. If the personalities at the top of the patronage system were to change, included elites, particularly non-technocratic elites, would very likely lose their privileged positions. Moreover, if bureaucratic institutions became more transparent and institutionalized, these elites would lose the majority of the financial benefit associated with their positions. The direct financial benefit from public sector posts is actually quite
small. While official salaries are meager, clients are given tacit approval to rob state coffers (through an endless array of corrupt accounting and tendering procedures) and they could have access to a number of material perks, including: automobiles, housing, and diplomatic status. They may also benefit from bribes as well as jobs for their family, friends, and/or other clients. It should be noted that the impact of public sector patronage is contingent on its interaction with a number of variables, particularly the type of elite under consideration. Technocratic elites, for example, who receive this type of patronage, may be associated with defection because they have a skill set that is transferable if patronage ties are rearranged or if the system became more institutionalized. Further, given their skill sets, technocratic elites also have an exit option. They may simply choose to leave Yemen and seek employment elsewhere.

In contrast to public sector patronage, more flexibility should surround the actions of those elites who are included in private sector or political patronage. In general, these types of inclusion do not produce the same degree of dependence on the existing system of informal distribution. More specifically, access to private sector patronage could allow elites to develop the skills and resources that would guarantee their continued access to power if patronage networks were realigned, or possibly even attenuated. Cash income is fungible, which in theory gives these elites the ability to buy themselves into different patronage arrangements (if there were a different patron) or to compete in a market setting. Equally important, experience in the private sector may produce a skill set that would allow them to survive and compete in a more formalized, transparent economy. Finally, private sector elites who have significant capital investments in Yemen are
especially likely to develop a long term interest in a more formalized, predictable legal system to protect their investments. The protection of assets in Yemen is guaranteed by brute force and proximity to the President. Even elites who are at present capable of protecting their investments risk losing their favored status in the future. This insecurity creates long term incentives for seeking a more predictable domestic political economy and/or for moving assets outside of the country. Theoretically, private sector patronage could create incentives for defection, yet in practice its impact must be contextualized and explored in the context of empirical cases.

Finally, of the four types of patronage, political patronage should exert the weakest association with loyalty and its impact will be highly contingent on its combination with other factors. Political patronage provides less direct financial benefits than public sector or private sector patronage. In particular, for elites with strong connections with their social base, political patronage provides only weak incentives to remain loyal. These elites can be confident that they will maintain, and could possibly augment their political influence in a more transparent and formalized democratic system. In some instances, however, political patronage could provide incentives strong enough to bind elites to the status quo. This is especially true of elites whose political popularity and social status has largely been created by the existing regime (the ease of defection variable captures this factor). By contrast, for young, popular tribal sheikhs with the capacity to negotiate for more lucrative inclusion, political patronage may provide only weak incentives for loyalty.

The third independent variable is elite identity. It can take four different values:
1. Tribal Elite (historically important tribal leaders or sheikhs);
2. Islamist Elite (ideologues generally associated with the Muslim Brothers or Salafi movement);
3. Traditional Merchants; or
4. Technocratic Elite.

This variable is strategic in nature. It attempts to identify what factors give an individual elite status and how these factors impact that individual’s strategic calculus. The four types mentioned above do not capture the entire spectrum of elites in Yemen. However, each category represents an important “insider” group in the structure of patronage. Elites may potentially belong to more than one type, but for the sake of parsimony, the project will attempt to specify a primary identity. A more nuanced evaluation of elite identity will then be pursued in the course of the case studies.

Independent of the other variables, tribal identity should exert strong incentives for loyalty. Tribal elites maintain their status based on a deeply patterned system of tradition and kinship. Moreover, their status depends on their ability to informally lobby the state for services and jobs in their tribal regions. While the tribes are far from a monolith, in general tribal interests have been systematically privileged under the Saleh regime, providing incentives for sheikhs to remain loyal to the informal system. The development of a more institutionalized party system, strong local councils, and a transparent electoral system could conceivably rob tribal sheikhs of their traditional power base.

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54 It is important to note here that no special category has been designated for the President’s clan, the Sanhan. Members of the Sanhan are deeply embedded in networks of patronage, and they generally populate military/security positions. Given their direct blood ties to the President, their decision to defect is laced with issues of kinship that override other factors. Therefore, they are excluded from the analysis.
55 For a more detailed analysis of elite actors in Yemen reference Chapter Two.
56 Again, the tribes are far from a monolith. Patterns of inclusion and exclusion will be more fully addressed in Chapter Two.
By contrast, Islamists, traditional merchants, and technocrats should experience incentives for defection. The majority of Islamist elites in Yemen derive their status from association with the political party Islah, and more accurately with the ideological tenants of the Muslim Brotherhood. Islamist elites generally seek a strong, institutionalized state in order to implement Islamic law, and by doing so increase their political influence. Similarly, traditional merchants and technocrats could also augment their elite status in a more formalized political arena. Traditional merchants are elites primarily because of financial clout and their family’s mercantile experience. They are vulnerable in Yemen’s lawless system and would benefit from a more predictable political economy. Technocrats are elites based on their skill set and ability to administer a modern bureaucracy. Theoretically, their skills would be in greater demand and more aptly utilized in a more transparent political system.

The impact of this variable is highly contingent upon its interaction with other factors. For example, while traditional merchants and technocrats may have incentives to agitate for a more formalized political economy, these groups are also extremely vulnerable to regime retribution. Given their typically low scores on the ease of defection index, these elites often choose a combination of loyalty and exit, as opposed to defection.

57 Bratton and van de Walle suggest that unlike bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes in Latin America, neopatrimonial regimes are unlikely to see an alliance between military rulers and a national bourgeoisie. They argue that in neopatrimonial regimes, “the pervasiveness of clientelism means that the state has actively undermined capitalist forms of accumulation.” Therefore, the merchant class is likely to support democratic reforms rather than the existing mode of governance. Bratton and Van de Walle, Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa, 89. This dynamic also seems to characterize the relationship between Yemen’s small traditional merchant class and the ruling regime. Traditional merchants have an interest in the protection of private property and in strengthening the rule of law. They have an interest in political reform, yet given their financial vulnerability, they rarely act on these incentives.
The fourth independent variable is a life-cycle measurement. This variable attempts to account for the effects of age, education, travel, and children on the decisions of individual elites. It can take two values: “risk taker” or “risk averse.” Young elites, who have been educated or traveled extensively in liberal democracies, and who have children that are not directly dependent upon domestic networks of patronage for education and/or employment, are more likely to be associated with defection. While this variable may capture some aspect of belief, the project emphasizes its strategic impact. Elites whose children cannot be negatively affected by the choice of defection may be more likely to pursue this course of action. Elites who have been educated or who have traveled or lived extensively in liberal democracies may be more familiar with, and therefore more comfortable, manipulating democratic institutions. Finally, this project hypothesizes that youth is associated with a higher risk tolerance and a greater willingness to experiment with innovative and risky forms of political bargaining.

The fifth independent variable, ease of defection, is an index variable which captures elements of an elite’s strategic calculus that are left unaddressed by the previous variables. Elites will receive a value of zero to three, with three representing elites who are relatively less dependent on patronage arrangements and can therefore more easily defect. Values on this variable are assigned based on three questions: 1) Does an elite expect others (domestic actors, foreign governments, and/or other international

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58 In Yemen, extended family relations are also a critical part of an elite’s decision making process. Therefore, including nephews and nieces into the analysis could produce a more accurate model of the risks involved in defection. However, obtaining accurate data on extended family relationships is difficult in practice and, given that all of the elites under consideration have some extended family that are dependent upon domestic networks of patronage, it would require a system for weighing each elite’s perception of risk to their extended family. Given data limitations, this study only analyzed the impact of children.
organizations) to join him in a coalition once he defects? 2) Can an elite lose his elite status in Yemen by defecting? and 3) Does the elite have access to patronage and/or an independent source of wealth that is unaffected by domestic patronage networks? Again, the higher an elite’s number, the more likely he will be to risk defection.

A Brief Note on Endogeneity:

“….endogeneity is not always a problem to be fixed but is often an integral part of the process by which the world produces our observations. Ascertaining the process by which values of the explanatory variables were determined is generally very hard and we cannot usually appeal to any automatic procedure to solve problems related to it. It is nevertheless a research task that cannot be avoided.”

This project assumes and accepts complex causation in the social world.

Researchers in the social sciences rarely have the luxury of randomly assigning values on independent variables, and as such, the direction of causality can be difficult to ascertain. Endogeneity is a fact in the social world, but it does not preclude valid causal inference.

59 This question is correlated with question #1, but they measure different phenomenon. Question #2 captures the vulnerability of a small proportion of elites who are completely dependent upon the President for their elite status. Some tribal sheikhs have been created by the Saleh regime to counterbalance traditional sheikhs. These “new” sheikhs are propped up by state monies and Presidential favor. They have limited connections with their tribe. In addition to “new sheikhs”, this question also separates traditional businessmen and some technocrats from more powerful elite actors. Traditional businessmen, despite their history in Yemen, can still lose their domestic elite status if they fall out of favor with the President. The larger business houses certainly have an exit option, as they have diversified their portfolios outside of Yemen, but they could not conduct business in Yemen without at least the tacit consent of the President. Finally, some, but not all technocrats would lose their domestic status if they defected and fell out of favor with the President. Technocrats like the Iryanis come from a Qadi (Judge) background. They have a deep political tradition in Yemen and would not lose domestic status upon defection. However, other technocrats who do not have historical roots as religious or scholarly families could lose domestic elite status. While most elites who answer “YES” to question #2 will answer “NO” to question #1, there is not a perfect correlation. Some technocrats, for example, who could lose their domestic elite status upon defection, can expect foreign governments and NGOs to strongly support their defection and even provide safe haven and an exit option if defection fails.

While a statistical design could deal mathematically with the issue of complex causation, this study will attempt to understand the directionality and, to some degree, the magnitude of endogeneity so as to increase the level of confidence in the research findings.\(^{61}\) It is important to note that endogeneity technically refers to a variety of potential errors when specifying the functional form of a model. This section addresses two common manifestations of the endogeneity problem: 1) an error in the direction of causality (B causes A, rather than A causing B), and 2) a feedback loop between the dependent and the independent variables (A and B cause each other but possibly at different rates or at different times).

Obviously, the author was unable to randomly assign values on the explanatory variables. Instead, an elite’s value on each independent variable is the result of a complex historical process, which includes multiple iterations of elite bargaining. Given the absence of random assignment, the most obvious and potentially problematic manifestation of endogeneity takes the following form: instead of arguing that the degree and type of patronage, in combination with other variables, produces parameters for expected elite behavior, one could argue that an elite’s predisposition towards loyalty, defection, or exit determines both the degree and type of patronage he receives.\(^{62}\)

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\(^{61}\) “If bias is unavoidable, we should at least try to understand its direction and likely order of magnitude.” King, Keohane and Verba, 199.

\(^{62}\) One could make a similar argument for certain components of independent variables three, four, and five. In the author’s assessment, independent variable three is the least likely to suffer from an endogeneity bias. Generally, elite identity is exogenously determined. However, in some cases the President has rewarded loyal elites by making them sheikhs. By doing this, the President is to some degree determining “tribal identity,” but he is of course not creating this identity out of whole cloth. Moreover, to a limited degree, elites may self-select into these categories. Chapter Two, for example, will discuss a trend by which traditional sheikhs are becoming prominent businessmen. Yet, these new tribal merchants retain their tribal identity and can certainly be distinguished from the traditional merchant class that has developed over centuries. As for independent variable four, the life-cycle variable, age and travel/education are exogenous.
According to this argument, the President makes an evaluation of the elite’s propensity for loyalty (based on some combination of an elite’s past actions and his values on independent variables three, four, and five), and then he places the elite in networks of patronage in a way that rewards past loyalty and prevents future defection. In this scenario, the causal arrow is reversed, with the dependent variable determining values on two of the independent variables. For clarity, the two causal chains are graphically depicted below:

**Causal Chain #1: (The hypothesized relationship in this study)**

Degree of Patronage + Type of Patronage + Elite Identity + Life-cycle Measurement + Ease of Defection

↓

Loyalty/Defection/Exit

**Causal Chain #2: (Problem of Endogeneity)**

Elite Identity + Life-cycle Measurement + Ease of Defection + History of Loyalty or Defection + Personal Relationship with the President

↓

The President’s evaluation of an elite’s tendency for Loyalty/Defection/Exit

↓

Placement in a Type and Degree of Patronage

Given the President’s role in distributing patronage, there is a feedback mechanism connecting an elite’s tendency for loyalty or defection with the degree and...
type of patronage inclusion. For example, since the ruling party’s victory in the 1997 parliamentary elections, the President has been able to exclude many Islamist elites from prominent positions in the patronage system. Islamist elites were excluded precisely because the President believed they were potential defectors who threatened to institutionalize the political system. Those who maintained their positions did so as a result of their domestic popularity or because they have close family, tribal, or personal ties with the President. Given the exclusion of Islamists from prominent positions, observations may be biased towards loyalty.

As the example above shows, endogeneity is a concern for the project. However, it in no way invalidates the hypothesized causal chain and it only becomes a serious concern with regards to military/security patronage (which will be discussed below). For public sector, private sector, and political patronage, the endogeneity bias is minimal for several reasons. First, the President is in no way all-knowing or all-powerful as he attempts to manipulate the patronage system. Saleh’s evaluation may be flawed. If this were not the case, there simply would be no cases of defection. In addition, factors outside Saleh’s control such as tribal legacies, international demands, elite expertise, and the government’s specific needs limit his power to distribute patronage. Given these constraints, there is a limited correspondence between an elite’s propensity for loyalty and the type or degree of patronage inclusion he receives. One cannot say for example that there is a specific “loyalty profile” for elites who are included in a particular type or degree of patronage. In fact, once cases are coded and placed in the typology, there is significant variance in the type of elites included across both degree and type of
patronage. Where there is limited variance, as is the case with Islamist elites, this can be noted and explained.

Again, the project does not deny a feedback mechanism between the dependent and independent variables. It does however argue that once patronage is distributed, the degree and type of patronage, in combination with the remaining independent variables, structure the preferences and incentives of elites. With the exception of military/security patronage, there exists ample variance on both the independent and dependent variables to explore this causal relationship. As will be explained in the following section, the project uses process-tracing in the context of paired comparisons and within-case analysis to uncover the causal mechanisms connecting clusters of independent variables with the dependent variable.

While endogeneity creates a manageable challenge for public sector, private sector, and political patronage, it is potentially more problematic in relation to military/security patronage. The observed cases of defection from military/security patronage in this study are zero. Yet this observation may be significantly biased in favor of loyalty. Given the centrality of military/security patronage to the survival of the regime, President Saleh exercises comparably greater control over this arena and he is more cautious in his selection of clients. Therefore, it is possible that elites included in military/security positions may be so predisposed towards loyalty that no matter where they were included in networks of patronage, the outcome would have still been loyalty. Phrased differently, their tendency for loyalty determined their position in networks of patronage.

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63 See Table 1.
patronage, not the other way around. Alternatively, the author simply may not have been able to gather accurate information on these individuals. It is possible that military/security clients have attempted defection by making a credible threat to strengthen formal institutions, but these efforts were quickly silenced and not exposed in the press.

Despite the loyalty bias, the study tentatively hypothesizes a strong negative influence of military/security patronage on the likelihood of elite defection. Regardless of the reasons behind their incorporation, once elites are included in military/security patronage they become more deeply embedded in the highly personalized system of power around the President. If the top patron were to change, or if democratic institutions were strengthened, these elites would suffer politically and financially. Moreover unlike other clients, they will likely face violent consequences for defection. Based on data collected in this study, there is some evidence to support the hypothesized relationship. The only cases of military/security disloyalty known by the author have involved coup attempts or violent up-risings, not credible threats to strengthen formal democratic institutions.\textsuperscript{64} In other words, it seems that if elites choose to challenge the President from within networks of military/security patronage, they generally do so through violent and decisive action. As further evidence, a most similar case comparison reveals that a technocrat included in military/security patronage remained loyal, while a technocrat who received public sector patronage defected.\textsuperscript{65} Even more interesting, within the President’s

\textsuperscript{64} See Chapter Two for a historical review of coup attempts and for a discussion of the most recent military uprising in the south of Yemen.

\textsuperscript{65} This reference is to Case Number 3 in Table 1 and to another technocrat who has been excluded from the typology because he receives military/security patronage. The study collected data on four military/security
family, there are differences in behavior that correspond to variations in the type of patronage inclusion. A close relative of the President, who is included in private sector and political patronage, has recently cooperated with reformers in the Parliament. This man has not technically crossed a red line for the use of formal institutions, but his open sympathies with reformers is unique for the President’s family. Other relatives of the President with similar values on the independent variables, but who are included in military/security patronage, remain staunchly loyal.

Evaluating the causal relationship between military/security patronage and defection is difficult. There is little observable variance on other independent variables when combined with military/security patronage. In fact, during the timeframe of analysis, all elites who are deeply included in military patronage are blood relatives of the President from the small Sanhan clan of the Hashid tribal confederation. Of those who are only “included” in military/security patronage, there is still a high degree of homogeneity. Most have tribal or marriage ties to the President and they all have a history of proven loyalty. Hypothetically, if other types of elites, particularly Islamist elites or possibly young, reform-minded tribal elites, were incorporated in networks of military/security patronage, it is possible that there would be defection from within this category.

Acquiring accurate and detailed information on the internal politics of the military or security apparatus in Yemen is near impossible for a foreign researcher. More importantly, the information that can be compiled is often too compromising for the elites clients, who are not members of the President’s family. All four remained loyal, but were excluded from the typology in order to protect their identities.
under analysis to justify publication. Given the data restrictions, ethical concerns, and the problem of endogeneity associated with military/security patronage, the case studies in this research design focus on public sector, private sector, and political inclusion.

Typological Space and Case Selection

This project in no way claims to present, or aims to produce, a fully specified typological space. Fully specified typological theories, where all mathematically possible types (combinations of variables) are hypothesized, are rare because researchers are usually interested in types that are relatively common or in types that are particularly useful for theory building or policymaking.\textsuperscript{66} The full property space for this project is complex, even daunting. Due to the fact that the research design accounts for two dichotomous independent variables, and four independent variables which are measured by four different values, the applicable typological space theoretically contains 1,024 types. Fortunately, it is possible to reduce the relevant number of cells in several ways.

First, the number of types may be reduced by excluding socially impossible cases. “A good theory may be able – in time, if not immediately - to specify hypothetical cases or combinations of variables that should not exist or at least be highly unlikely.”\textsuperscript{67} There are several cases of impossible or highly unlikely types within this typological space. Socially unlikely types including military/security patronage are particularly common. While this type of patronage was distributed more broadly in the past, by 2003 almost all

\textsuperscript{66} George and Bennett, 235.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 249.
of the “deeply included” positions in the military/security apparatus were populated by
the President’s close blood kin. Given that the President’s close family are excluded from
the analysis (see footnote 46), any combination of military/security and “deeply
included” is practically nonexistent and can therefore be removed from the typological
space under consideration. Other types of socially improbable cells include combinations
of Islamist elites with military/security patronage, public sector patronage, or “deeply
included” political patronage. While Islamists were included more broadly before 1997,
they have subsequently been systematically excluded from the above mentioned
categories.

A second strategy for reducing the property space is to remove cells that are over-
determined by existing theory. In general, most-likely cases are theoretically interesting
only if they do not produce the expected outcome.68 Given the small set of defectors and
the potential risks associated with defection even under the best of circumstances, this
study will only exclude cells that are over-determined towards loyalty. When all five of
the independent variables assume values that would predict loyalty, both independently
and in combination, these cases are over-determined and theoretically uninteresting
unless they do not produce the expected outcome. For example, the combination of tribal
elite, deeply included, public sector patronage, risk averse, and ease of defection zero,
will result in loyalty. This combination, and combinations like it that produce the
expected outcome, may be excluded from the relevant typological space.

68 Ibid., 251. The authors note that while these cases are less likely to be theoretically informative, process-
tracing can be used in these cases to validate hypothesized mechanisms or show that causal mechanisms
did not operate as expected. Process-tracing is particularly revealing if the most-likely case demonstrates
extreme values on the independent variables, which allows researchers to examine causal mechanisms in
stark relief.
Finally, a third strategy for reducing the property space is to select cases based on research design objectives. This project is particularly interested in assessing and refining the initial working hypotheses regarding the impact of different types of patronage on elite defection. In addition, it also aims to analyze the causal paths associated with several politically prominent cases of defection in Yemen - cases that are widely discussed in the Yemeni media and watched by international organizations. In order to satisfy these objectives, it is useful to graphically depict the relevant typological space in order to observe how empirical cases cluster.

Before selecting specific cases for further analysis, it is important to note that the outcomes of the majority of cases are consistent with existing working hypotheses. In fact, only two cases, Case Numbers 3 and 26, are deviant. For these two cases, initial working hypotheses strongly predict loyalty, yet the observable outcome is defection. For the remaining thirty-one cases, outcomes are consistent with the proposed hypotheses. However, as will be discussed below, there are two instances of within-type variation, Case Numbers 12-13 and Case Numbers 27-28. For these sets of cases, the same independent variable values produce divergent outcomes. Initial working hypotheses do not make strong predictions regarding these clusters of independent variables and further investigation is needed to refine hypotheses.

See Tables 1-4

After placing all thirty-three cases in the larger typological space, the clustering of cases highlights several fruitful research designs. First, as expected, there is ambiguity

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69 Ibid., 251.
70 All data points for military/security patronage are excluded from the typology. The information gathered about this category is too sensitive to be used, even without name association.
surrounding the impact of political patronage. As Table 4 shows, the combination of political patronage, deeply included, tribal, risk taker, and ease of defection two, resulted in both defection and loyalty. The basic test of validity for a type is that all cases in the type have a similar outcome. Given the presence of two different outcomes, this type warrants further investigation in order to explore the possibility of measurement errors or left out variables. It is important to note that the initial working hypotheses of this project do not suggest a clear outcome for this combination of independent variables. Two variables, tribal and deeply included, are associated with loyalty, while two variables, ease of defection two and risk taker, are associated with potential defection. Of the four types of patronage, political patronage is hypothesized to leverage relatively weak incentives for loyalty, especially when combined with an elite whose political popularity is sound and who is capable of agitating for more lucrative inclusion.

In order to better understand the impact of political patronage and to further refine the distinction between types, this project conducts a detailed analysis of the three cases that fall into this type. The three cases actually represent only two tribal elites: Sheikh Yasser al-Awadi (Case Number 13 and Number 14) and Sheikh Muhammad Abu Luhom (Case Number 12). Yasser’s actions have changed from loyalty to defection over time, meaning he constitutes two separate cases. Using interview data and the local press, the project will first document how and why Yasser moved to from loyalty to defection in 2007. After examining Sheikh Yasser’s move to defection, the project then compares him...
with Sheikh Muhammad Abu Luhom. This comparison should identify left out variables or measurement errors to account for within-type variation. Beyond refining the typological space, Yasser’s case will also inform hypotheses regarding the impact to of elite defection. While his defection was bold at first, he has since been reincorporated, providing a useful example of how defection may perpetuate the existing mode of autocracy.

In addition to within-type analysis, the clustering of variables in the typological space also identifies an interesting deviant case of defection. Based on initial working hypotheses, the combination of included, political patronage, tribal, risk averse, and ease of defection zero, should provide strong incentives for loyalty. Yet, despite these incentives, Sakhir al-Wajih (Case Number 26) defects. Like the first set of case studies, Sakhir’s case also provides an opportunity to explore potential left out variables and measurement errors. Equally important, his case provides a unique opportunity to examine a successful case of defection that is having a small, but important impact on the organization of power in Yemen. Sakhir’s defection in Parliament has produced a comparatively greater positive impact on formal political institutions than any other instance of defection explored in this study. As such, it affords an opportunity to examine the circumstances that facilitate a modest, yet successful formalization of the political arena.

Finally, the project will conclude with a single case study of Hamid al-Ahmar (Case Number 22). Unlike the other case study selections, Hamid does not present a typological anomaly. In fact, his actions are consistent with his values on the independent
variables. Instead, his case affords an opportunity to explore one pathway of defection associated with private sector patronage. Equally important, Hamid constitutes a politically prominent case of defection that was widely covered by the Yemeni media and watched by international observers. As a member of one of Yemen’s most prominent tribal families, Hamid is at the center of a brewing conflict over who will control political and economic spoils in the post-Saleh era. His case should provide critical insights into the future of Yemen’s neopatrimonial system and into the potential for formalization of politics after Saleh.

Outline/Plan for the Dissertation

This chapter suggests that to understand institutional change and renewal in hybrid regimes, scholars must look beyond democratic institutions to examine differences in the underlying practice of autocracy. In an attempt to understand a particular type of hybrid system, those dominated by neopatrimonialism, it has outlined a model for analyzing elite bargaining and defection in the context of Yemen. While this chapter has discussed informal institutions, variables, and working hypotheses in abstract terms, the remainder of the dissertation will place these elements in an empirical context. Chapter Two will disaggregate and explain the guiding principles of Yemen’s informal, kinship based patronage system. In doing so, it will explain the rules of inclusion, exclusion, rewards, and punishments that structure elite behavior. This chapter will also explain in more detail the concept of defection, or crossing “red lines.” Finally, it will briefly review
how the rules of the game and patterns of inclusion have changed since Saleh consolidated political power in 1994. Chapters Three through Five will then carry out the case studies mentioned above in order to test and refine the initial working hypotheses. Finally, a concluding chapter will summarize the case study findings, explain their significance for the survival of autocracy in Yemen, and then address issues of generalizability to other neopatrimonial regimes.
Table 1: Placement of Cases in the Typological Space (Military/Security Elites Excluded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case #</th>
<th>IV #1 Military/Security or Tribal Elite, Y/N?</th>
<th>IV #2 Military/Security or Public Sector Patronage, Y/N?</th>
<th>IV #3 Tribal Elite, Y/N?</th>
<th>IV #4 Life-Cycle: Risk Taker or Risk Averse</th>
<th>IV #5 Ease of Defection Index: 0=incapable, 3=Very Capable</th>
<th>Outcome: Loyalty, Defection, Exit</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Y (Public Sector)</td>
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<td>Defection (Limited)</td>
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<tr>
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### Table 4

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<th>Exit</th>
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<td>Three</td>
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<td>Three</td>
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<td>Traditional Business</td>
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<td>Three</td>
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<td>Risk Averse</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk Averse</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Three</td>
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<td>Three</td>
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</table>

The Yemeni regime, like other hybrid regimes, purports to be a democracy. On paper, it has an elected parliament and president, a multi-party system, an independent judiciary, and the framework for a democratically elected local government. In reality, these institutions do not generate or transfer political power. Power and wealth are produced and transmitted through a highly informal, yet deeply patterned web of tribally based patronage relationships.

To understand the dynamics of the Yemeni autocracy one must look beyond written laws and formal institutions to examine the informal rules of the game that govern political behavior. In an attempt to operationalize the study of informal institutions, Helmke and Levitsky suggest that “at a minimum” scholars must answer three basic questions: “First, what are the actors’ shared expectations about the actual constraints they face...Second, what is the community to which the informal rules apply...and third, how are informal rules enforced?” This chapter will loosely follow Helmke and Levitsky’s framework. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, it will first identify the relevant community to which the informal rules of patronage politics apply. Then it will identify actors’ shared expectations, or the rules of the game, that guide political behavior. Outlining the rules of the game will clarify the critical concept of crossing “red lines” and it will highlight the extent to which demanding formalization is a radical departure from

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72 Helmke and Levitsky, 733.
the status quo. Next, it will address the consequences or punishments associated with 
breaking the rules of the game. These punishments, or enforcement mechanisms, are 
often “subtle, hidden, or even illegal.” Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief 
analysis of the changing patterns of patronage inclusion and exclusion since Saleh 
consolidated power throughout Yemen in 1994. This analysis will set the stage for the 
case studies explored in Chapters Three through Five.

To some extent, this chapter is an exercise in simplification. The informal 
institution of patronage politics in Yemen is a product of a complex game of elite 
bargaining between Saleh and his clients. While one can certainly identify a set of 
informal rules that guide and bound elite behavior, these rules are under constant 
negotiation as actors engage in boundary testing to improve their strategic positions. 
Furthermore, it is important to note that no actor in this game, including the President, 
has perfect information to navigate the political arena. Certainly Saleh makes mistakes 
as he attempts to manipulate patronage distribution in ways that preserve his authority. 
Clients also miscalculate their own strength, the availability of coalition partners, and the 
President’s preferences. In sum, the game of patronage politics is far from a well 
rehearsed play in which actors know and perform their parts. The following pages may 
give the impression that the system is more coherent, transparent, and means-ends 
efficient than it actually is in practice. Issues of unintended consequences and imperfect

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73 Ibid., 733.
74 To make sense of the patronage game, this chapter relies on extensive interviews with elite clients and 
advisors close to the President. Much of the interview data paints an exaggerated picture of the President’s 
ability to manipulate the patronage system. Clients often discuss the President as if he has unlimited access 
to information and an uneanny ability to fracture potential reform coalitions. Undoubtedly, Saleh is a 
skilled politician. Yet, he also has imperfect information and is capable of miscalculation.
information will be revived and more fully addressed in the case study section. For now, much of the messiness has been excluded in order to effectively highlight core dynamics.

**A Brief Historical Note**

Before disaggregating the informal institution of patronage politics, and exploring its relationship with formal democratic institutions, a historical note is in order. Saleh’s rule has been based on a highly informal, tribal system of patronage politics since he became President of North Yemen in 1978. Yet, the neopatrimonial system has developed and expanded over time. When Saleh first gained control of the country, the political economy of patronage politics was fragile and limited in scope. At that time, the state exercised limited control over the country’s territory, and the President’s primary concern was avoiding a coup and surviving in office.\(^{75}\) Like other neopatrimonial regimes, the roots of the neopatrimonialism in Yemen can be traced to Saleh’s ability to co-opt and control the armed forces.\(^{76}\) Immediately upon taking office, the President began to place his close relatives into top military positions. Gradually, he was able to tribalize the officer corps. In addition to weakening the military as an autonomous

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\(^{75}\) Interview by the author with an advisor of the President, Sana’a, Yemen, April 2006. In this interview the President’s advisor emphasized Saleh’s fear of a coup during the early years of his reign. According to the advisor, the President is less worried about a coup now and more concerned about a social uprising. This is a valid shift in focus given the President’s consolidation of military rule around his family and the growing problem of social unrest throughout the country. While the Saleh regime has consolidated power in the capital, it is currently threatened by growing unrest in the former South Yemen and a slow war of attrition by a group of Shiite rebels, the Huthis, in Northern Yemen. These two conflicts, in combination with growing attacks by al-Qaeda on foreign targets (particularly those associated with the oil industry) as well as the rising cost of food, could create a perfect storm of discontent that may be too much for the central government to manage simultaneously.

\(^{76}\) Richard Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” *Comparative Politics* 24:4 (July 1992): 396. Snyder argues that the initial power base of most neopatrimonial regimes is the military. In the beginning, neopatrimonialism often depends on the dictator’s ability to wrest power away from military institutions.
institution, Saleh also worked to incorporate powerful social elites, particularly tribal sheikhs, into networks of patronage. The incorporation of powerful northern sheikhs into prominent government positions marked a distinct shift in policy. Saleh’s most prominent predecessor, President Ibrahim al-Hamdi, had conscientiously set out to attenuate the power of tribal families by excluding them from prominent posts.

Patronage extending from the President, however, occupied only a fraction of the larger political economy. During the late seventies and throughout most of the eighties, labor remittances from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states bypassed state coffers and accrued directly to Yemeni citizens. The remittance economy created a powerful, independent private sector with limited ties to the ruling regime in Sana’a. Further, Saudi Arabia was deeply involved in tribal politics of North Yemen and distributed large sums of money directly to loyal sheikhs, particularly on the border region.

The late 1980s brought a sea change in the political economy that fundamentally altered the nature and scope of patronage politics. The international price of oil fell by half in 1986, marking the beginning of the end for Yemen’s remittance based economy. Almost overnight foreign aid, primarily from oil rich Gulf States, fell from over ninety percent of the national budget to only two percent, and remittances dropped forty percent from their peak in 1981. The precipitous decline of foreign aid and the remittance economy

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77 For a detailed explanation of the impact of the remittance economy on processes of state formation as well as the development of state-business relations see: Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).
78 Saudi Arabia has a long history of direct interference in Yemeni domestic affairs. The Kingdom has long standing ties with several prominent sheikhs in north Yemen, including the al-Shayf family from the governorate of al-Jawf and the al-Ahmar family from the governorate of Amran. Even today, Saudi Arabia continues to provide salaries directly to client sheikhs.
79 Chaudhry, 269.
economic allowed the central government to take dramatic steps to increase direct
taxation and regulate the private sector. Of particular importance was the state’s strict
regulation of imports. State control of import licenses radically altered the nature of
Yemen’s business class and the traditional role of tribal elites. Saleh issued import
licenses to favored sheikhs, who then sold the licenses to traditional merchants for a
profit. In this way, dozens of tribesmen entered the business community, while the
traditional business houses rose and fell based on their willingness to cooperate with the
President and the new tribal business elite. At this point, networks of patronage
extending from the President became a central part of the production and transfer of
power.

The decline of the remittance economy in the mid-1980s allowed the state to
control a greater portion of national wealth through intervention and regulation. It is also
important to note that in 1984 the American Company, Hunt, discovered oil in northern
Yemen. After unification with the South in 1990, the oil and gas sectors would become a
lucrative source of patronage and corruption for the President. Currently oil revenues
comprise over seventy percent of the government’s annual revenues. These revenues
finance the lion’s share of government spending, including the salaries of civil servants
and the military. In addition to funding the bloated civil service, the President is able to

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80 The transformation of state-business relations was verified by numerous interviews conducted by the
author between September of 2006 and September of 2007. The transformation of the Yemeni business
class is also addressed by Chaudhry in: The Price of Wealth. The distinction between the “traditional”
merchant class and the “tribal” merchants, or what some call the “parasitic” business class, still exists today
in Yemeni discourse.

81 The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, “Country Report: Yemen July 2008,” (Dartford and Kent, UK:
Patersons Dartford, 2008), 6. Also see: Mohammed Bin Sallam, “MPs accuse government of hiding
distribute access to oil concessions, as well as the right to sell the Yemeni government’s share of extracted crude, to prominent clients. Further, patronage related to the oil sector is not limited to domestic production. While Yemen exports raw crude, it is actually a net importer of diesel. In fact, the government spends between 300 billion (according to official budget estimates) and 600 billion Yemeni Riyals (as informally estimated by government officials) annually on a petroleum, mostly diesel, subsidy. Yet the majority of this oil is never sold on the domestic market. Those clients lucky enough to be at the top of the patronage web are allowed to buy subsidized oil and then sell it for a profit on the international market. Much of this oil is smuggled to the Horn of Africa. In sum, domestic oil production and diesel subsidies marked a dramatic expansion of state resources, and by extension, networks of patronage extending from the President.

In addition to increased economic control, the President was also able to expand patronage through the General People’s Congress (GPC). Saleh established the GPC in 1982 as a quasi-party institution, or umbrella organization, that incorporated a wide array of social groups and political tendencies. The GPC portrayed itself as an explicitly non-partisan, nationalist organization, which had as its goals “state building, democracy, constitutional rule, modernization, and ‘building military and security institutions.’”

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83 One Dollar = approximately 200 Yemeni Riyals.


reality, the GPC was a successful move by the state to co-opt the material resources and political reach of a network of civil society organizations known as Local Development Councils (LDCs).\textsuperscript{86} LDCs thrived during the 1970s and early 1980s as a result of the remittance economy, and they were the source of the lion’s share of development projects, especially in the countryside. The GPC essentially built upon and co-opted these grassroots organizations on behalf of the central government. LDC elections served as the basis for the GPC’s national level organization, the Permanent Committee. In 1982, LDC elections produced 700 delegates to the GPC’s Permanent Committee and the President then appointed 300 additional delegates.\textsuperscript{87} In its current form, elections for the Permanent Committee are still partially determined by local elections and partially by presidential appointment.

From its conception, the GPC became an important component in the patronage system. On one hand, the Permanent Committee, and more importantly, the organization’s top executive committee, the General Committee, became a source of political patronage that the President could distribute to loyal clients. On the other hand, GPC membership became a sign of loyalty to the regime and an expected part of reciprocity if one intended to be included in other forms of patronage. Sheila Carapico notes that in the 1980s, membership in the GPC was a “prerequisite” for other types of political and civil service appointments.\textsuperscript{88} By the end of the 1980s, elites throughout

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 142.
North Yemen began to view networks of patronage around the President as the main locus of political and economic competition.

In 1990, unification with South Yemen marked another sea change. Unification brought democratic institutions into the political arena, and Yemen became a hybrid system. Democratic institutions were more the result of hasty unity rather than real commitment to democratization, yet they survived the tumultuous process of unification and the subsequent civil war. After Saleh’s triumph over the South in the 1994 civil war, the President consolidated neopatrimonial rule throughout the country. But formal democratic institutions, particularly the Parliament and the multi-party system, became an entrenched part of the political landscape, producing new bargaining resources and constraints for both the President and clients. The details of the patronage system discussed below, and their relationship to formal democratic institutions, apply roughly to the post-1994 period of Saleh’s rule.

**To Whom Do the Informal Rules Apply?**

The rules discussed in this chapter apply to the political elite in Yemen. In this study, political elites are defined as: “national level agenda setters, figures who wield regular and substantial influence over a country’s political system.”

It is important to note that this project examines the sub-set of elites who are included in networks of patronage. However, the rules of the game apply to included and excluded elites alike.

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Elites who are outside networks of patronage have either been intentionally excluded, or they have chosen exclusion. In either case, they are subject to the rules of the game.

The broad category of “political elite” is comprised of several groups, most prominently for the purposes of this study: tribal elite, Islamists, traditional merchants, and technocrats.\(^{90}\) Tribal elite refers to the population of historically important tribal sheikhs, mostly from northern Yemen, who command the allegiance of tribes or tribal groupings. For the purposes of this study, it also includes new sheikhs who have essentially been created by the regime (or at least significantly strengthened by the regime), as well as the President and his family from the Sanhan tribe.\(^{91}\) Islamists in this study are ideologues usually associated with either the Muslim Brothers or with the Salafi movement. Traditional merchants are primarily Shafi‘i\(^{92}\) businessmen who acquired their wealth in the agricultural regions of middle Yemen and in close proximity to the thriving markets of Aden during the British occupation. Some traditional merchants also hail from the governorate of Hadramawt; however, many of these business families have left Yemen and now live in Saudi Arabia or Indonesia. Finally, technocrats refer to a group of actors with the education and expertise necessary to run a modern state and regulate a 21\(^{st}\) century society.

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\(^{90}\) There are several ways one could draw the lines between elite categories in Yemen. Much of the literature makes a distinction between military officers and tribal sheikhs. This study, however, collapses these two groups into the category of tribal elites. In practice, all top military officers are tribal and usually without exception from the President’s clan, the Sanhan. The term technocrat in this study is roughly equivalent to what other authors, including Paul Dresch, refer to as “modernists.”

\(^{91}\) As a tribe, the Sanhan was historically marginal before Saleh became President. The President and his close family are not traditional sheikhs; instead, most entered the ranks of the elite through the military. Shafi‘is are Sunni Muslims who adhere to the Shafi‘i school of Islamic law. The majority of Yemenis are Shafi‘i, while the largest minority are Zaydi (a branch of Shi‘a Islam). Zaydis form the majority in the Northwest of the country. Historically the rulers of North Yemen, including the Imams and now President Ali Abdullah Saleh, are Zaydi.
century economy. These individuals are predominantly from an urban background and they often come from respected qadi families, such as the al-Iryanis.

The categories above simplify, and in some ways obfuscate, a more complex empirical reality. The anthropologist Paul Dresch argues that in the 1990s the traditional categories used to describe the Yemeni elite, such as “merchant, shaykh, officer, and modernist,” have “finally collapsed.” As evidence, in 1997 the President, an “army [and tribal] man par excellence- became a partner in Hayl Sa’id Enterprises, the best known of Yemen’s industrial and commercial companies. Indeed, the categories that have distinguished Yemeni elites throughout history have never been mutually exclusive, and they have become more fluid in recent years. Saleh’s strategic incorporation of sheikhs into the private sector, for example, has created a new group of tribal businessmen. Now, one is hard pressed to find a sheikh who does not also consider himself a merchant. Despite the reality of multiple identities, the categories maintain empirical and explanatory value because they reveal important patterns of inclusion and exclusion. As will be discussed below, Saleh makes inclusion and exclusion decisions based on the type of elite under consideration. Equally important, these categories also guide elites as they make decisions regarding the degree and type of inclusion they can legitimately request.

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93 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Yemen Corruption Assessment, (Burlington, VT: ARD, Inc., September 25, 2006), 5. I used this publication for background information on traditional merchants and technocrats. The paper also contains more detailed background information on tribal and military elites.

94 qadi means judge in Arabic. In Yemeni society, qadi families are associated with legal training and expertise.

Specifying the Rules of the Game

According to Juan Linz, one of the defining characteristics of autocracy is that “a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.” This is indeed the case in Yemen. Under the Saleh regime, several unwritten rules shape the incentive structures of elite actors. These rules, or guiding principles, constitute a set of expectations that are shared by the President and elite clients alike.

It is important to note that the rules of the game outlined below are guidelines, rather than rigid laws. In fact, what makes this system a viable strategy of rule is a degree of uncertainly and fluidity. Elite clients, for example, have an idea of what kind and how much patronage they can expect to receive from the President, but they cannot be certain that they will receive the expected benefits. Further, even when elites temporarily fall out of favor with the regime, the patronage system is fluid and inclusive, making future incorporation or greater access possible. Uncertainty and insecurity often discourage defection and the formation of oppositional coalitions because elites have a difficult time evaluating not only their own status in patronage networks, but also the status of potential coalition partners. There is of course no simple formula to predict how precisely a certain type of elite will be included in networks of patronage. Nor is there a transparent formula for the distribution of rewards and punishments. This section attempts to order and simplify a highly complex political reality. Again, the analysis intentionally sacrifices some nuance in order to effectively highlight core dynamics.

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Guiding Principle #1: Patronage is distributed broadly

Yemen is an inclusive as opposed to exclusive patronage system. Yemeni elites of all types expect some form of inclusion, and the President is generally willing to oblige. In fact, Saleh has consistently chosen co-option, compromise, and divide and rule tactics over exclusion and direct confrontation. While there has been a trend towards consolidation of power around the President’s immediate family in recent years, particularly with regards to the military, political and economic spoils are still disbursed widely. According to Dresch, “talk of ‘family rule’ misrepresents the problem. Far from restricting illicit wealth to small circles of kin or colleagues, the government proved ecumenical… [It is] ordinary Yemenis [who]… simply do not have access to much of the national wealth.”

Dresch’s analysis is quite accurate. The inclusiveness of the patronage system is elite in nature. Saleh primarily concerns himself with grand patronage and then it is the task of elite clients to redistribute wealth and access as they see fit. In many cases, the average Yemeni sees little material benefit. In fact, the al-Ahmar family’s tribal area, as well as Saleh’s own Sanhan region, is strikingly underdeveloped. These two families are at the heart of political and economic access, yet wealth and power has a limited trickle-down effect within their tribal regions.

Among the political elite, however, inclusion is the norm and exclusion the exception. A striking testament to the inclusive nature of the system is Saleh’s treatment

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of the former leaders of South Yemen. After the civil war of 1994, Saleh declared amnesty for all but a hand full of southern leaders. In recent years, he has called for the southern leadership in exile to return to the country. Immediately before the Presidential election of 2006, Saleh allowed two prominent southern politicians, Abdul Rahman al-Jifri and Salem Saleh Mohammad, to return and participate in political life. He even appointed Salim Saleh as a presidential advisor and as head of a committee dealing with land disputes and other grievances in the south.98 Saleh’s attempt to incorporate former enemies into networks of patronage is purely instrumental. The President is currently facing a growing crisis in southern Yemen in which hundreds of civilians have organized demonstrations against what they perceive as institutionalized political and economic discrimination.99 However, Saleh’s attempt to co-opt southern leaders is evidence of flexibility and inclusiveness. Even those who have engaged in open insurrection may eventually be included in the fold.

The inclusiveness of Yemen’s neopatrimonial system has certainly contributed to its longevity. Most all prominent elites, whether they are aligned with the ruling party or members of the formal opposition, receive some type of benefit. This ecumenical distribution has hindered the development of a radical or moderate opposition with the

98 Longley and al-Iryani, 7. The committee dealing with southern grievances is called: The Presidential Commission to Deal with Negative Phenomena that Harm Social Peace and Unity. Salem Saleh nicknames it, “The Commission with the Long Name.” It is widely viewed as a sham by most southerners.
desire or capacity to affect regime change. Almost everyone has some financial or political interest in maintaining the status quo. In fact, it is precisely the broad, inclusive nature of the patronage system that makes it necessary to examine the defection of included elites in order to observe gradual processes of change and renewal. A large group of excluded elites with the resources or the motivation to coalesce around radical regime change simply does not exist.

It is important to emphasize that the expectation of inclusion is a significant limitation on Saleh’s ability to manipulate informal patronage arrangements. Saleh is not a sultanistic dictator who manipulates the political arena relatively free of social constraints. Instead, he operates in a political arena in which the state has only a limited monopoly of violence and where social forces are strong. Today there are still tribal areas, particularly in al-Jawf, Marib, and Shebwa that are almost entirely controlled by tribes. Direct confrontation with armed tribes or even an aggressive posture towards historically important families is a risky gamble, both militarily and politically, for the President. In sum, while Saleh may rearrange patronage ties in order to balance domestic alliances, radical exclusion of the political elite, particularly the tribal elite, is not an option if he wishes to remain in power. Given the social and political limitations on Saleh’s rule and the relatively wide circle of clients that support his regime, the style of rule in Yemen is solidly neopatrimonial as opposed to sultanistic.

For an analysis of how varying degrees of patronage penetration affects transitions (or lack thereof) from neopatrimonialism, see Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” 379-399, and Brownlee, “….And Yet They Persist,” 35-63.

**Guiding Principle #2: Elites must accept inclusion**

When an actor is offered patronage, he is expected to either accept the offer or to lobby for a better position. Rejecting patronage is unacceptable because it challenges the very organization of power around the President. By accepting inclusion, elites become dependent on and obligated to Saleh. When elites are financially and or politically invested in the regime, they risk losing their privileged positions if the organization of power is altered. Moreover, by joining the patronage game, elites can be discredited as “corrupt” if they seek to publicly criticize the regime, or reform the political economy on which it rests.

Blackmail is a central component in maintaining loyalties and preventing reform coalitions. Anecdotal evidence confirms the importance of blackmail as a way to maintain the status quo. In one particular case, a prominent member of the government spoke out against corruption and then urged his colleagues to join him in reform. After this bold move, the President offered him monies that could be used for a development project in his impoverished tribal region. Before offering the bribe, the President had worked to ignite tribal conflict in the man’s district. The bribe placed the man in a difficult situation. If he denied the money, attacks against him and his tribe would continue. If he took the money, the Office of the President would then have a record of
the bribe, which could be used as blackmail. A presidential advisor strongly recommended that the elite take the money so that the political crisis could be resolved. When the man took the bait, the story was leaked to the press. If he continued in his oppositional stance, the bribe would be revealed and his name permanently tarnished in the media.102 This type of interaction is typical and actually works both ways: the President blackmailing elites and elites blackmailing the President. Yemenis often speculate that Abdul Qadir Bajammal, a former prime minister and the current general secretary of the GPC, is able to maintain prominent positions because of his intimate knowledge of the President’s own financial affairs.

A prominent diplomat summarized the dilemma of inclusion by describing it as “a double edged sword,” especially for genuine reformers who wish to democratize the system. Given the weakness of the political opposition and the consolidation of power around the President, one must be included in networks of patronage to be in a position to affect change. However, once included, elites are partially implicated in the system, and they perpetuate the very organization of power they wish to alter.103

A small handful of elites reject inclusion completely and remain outside of patronage circles. Their numbers are small, even within the formal opposition, and they suffer financially and politically for their decision. Within the most powerful opposition party, Hizb al-Islah, prominent leaders such as Mohammad al-Qahtan and Dr. Mohammad al-Sadi, seem to have avoided patronage co-option completely. Men like

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102 Interview by the author with a prominent member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, September 2006 and July 2007.
103 Interview by the author with a prominent diplomat, Sana’a, Yemen, September 2007.
these enjoy social respect for their decisions; however, their ability to affect change is limited by their distance from decision making circles and by the fact that their own party is permeated by direct patronage ties.

*Guiding Principle #3: The type and degree of patronage inclusion is not random. In distributing patronage, the President considers a variety of factors, including: the type of elite under consideration (tribal, technocrat, merchant, etc), an elite’s grassroots popularity, proven loyalty, and finally the tactical needs of balancing tribal, family, and regional alliances.*

While an elite actor may experience various levels of inclusion or exclusion over a period of time, these changes follow an internal logic in the system that is generally understood by patron and client alike. For any given elite, there is essentially a range of acceptable patronage. This range is a function of several factors, including: the type of elite under consideration, an elite’s grassroots popularity (and particularly his ability to gather an armed following), his proven loyalty to the President, and finally his family, tribal, and or regional affiliations. When an elite receives patronage within an acceptable range, serious conflict is usually avoided. When an elite lobbies for positions outside of what the President believes to be appropriate, or when the President does not extend patronage within an acceptable range, serious conflict will usually follow. It is important to note that conflict is part and parcel of this system. Even when elites fall within an acceptable range, they often lobby for greater access. As long as their actions stay within

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104 See Chapter One for an explanation of potential endogeneity problems. Also note that guiding principle three is an intentional over-simplification of a complex political reality.
the informal patronage paradigm, and they do not cross red lines, their actions are an accepted part of everyday politics.\textsuperscript{105}

There are distinct patterns of distribution associated with the type of elite under consideration. In fact, one Yemeni political observer argues that the President follows a loose division of labor based on elite identity.\textsuperscript{106} Saleh views different types of elites, particularly tribal, technocratic, and traditional merchant elites as possessing different sets of skills, which make them suitable for certain types of roles in the government and the national economy. Tribal elites are the most versatile group and can be found in almost any part of the patronage equation. They routinely receive military/security, public sector, private sector, and political patronage. Since Saleh gained control of the country in 1978, he has systematically privileged tribal interests. However, as will be discussed in more detail later, “the tribes” are far from a monolith. There is a hierarchy of power within the tribal system that determines which tribes or tribal confederation receives the most patronage.\textsuperscript{107}

In comparison to powerful tribal interests, technocrats and traditional merchants receive a narrow portion of patronage. While it would be dangerous for the President to exclude these groups in mass, given their financial clout and technical expertise, he has a great deal of leeway to demote or exclude these individuals based on their behavior.\textsuperscript{108} Considering their skill set, traditional merchants are generally included in private sector patronage, and are occasionally incorporated into political patronage when their business

\textsuperscript{105} See next section for a discussion of red lines.
\textsuperscript{106} Interview by the author with a Yemeni technocrat, Sana’a, Yemen, September 2006.
\textsuperscript{107} USAID, \textit{Yemen Corruption Assessment}, 3.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 5.
expertise is needed. Technocrats are usually given positions in the government bureaucracy or political patronage. Some also receive private sector benefits, although this is done on a case by case basis. Technocrats are generally prevented from entering high positions in the military/security complex. More than likely, this is done in an attempt to avoid a coup coalition between technocrats and any disgruntled factions in the military. Again, the division of labor discussed above identifies broad patterns of inclusion. There are of course exceptions and variations.

In addition to making distinctions based on these broad and often misleading categories, the President accounts for an elite’s personal popularity, and particularly his ability to rally an armed following. Elites who maintain deep social connections and loyalties with the population are threatening and cannot be ignored. They are generally deeply included in networks of patronage and the President will rarely ever fully exclude socially popular elites, unless they engage in open insurrection. If Saleh chooses to reduce their amount of patronage, he will do so only with great caution.

Popular leaders capable of rallying an armed militia are particularly dangerous. Yemen is a tribal society with a heavily armed population. While Saleh has made great strides over his tenure to expand state control over the country, the state still does not possess a monopoly of violence, particularly in the tribal periphery. Powerful sheikhs maintain their own armed followings and they periodically demonstrate control over their territories. In this precarious environment, the President generally seeks to co-opt sheikhs with strong ties to their tribesmen. In fact, an advisor close to the President suggests that the incorporation of tribal elites into the private sector was a deliberate attempt to change
the nature of a sheikh’s connection with their tribe. Before the 1980s, tribal involvement in business was unusual. According to tribal tradition, it was considered shameful for a tribesman to engage in commerce. This tradition, however, melted away during the late 1980s and the majority of young sheikhs now are also businessmen.

With their new involvement in commerce, many sheikhs are preoccupied with personal profits and bottom lines in the capital and have less time to devote to the traditional tasks, including the adjudication of tribal law. By including them in business, the President sought to weaken their military bond with the tribe. Sheikhs’ involvement in private sector business creates a new mode of dependency on the state, and provides disincentives to interfering with the organization of power in the capital.

The importance of social popularity is certainly not limited to tribal sheikhs. The President is also careful to extend valuable patronage to religious leaders who could potentially rally the population against the regime. The language of Islam is a powerful mobilizing tool in Yemen and those who control religious discourse are influential political players. Even as the President began a systematic exclusion of the Islamist party, Hizb al-Islah, from prominent positions in the government after 1997, he maintained ties with many top leaders. The tribal wing of Islah, represented by Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein al-Ahmar, maintained their patronage connections. Even among the Muslim

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109 Interview by the author with a member of the GPC’s General Committee, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2007.
110 Sheikhs often vehemently disagree as to the consequences of participating in commerce. Most of the time, their opinions justify their family’s relationship to the business community. Sheikhs who own businesses argue that they are no less attached to their tribe. In fact they claim that their personal wealth allows them to more effectively solve tribal conflicts (sheikhs often solve disputes by compensating the wronged party- it is also important to note that simply going through the tribal protocols of adjudication often requires a sheikh to expend personal resources on hosting the disputing parties). Sheikhs uninvolved in commerce often tout their positions as tribesmen who are “untainted” by commerce. Despite these differencing opinions, the number of tribesmen now involved in business has all but erased the former stigma associated with trade and commerce.
Brother and Salafi component, many popular leaders remained in the patronage fold largely because of their social influence.\textsuperscript{111} In sum, while the party was officially excluded, Saleh was cautious not to alienate socially popular leaders.

Proven personal loyalty to the President also plays a role in where elites are placed in patronage arrangements. This is especially true for military/security positions. Before Saleh took power in 1978, Yemen was riddled with military coups and political assassinations.\textsuperscript{112} Given this dangerous political environment, the President has always placed a premium on loyalty, especially among military officers. In general he prefers to appoint close blood relatives to top military positions. One prominent example is the current head of the Political Security Organization (PSO), General Ghalib Ghamish.\textsuperscript{113} Ghamish is from the President’s village, Bayt al-Ahmar, in the Sanhan tribe of the Hashid confederation. He acquired the powerful position as the head of Yemen’s top security agency by virtue of kinship and proven loyalty. Approximately one year after Saleh became President, there was a coup attempt led by supporters of former President Ibrahim al-Hamdi. Ghamish was at that time an officer in the Military Police. He refused to support the coup and was consequentially jailed by Hamdi supporters. After the coup

\textsuperscript{111} The most prominent example is probably Sheikh ‘Abd al-Majid Zindani who has maintained his access to private sector patronage. Zindani has a large stake in Yemen’s fishing industry and many Yemenis suspect that his market share was improved after the Presidential elections of 2006 (in the elections Zindani, for a number of reasons, broke rank with Islah and supported the President). During the elections, Saleh also promised financial support for Zindani’s religious university in Sana’a, Iman university. Another prominent member of Islah was given access to a prime piece of real estate in Aden. Many Yemeni journalists and political commentators suggest that the President utilizes this man’s real estate investment as a pressure point to control his political opposition.

\textsuperscript{112} The two Presidents preceding President Saleh, Ibrahim al-Hamdi and Ahmed al-Ghamish, were both assassinated.

\textsuperscript{113} The PSO is the equivalent of the FBI and the CIA in an American context. There is no special agency, the equivalent of the CIA, dedicated specifically to gathering foreign intelligence.
attempt failed, Ghamish was richly rewarded for his personal loyalty with the position of
head of the PSO.\footnote{114}

Finally, elites receive patronage based on tribal, family, and regional affiliations. Saleh is an expert at balancing a complicated array of tribal, family, and regional interests, and often individual elites are pawns in a larger strategy of divide and rule. From a tribal perspective, the President distributes patronage after considering the relationship between various confederations, tribes within confederations, and individual members within prominent tribal families. In Yemen, there are three main tribal confederations: Hashid, Bakil, and Madhaj. Madhaj is technically the largest, although sheikhs in this confederation are historically weaker and therefore their incorporation is done on an individual basis depending on the strength of their tribal affiliations. Hashid is the confederation of the President and it is generally privileged over the other two confederations. Within Hashid, the President is from a small tribe called the Sanhan. The Sanhan is systematically privileged, especially regarding military/security patronage.

As a whole, Hashid is comparatively easier to control through patronage than the other confederations because it is organized hierarchically. Until his passing on December 29, 2007, Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar was the undisputed sheikh of sheikhs of the Hashid confederation. Abdullah was instrumental in Saleh’s rise to power and he essentially ruled in coordination with the President beginning 1978. With Abdullah’s support, the loyalty of Hashid remained secure. Now that Abdullah has passed away, the hierarchical cohesion of Hashid is less clear. It remains to be seen which one of Abdullah

\footnote{114 Interview by the author with a prominent politician with ties to the military establishment, Sana’a, Yemen, Fall 2006.}
sons, if any, will dominate the confederation, and what the son’s relationship will be to the President.\textsuperscript{115}

Bakil, compared to Hashid, is more complicated. This confederation is numerically larger and more decentralized. Bakil does not have one sheikh of sheikhs who can be incorporated and then subsequently control subordinate sheikhs. Instead, the confederation contains several historically prominent tribal families that vie for power, including: Abu Luhom, Abu Ras, Shayif, and Qadir. In general, Saleh is careful to incorporate all major players, but he uses patronage strategically to check the power of potential leaders. Each of the families mentioned above has members scattered throughout private, public, and political patronage. Moreover, several marriage relations and direct business ties bind various parts of the Bakil confederation to the President’s family. The President’s daughters have married into the Abu Luhom family as well as the Duwait family, a prominent Bakil clan from the Khowlan region just east of Sana’a. The most prominent business ties to Bakil are probably through the Rowayshan family, another tribal family from the Khowlan region.\textsuperscript{116}

While Bakil sheikhs occupy prominent positions, they are keenly aware of the decentralized nature of their confederation and the competition between sheikhs with comparable historical clout and influence. Given that the President hails from Hashid, there is an underlying sense of resentment among Bakil sheikhs that they are not as fully

\textsuperscript{115} Formally Abdullah’s oldest son, Sadik, was appointed sheikh of sheikhs of the Hashid Confederation before Abdullah’s death. However in practice, Hussein al-Ahmar, Sadik’s brother, is a more influential tribesman and seems to be lobbying for control of the confederation.

\textsuperscript{116} The author attempted numerous times to interview members of the Rowayshan family, but ultimately failed to obtain a single interview. Second hand sources report that the Rowayshan’s are intimately tied to the President financially. They own various import businesses as well as the Yemen Commercial Bank. The family got their start in business in the 1980s by acquiring the sole right to import fireworks into Yemen.
incorporated as their Hashid counterparts. In the words of a Bakil tribesman from the Khowlan, “Bakil is the tribe of the GPC. Hashid is the tribe of the President.” In other words, Bakil is superficially included in networks of influence, but real power lies with Hashid.

In addition to balancing tribal confederations and tribes within a confederation, Saleh also strategically distributes patronage within the most powerful tribal families. In the same family, one brother may be given a position in the military, one in the private sector, and another in the political arena. This ensures that families have multiple points of dependency on the existing power structure and it allows the President to leverage pressure against one member of the family by threatening his relatives.

The divide and rule tactics discussed above apply outside of the tribal context as well. Saleh balances powerful technocratic, religious, and merchant families in a similar manner. Additionally, he also considers the importance of regional affiliations. Regional affiliation is particularly important in the former South Yemen where since the civil war, southerners have complained of economic and political marginalization. The President’s response to southern discontent has generally been to co-opt prominent southern leaders. Southerners are strategically incorporated mainly through public sector patronage. Since the civil war, several cabinet positions are informally reserved for southern politicians. Among these posts, two ministerial positions (usually including the Minister of Oil and Minerals) plus the position of prime minister are generally awarded to the oil rich

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117 Interview by the author with a GPC tribesman from Khowlan, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2006.
governorate of Hadramawt.\footnote{The Governorate of Hadramawt constitutes one third of Yemen’s total area. The Hadramawt boasts a small population, a wealth of natural resources (particularly oil and fish wealth), a long mercantile tradition, and strong sense of regional identity.} When President Saleh appointed a new government in April of 2007, he failed to honor the informal arrangement by denying Hadramawt the position of prime minister. According to a prominent Hadrami politician, this move was a deliberate statement against the governorate.\footnote{Interview by the author with a prominent Hadrami politician, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.}

In addition to cabinet positions, southerners also occupy several symbolic political appointments within the ruling party and the Parliament. Until resigning in early 2008, Ja’afar Basalah from Hadramawt was one of the five members of the Parliamentary Presidium. Abdullah al-Bar from Hadramawt is the Deputy Speaker of the Shoura Council. After being removed as prime minister, Abdul Qadir Bajammal, also from the Hadramawt, became the general secretary of the GPC in 2007. Finally, a select few southern merchants are included with northern, tribal businessmen in networks of private sector patronage. It is critical to note that while Saleh has been careful to include southerners in visible political positions, their appointments are largely symbolic. Cabinet ministers and prominent party members, whether they are from the south or north, do not necessarily have the authority to pursue reform or to influence policy. Power comes with proximity to the President. Southerners as a rule do not have this kind of access and influence.

In so far as the President deliberately places elites into networks of patronage, the four factors explored above: elite identity, grassroots strength, proven loyalty, and tribal, family, and regional affiliation, seem to guide his decision making process. In numerous
elite interviews, clients pointed to these factors as they sought to explain their own place in networks of patronage. Of course, intentionality does not tell the entire story of patronage distribution. The President cannot micromanage the entire system. Moreover, he makes mistakes and does not have perfect information regarding each elite client. In practice, there are certainly numerous disputes over the range of acceptable inclusion. This being said, the four factors above constitute a set of shared expectations concerning how patronage should be distributed.

*Guiding Principle #4: In return for patronage, elites must provide a minimal level of support for the authority of the President and the political economy that supports his regime.*

There are numerous possibilities surrounding the specific payments individual clients provide the President in return for access to patronage. A governor may be asked to turn a blind eye to alcohol and gun smuggling by the army in his governorate. A sheikh may be required to ignite a conflict in his local area against another sheikh whose power is threatening to the President. For a merchant, repayment may include anything from contributing to a presidential re-election campaign, as happened in 2006, or taking as a business partner one of the President’s family or another powerful tribesman.

While the details of reciprocity vary, in return for inclusion all elite clients are expected to provide a minimum level of loyalty to the President and the political economy that supports his rule. If the elite has a social following, they must also provide the political quiescence of their social constituency. In sum, they can take no action that
either violently or non-violently threatens the highly personalized nature of power around Saleh. This includes everything from organizing a coup to building formal institutions with the capacity to limit executive authority.

While loyalty to the President may seem constraining, it actually provides for a great deal of maneuver. Elites may lobby for greater access to political power and material wealth as long as they stay within the framework of the informal patronage system. They may for example use backroom negotiations with the President or his close family members in order to gain greater access or achieve some reforms. In these behind the scenes negotiations elites may engage in a variety of tactics, including: blackmail, bribery, or appeal to tribal and family alliances. Sheikhs may even rally their tribesmen in Sana’a or in some cases cut roads and interfere with government control of a tribal area in order to gain bargaining leverage. All of these actions are an acceptable part of bargaining in Yemen’s informal, tribal system. Elites are also allowed to openly critique prominent members of the government and the ruling party, as long as the critiques do not directly attack the President or his close family. However, they must always stop short of making credible threats or taking actions that formalize politics and attenuate the personal discretion of the executive. These actions constitute crossing “red lines” and they will be addressed in the following section.

Crossing “Red Lines”

Red lines limit the range of acceptable behavior for elites as they vie for better positions in patronage networks or as they seek to reform the political system. They
preserve the nerve center of the regime by protecting the highly personalized authority of the President and the corrupt political economy that supports his regime. Red lines are not rigid markers and they may change over time. For example, red lines governing political parties fluctuate slightly depending on election cycles. During election season, the regime permits and encourages GPC mobilization. Elites in the ruling party debate and promote the party platform. Leaders in the party actively connect with constituents and mobilize the grassroots base. Yet after the election period, the party radically demobilizes. According to one high ranking member, “suddenly after elections, everything freezes.”

GPC members who continue to encourage party mobilization risk crossing red lines, especially if their activities encourage accountability and implementation of the party’s platform. While the area covered by red lines may expand and contract over time, their positions at any given time are generally understood by political elites.

Some red lines are more obvious than others. Certainly by any intuitive definition, a military coup, open insurrection, or other mass mobilization of citizens aimed at dividing the Yemeni state or toppling the regime in Sana’a constitutes crossing a red line. The Huthis crossed a red line in Sa’dah by openly engaging the Yemeni army and calling for the establishment of a Zaydi Imamate in northern Yemen. Like the Huthi rebellion,

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120 Interview by the author with a high ranking member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
121 The Huthi rebellion began in Sa’dah in the summer of 2004 as a conflict between government forces and a small Zaydi militia, known as the Believing Youth. The leader of the rebellion, Hussein Badr Eddin al-Huthi, was killed in fighting on September 14, 2004. Now Abdul Malik al-Huthi leads the movement. The Huthis are part of the Zaydi sect of Shi’ism Islam (as is the President and the majority of the population in northwest Yemen). The Huthis reject the government in Sana’a as illegitimate and call for a return to religious rule by a Zaydi Imam. However, their call for a new government is not simply a religious matter. The conflict is intimately related to socio-economic conditions, particularly poverty. For more information
General Saed Shatoor violently crossed a red line. Shatoor, a former general in South Yemen’s Army, along with other southern military men, have taken up arms and retreated to the mountains in the governorate of Dalia in protest of what they see as the regime’s unfair treatment of the southern soldiers. This group of soldiers has interfered with the regime’s movement of goods and people between Aden and the north, and they threaten the very authority of the central government. In both cases, open insurrection crossed a red line and was met with aggressive state military action.

This project is interested in actions and credible threats that are less dramatic and violent, but which still threaten the highly personalized and informal structure of power. In this study, red lines will refer to limits set by the regime for the use of formal political institutions, such as the Parliament, the parties, the courts, and the media. As the previous section indicates, the incentive structure of elite actors is guided by the informal institution of patronage politics, not by formal political institutions. In fact, formal rules are routinely broken and subverted by informal politics. As such, demanding formalization of the political arena dramatically challenges the norm. Defectors in this study go beyond acceptable boundaries for the use of formal institutions by taking actions and making credible threats that could infuse weak, formal institutions with rational-legal authority. While less dramatic than a coup, these actions threaten to change the underlying political economy that supports the President. Identifying elites who have crossed red lines requires a detailed knowledge of cases. Given the frequent use of formal

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122 For more information on General Saed Shatoor and his role in leading an opposition movement in south Yemen, see: Longley and al-Iryani, 1.
democratic institutions as a façade to cover underlying autocracy, one must be able to distinguish between elites who are using these institutions in ways that are acceptable and those who are making credible threats to strengthen them.

Before examining specific examples of defection, it is important to note that a defector is not synonymous with a genuine democratic reformer. Defectors may be democrats; however, they may simply be using the threat of building formal institutions to reposition themselves in networks of patronage. In most cases, it is a combination of some commitment to democratic change and some desire to improve their political position. Equally important, not all reform-minded elites qualify as defectors. Defection is inherently risky. At a minimum it will draw the ire of the President or clients who benefit from the status quo. At worse, it could result in physical harassment and complete exclusion from patronage networks (punishments are discussed in the following section).

In order for an actor to qualify as a defector, they must take an action that poses a credible threat to the informal organization of power. Many elites, particularly technocrats and southern politicians, are reformers in the sense that they would support and benefit from institutionalization and also democratization of the political sphere. They talk of reform to researchers, NGOs, and foreign diplomats. They also eagerly reveal the inner working of the Yemeni autocracy when given the opportunity. Yet they stop short of making credible threats to change the system.

The same is true for many reform-minded individuals in the ruling party. Since the GPC’s 2005 conference in Aden, a distinction has developed between “reformers” and the “old guard.” Reformers verbally support democratic reforms and they often work
with foreign governments as well as NGOs. They helped to construct the party’s 2006 presidential and local council platform and they were instrumental in strengthening grassroots organization in preparation for these elections. The GPC’s program is laudable on paper. It proposes among other things: fighting corruption, empowering local government, and strengthening the rule of law. However, it is little more than rhetoric in practice. Until now, none of the presidential campaign promises have been fulfilled and the “reformers” as a group have done little to enact the promised measures. A diplomat who worked closely with this group described the situation in this way:

“As this account suggests, reformers in the GPC work behind the scenes in ways that could prepare the playing field for democratic development in the future. However, they stop short of aggressively strengthening democratic institutions and curtailing the power of the President. These elite are not defectors. They are joiners rather than followers. They constitute a moderate bloc within the ruling party that could defect if reforms were initiated and gained political traction.”

Now that defection has been discussed in general terms, several examples, drawn from different institutional arenas, will help to clarify the concept. To identify defectors,

123 Interview by the author with a prominent diplomat, Sana’a, Yemen, June 2007.
one must first establish the status quo or an acceptable range of behavior with regards to a specific formal institution. In the electoral arena, the 2006 presidential election provides a unique opportunity to examine crossing red lines. This election was the first election in which Saleh faced real electoral competition. In 1999, Yemen’s first presidential election, Saleh ran against a little known, weak opponent who was actually fielded by the ruling party to give the appearance of competition. In 2006, the situation was different. The main opposition alliance, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP),\textsuperscript{124} fielded a viable candidate, Faisal Bin Shamlan. Of critical importance was Saleh’s acceptance of Shamlan’s candidacy. During the course of the campaign, Saleh became angered by the heated nature of the competition, but it was clear from the beginning that he and his advisors wanted the opposition to field a candidate. As evidence, in a meeting with the heads of Islah, Saleh refused to accept Islah’s endorsement. Instead the President encouraged his former allies to continue their public support of Shamlan.\textsuperscript{125}

Yet there were limits to how far Saleh wanted the opposition to go in their support of an alternative candidate. Verbal support, as well as “respectful” campaigning was not only accepted, but encouraged by the regime. Elites in the opposition who verbally supported Shamlan, organized and participated in Shamlan rallies, and spoke positively of competitive presidential elections in the domestic and foreign press were all within an

\textsuperscript{124} The JMP is a coalition of five opposition parties: Islah, The Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), the Nasserite Popular Unionist Party, al-Haqq, and the Union of Yemeni Popular Forces (UPF). Islah is the group’s most powerful member and the only party with strong national appeal. The second strongest player in the coalition is the YSP. The YSP is the party of the former socialist South Yemen. It was a strong political player immediately following unification in 1990, but the civil war of 1994 severely weakened its political influence. The three remaining parties have little to no popular base. The last two, Haqq and the UPF, are small Zaydi (a brand of Shi’ah Islam) parties. Haqq has a small following in the north of Yemen, particularly in Sa’dah, and the UPF is mostly a party of sayyids and intellectuals. April Longley, “The High Water Mark of Islamist Politics? The Case of Yemen,” The Middle East Journal 61:2 (Spring 2007): 241.

\textsuperscript{125} Interview with a member of the Joint Meeting Parties, Sana’a, Yemen, summer 2007.
acceptable range of behavior. On the other hand, elites who aggressively criticized the President, who actively attempted to crack his tribal base of support in Hashid, or who openly placed their personal wealth and or political clout behind his electoral defeat had clearly crossed a red line. In short, political theatre was designed to give the appearance of real competition, but elites were expected to stop short of taking actions that could actually lead to the President’s defeat.

In this context, Hamid al-Ahmar barreled through a red line. Hamid actively and aggressively threw his political and financial weight behind Shamlan for the duration of the electoral period. While the majority of included elites in Islah stayed within acceptable boundaries for opposition behavior, Hamid openly criticized the President and blamed him personally for the ills of the country. More importantly, Hamid utilized his family’s prominent position to threaten the President’s support in Hashid. His words and actions in support of the JMP, and specifically Shamlan, threatened the very nerve center of the President’s authority and clearly constituted crossing a red line.

Within the Parliament, several political elites have also crossed red lines. The status quo for the Parliament is a weak, passive institution that approves the government budget and periodically engages in oversight with the approval of the President. MPs are expected to vote for spending bills proposed by the government, follow the orders of the Presidium, and occasionally make pro-democracy and anti-corruption speeches on the floor of Parliament or to the Yemeni press. They also play a role in superficial reform initiatives that are approved and controlled by the executive, such as the creation of the
National Anti-Corruption Authority (NACA). Reform-minded MPs in the GPC are permitted the latitude to voice dissent within their committees; however, when votes go to the floor, they are expected to cease opposition and yield to party orders. MPs are never under any circumstances permitted to use the Parliament to check the power of the executive. In particular, MPs cannot interfere with the President’s indirect selection of the powerful Parliamentary Presidium, which is the highest administrative body in the Parliament. They should not conduct independent, unsanctioned investigations of government agencies, nor should they question too harshly ministers, especially those involved in corruption deals that benefit Saleh or his close family. If they are quiet and follow the rules, the President will continue to secure their election, and they will maintain positions on parliamentary committees that bring benefits to their districts and money to their pockets.

Unfortunately for the regime, several MPs have individually and in one instance collectively broken the boundaries of acceptable behavior. The most prominent example of crossing red lines in Parliament can be found among a group of MPs who founded Yemen Parliamentarians Against Corruption (YemenPAC). This group has engaged in unsanctioned investigations of corruption scandals, it has gone too far in questioning ministers, and it has taken its findings and grievances to the Yemeni press. Most dangerously, it has spanned the opposition and the ruling party to form a bloc for political reform that strengthens parliamentary oversight and reduces government corruption.

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126 The NACA technically has broad authorities to oversee the implementation of anti-corruption laws, but in practice it is widely viewed as a tactic to improve the government’s image, rather than a genuine attempt to curtail corruption. For more information on the authority, see: Mohammad Bin Sallam, “Activists cast doubt on ability to fight corruption,” *Yemen Times*, December 13, 2007, Issue 1111, Vol. 15.
127 Interview by the author with a Yemeni journalist, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
As a final example, elites have also crossed red lines in the arena of party formation. The GPC is a catch-all party. It is essentially an umbrella organization designed to contain oppositional tendencies and to distribute patronage. The party is activated during elections and then it demobilizes during non-election years. It is not a source of political power. Instead, it is an important aspect of informal patronage distribution and a critical tool during election cycles. Actively building a party organization that maintains ties to the population and continuously develops policy solutions is an undesirable outcome for Saleh. Strengthening the party as a source of political power threatens the President’s position as decision maker and distributor of resources. It also threatens Saleh’s plans to pass authority to his son, Ahmed, and to keep the most lucrative sources of corruption in the hands of his relatives.

Recently a young MP, Sheikh Yasser al-Awadi, crossed a red line by giving an interview in the local press in which he discussed the deficiencies of the party and the personalization of power around the President. Criticizing the ruling party in Yemen is common practice, and it is actually considered good form to air a litany of grievances and then point the finger of blame at the GPC. Yasser, however, crossed a red line by criticizing the President’s form of rule. He then went further by making a credible threat to institutionalize and strengthen of the ruling party in the context of a reform coalition. His association with other influential elites in the opposition, including YemenPAC, made his threat particularly menacing.

Punishments and Enforcement Mechanisms

If patronage politics in Yemen is truly rule governed, there must be enforcement mechanisms or consequences for breaking the rules of the game. Both the President and his elite clients have incentives to abide by the rules. If the President fails to extend patronage broadly, he risks angering large groups of elite clients, who may then unite in an opposition coalition to remove him from power. Moreover, if the President fails to extend patronage around certain rules of distribution, he risks angering powerful actors who are individually capable of rallying military, political, or ideological resources against his regime. This project, however, focuses on the sanctions levied by the President against elite clients. Clients who refuse to accept patronage inclusion, lobby for patronage inclusion beyond an acceptable range, engage in open insurrection, or who cross red lines by building formal political institutions can face an array of physical, economic, and political sanction. Punishment can be both individual and collective in nature. An individual may be punished directly or through the exclusion, harassment, or demotion of his family members.

Punishments are not distributed randomly. Military/security clients are particularly susceptible to the threat of physical violence or even death. Military/security clients are simply too close to the nerve center of the President’s power to be allowed to defect without severe and swift retribution. The history of Saleh’s rule is littered with the deaths of top military/security personnel suspected of disloyalty. Usually they are the victims of strange “accident.” A prominent example is the late military commander, Mohammad Ismail al-Qadi. Mohammad Ismail was killed in a mysterious helicopter
crash in 2001 after he reportedly objected to the President’s decision to groom Ahmed for the presidency.\textsuperscript{129} Military/security clients are not the only elite at high risk of sanction by physical violence. It is important to note that brave members of the opposition, the press, and civil society groups who have rejected patronage inclusion make themselves vulnerable to brutal attacks and harassment by the security and military establishment. By refusing to participate in the patronage paradigm, these elites subject themselves to the full gambit of regime retribution.

For non-military/security clients, physical abuse is possible; however, they are more likely to face financial sanction. One tribesman included in public sector patronage described the system of punishment in this way:

“The President is unique from other Arab autocrats in that he rarely resorts to violence as a form of punishment. Instead, he brings enemies to his side and prevents dissention by using money. In a few cases, violence has been used against hopeless cases. These hopeless cases reject any compromise or deals with the President. Those who hold powerful positions in the government will be punished if they criticize the regime [the President and his close family] directly by losing their high position and the many material extras that come with the high position. They will not be physically threatened and will still maintain a minimum salary with the government. The President does not like to break ties completely.”\textsuperscript{130}

Financial sanction is a favorite of the Saleh regime. Most everyone who is included in the patronage system can fall prey to financial sanction in some way. Each form of patronage

\textsuperscript{129} Interview with a Yemeni journalist, Yemen, summer 2007. This report was also confirmed by several journalists and political analysts in Sana’a. Within the Sanhan clan, there was supposedly an agreement whereby Ali Muhsin (who is rumored to be the President’s half brother) would become president upon Saleh’s resignation or death. This deal was made at the beginning of the President’s term in light of the tumultuous nature of Yemeni politics and the distinct possibility that Saleh would fall prey to an assassination attempt. However in 1999, when Ahmed was appointed to head the Special Republican Guards, many Yemeni political observers began to speculate that Ahmed was being groomed for the presidency. It is rumored that the Sanhan met again in 2001 to discuss the issue of succession. In the meeting all agreed that Ahmed should be the next president, with the exception of Ali Muhsin and Mohammad Ismail. Endless speculation occurs in gat chews over the internal dynamics of the family, but there is generally agreement concerning the succession tension between Ali Muhsin and Ahmed.

\textsuperscript{130} Interview by the author with a tribesman included in public sector patronage, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
provides either direct or indirect access to material wealth, which may be attenuated if an elite fails to uphold his obligations. Financial sanction can come in many forms. It may be obvious, as is the case with losing employment or being denied government contracts, or it may be more subtle as the President works through third parties to create financial chaos. For example, problems may mysteriously arise at a private bank, an elite’s landlord may deny access to property, services may be cut off to his business or even to his home, or land may be stolen by a powerful sheikh. The protection of assets in Yemen is ultimately related to raw power and connections with the President, not to an objective legal system. Without the appropriate connections, or the physical strength to protect assets, personal property is vulnerable. In this environment, the President can punish a client by simply allowing others to prey upon his property.

Financial punishments are often combined with political sanction. Political clients, who are included in the upper echelons of the ruling party or appointed to other prominent political positions, are susceptible to an array of punishments. These sanctions threaten not only their ability to shape the national political agenda, but more importantly, they threaten an elite’s control of grassroots constituencies. Political appointments and prominent positions in the ruling party allow elites access to government resources, which can then be redistributed down the patronage chain. While some elites are financially independent of domestic patronage for their personal wealth, they still depend on access to the state to maintain their own web of clients. In these cases, the loss of a party position may diminish grassroots popularity. In addition to denying access to state resources, other punishments include: igniting tribal feuds,
supporting other tribal sheikhs or families in an elite’s district, blackmail, or spreading rumors in the press. One frustrated technocrat complains that he is “watched at all time” by political security. According to him, his phone and email are tapped and his guard works for political security directly. These complaints are typical of the political elite in Yemen, even among prominent sheikhs. The political security organization (PSO) is notorious for spying, gathering blackmail material, and spreading misinformation. Whether or not the reach of political security is as comprehensive as Yemenis suggest, the fear of this organization is real, and it provides a deterrent to defection.

As the above paragraphs indicate, all elites, to include powerful sheikhs, have vulnerabilities and can be punished for breaking the rules of the game. Yet, some are more vulnerable than others. Technocrats and traditional merchants are particularly susceptible to all types of punishment because they are largely unable to defend themselves. However, given their skill set, these groups often possess an exit option that allows them to thrive outside of the country. Instead of suffering financial and possibly physical abuse, elites in these categories often choose to build a life outside of Yemen. Punishing Islamist elites and tribal elites is more complicated because these elites possess ideological, popular, and military resources which can be used against the President.

Punishments are also related to the severity of an offense and to the tactical needs of the President. Any action that physically threatens the regime, or Yemeni unity, will result in violent consequences. Punishments for violations that fall short of physically challenging the President’s authority are more varied, and can include any of the financial and or political sanctions explored above. This project is particularly interested in the
consequences of crossing red lines by strengthening formal institutions. Again, punishment is directly related to the type of elite who has committed this violation as well as to the type of patronage extended to the elite. However, it is critical to note that defectors are not always immediately punished for their actions. If the defecting elite is particularly powerful within an important tribe or popular within a large constituency, instead of alienating the defector, Saleh may try to simply re-incorporate him into a more lucrative or prestigious part of the patronage arrangement. In this situation, defection from the system of patronage actually rewards the defector. However, in order to receive greater inclusion, the elite must cease deviant behavior and move back into the patronage paradigm.

Reincorporation may also be offered in cases where the President derives some tactical benefit from the elite’s defection. For example, in some cases reform-minded technocrats have successfully institutionalized isolated pockets in the government bureaucracy. While Saleh does not want these pockets to spread, their success often provides the President with a useful example of “reform” to show the international community, and in some cases they provide critical services to impoverished citizens. This is the case, for example, with the Social Fund for Development. The Fund is a transparent, efficient agency that is outside the patronage paradigm. The potential threat it posed to the patronage paradigm was outweighed by the positive attention it drew from international donors and the success it had in providing services to impoverished Yemeni citizens. Now it is an isolated pocket of rational-legal authority in an otherwise personalized and inefficient bureaucracy.
Changing Patterns of Patronage

The principles organizing informal patronage politics have remained fairly constant since Saleh consolidated control over Yemen in 1994. Yet the system is far from stagnant. Over time, shifts have occurred in patterns of inclusion and exclusion as a result of changes in both the strategic concerns of the President and the changing demands of clients. The following section will set the political stage for the case studies that follow by reviewing three important sea changes in patronage distribution. These shifts have altered the names at the top of the patronage equation as well as the type of patronage distributed to powerful players. In general changes have served to re-invent networks without altering the organization of power. Yet these shifts also draw attention to tensions in the neopatrimonial system.

The first major sea change in networks of patronage since 1994 has been the political exclusion of the main opposition party, Hizb al-Islah. Islah was established in 1990 as a combination of tribesmen, Muslim Brothers, Salafis, and businessmen. Before it became a political party, the component parts of Islah had a history of coordination and political affiliation with the Saleh regime. The head of Islah, the late Abdullah al-Ahmar, was the sheikh of sheikhs of the President’s tribal confederation. In addition to the direct tribal connection, Saleh also has historical ties to the ideological wing of Islah. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the President relied heavily on the Muslim Brothers to fight and eventually win a guerilla war against a socialist insurgency

131 While these four groups certainly overlap, the distinction is a useful rubric for parsing out various tendencies and trends within the larger organization.
in middle Yemen. The President also has deep ties to the Salafi component of Islah through his relative, Ali Muhsin.  

After it was established as a political party in 1990, Islah worked in a close partnership with the GPC. From 1990 to 1994, the GPC and Islah were united against a common enemy, the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). After the YSP’s defeat in the civil war, Islah then ruled in a formal coalition with the ruling party from 1994 until the parliamentary elections of 1997. During this time, Islah was awarded nine cabinet posts and the position of first deputy prime minister.  

It was difficult to call Islah a real opposition. In fact, many in Islah considered themselves to be partners in the Saleh regime, rather than an opposition party.  

After the civil war, the relationship between the two parties gradually began to change. In the absence of competition from the YSP, Saleh feared the growing electoral strength and grassroots appeal of Islah. In particular, he was threatened by the ideological core of the party, the Muslim Brothers. Modeled after the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, the Yemen Brothers organized a strong grassroots following based on service networks and

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132 By any account, Ali Muhsin is a shady character in Yemeni politics. It is unclear whether or not he is actually the President’s half brother. Some say he is a half brother while others claim he is merely a relative from the President’s village, Bayt al-Ahmar (not to be confused with the family of Abdullah Bin Hussein al-Ahmar). Whatever his blood relationship with the President, Ali Muhsin is a feared man in the Yemeni political system. He is currently the military commander in northwest Yemen and he has deep ties with the Salafi movement. During the 1980s, Muhsin was instrumental in coordinating the movement of Yemenis into the Afghan jihad. After the return of the Yemeni Afghans, he maintained ties with Salafi sympathizers and he is said to mediate between extremist elements associated with Islah and the President. Reliable sources also confirm that Muhsin is involved in various types of smuggling between Somalia (primarily livestock) and Saudi Arabia (arms). He is also an interlocutor between the Somali Islamic courts and the government of Yemen. He is personally responsible for the execution of the central government’s war against the Huthi rebellion in Sa’dah.


134 Interview by the author with a member of the Yemeni Socialist Party, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007. Interview by the author with a member of Islah, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2006.
particularly the provision of education. Unlike the GPC, Islah’s members were continuously mobilized and their politics were guided by a clear religious ideology. Ultimately, the Brothers’ desire to strengthen political institutions, fight corruption, and create a society based on Islamic Law is threatening to the President’s tribally based patronage system.

In the post 1994 political landscape, President Saleh set out to neutralize Islah as an effective political organization. He did this by excluding members of Islah from prominent political and public sector posts, coaxing some members into the GPC ranks, and maintaining patronage ties with influential members on an individual, not on a party basis. Although Islah ruled with the GPC between 1994 and 1997, members point out that the party was intentionally assigned difficult service ministries, including the ministries of health, supply and trade, electricity and water, and education. Many in Islah and the media suspected that these appointments were meant to dampen the party’s popular appeal by setting Islah ministers up for failure. After the GPC won enough seats in the parliamentary elections of 1997 to rule without a coalition partner, Islah’s alienation from prominent political positions was complete. In addition to denying prominent public sector and political appointments, the President also successfully coaxed Islahi businessmen into his camp. These businessmen knew that the political exclusion of Islah would mean difficulty for their businesses. Faced with this scenario, they changed party affiliation to protect their assets.

It is critical to note that the President did not exclude members of Islah across the board. In fact, while Islah as a party was excluded from political access, individuals with strong family or personal ties to the President kept their favored positions. The status of Sheikh Abdullah and his family remained secure. Abdullah continued in his position as Speaker of Parliament and his sons continued to receive access to favored positions in the GPC and to lucrative private sector patronage. Muslim Brothers with marriage ties to the President’s family or with deep tribal connections also maintained their access. In other words, many of Islah’s top leadership remained well connected, even as Saleh attenuated the potential strength of the party as an organization. Thus far, Saleh has successfully attenuated the oppositional strength of Islah. However, as long as the hybrid system provides the party’s ideological core with an opportunity to organize and compete for popular support, they will threaten the neopatrimonial system.\(^{136}\)

The second critical shift in networks of patronage since 1994 has been the consolidation of power around the President’s close family. While patronage access is still spread widely in Yemen, over time the President has consolidated a greater proportion of patronage in the hands of his close blood relatives. Consolidation of top military and security positions has been most dramatic. In 1995 the YSP’s official paper, *Sawt al-‘ummal*, published a list of 33 Sanhanis in prominent positions (mostly military). This list included “not only the President’s full-brother Muhammad, head of Central

\(^{136}\) It is important to note that the typological space in this study includes only four members of Islah. Had the sample been drawn from the period before 1997, the number of Islah members would have been higher. Further, there would have been several more cases of Islamists defecting. Case Number 33 for example would have been classified as a defector before 1997. His defection had no lasting impact on the government bureaucratic institution he tried to reform. Eventually he was reincorporated into networks of political patronage, providing a useful example of how defection may serve to reinvent rather than change the organization of power.
Security, and their half-brother Ali Saleh, head of the Republican Guard, but such lesser figures as Muhammad Ahmad Isma’il (8th Shock Brigade), Husayn al-Akwa (1st Infantry Brigade), Ali Ahmad al-Sayyani (General Intelligence), and Ali Ali Al-Sayyani (1st Rocket Brigade). Ahmad Husayn Shumaylah, also of the Sanhan, ran the passport office while Ali Husayn Shumaylah served as chief of staff of the Republican Guards.”

In 1999 the names at the top of the military command began to reflect a younger generation. The President’s eldest son, Ahmed Ali Saleh, was appointed head of the 20,000 strong Special Republican Guard Forces tasked with protecting the President. Within the same organization, Ahmed’s cousin, Tariq Muhammad Abdullah, gained control of the immediate special guard unit around the President. At the same time, the President’s half-brother, Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, was named commander of the Eastern Military District. Since then, two other nephews have risen to prominence: Yahya Saleh is now Chief of Staff of the Central Security Forces, and his brother ‘Ammar Mohammad is the Deputy Director of National Security. The relationships between the five men mentioned above are a source of constant speculation and rumor. Ahmed, Ali Muhsin, Yahya, and ‘Ammar control distinct sections of the military/security apparatus, which often act as competing fiefdoms rather than coordinated bureaucracy. Since 1999 Yemenis have speculated that the relationship between Ahmed and Ali Muhsin could turn sour, even violent, when the issue of succession comes to fruition. Those close to presidential circles claim that when the President initially gained power, there was an

137 Dresch, A History of Modern Yemen, 189.
138 Ibid., 202-203.
139 The nominal director of the Central Security Forces is Abdul Malik al-Tayyib. The director of National Security is Ali al-Anisi, who is also the director of the Office of the President. Both of these men are only nominal heads. Real power and authority resides with the President’s nephews.
agreement within the Sanhan that Ali Muhsin would rule after Saleh. In practice, however, Saleh is grooming Ahmed for this task. Beyond the Ali Muhsin- Ahmed tension, Yahya and Ahmar have heightened competition over future control of the state.

In addition to dominating the military/security patronage, the President’s family is also rapidly entering the business realm. To name only a few examples, Towfiq Saleh Saleh, the President’s nephew, is head of the Yemen Tobacco Company. One of the President’s son-in-laws is the head of Yemenia airlines. Another son-in-law, this one from the Duwait family, owns a large cement factory in the governorate of Amran. Today, the family is involved in everything from gun smuggling, fishing, shrimping, construction, oil, and natural gas. They are also acquiring a larger and larger percent of the country’s valuable real-estate. One Yemeni observer explained the shift towards the private sector in this way:

“After twenty-seven years in power, Saleh is now trying to push the younger generation into business rather than politics. Saleh is shrewd. He knows that in the long term, if his sons and relatives dominate politics it will be dangerous for them. Business is safer. He also knows that he cannot eat too much of the pie……in general he allows his kin group to dominant the money and the military while leaving meaningless government positions [bureaucratic as well as party positions] to the rest of society.”

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140 The Yemeni government is the majority shareholder in Yemenia with the Saudis holding 49%.
141 A close advisor of the President vehemently denied that the family is involved in private business. According to him, those who complain about the structure of patronage distribution are referring only to military positions. Interview by the author with an advisor to the President, Sana’a, Yemen, April 2006. However, this claim is difficult to reconcile with the President’s personal connections to the Rowayshan family, as well as the fact that several members of Bayt al-Ahmar, the President’s village in the Sanhan, are prominent businessmen. Even the President’s oldest son, Ahmar, is now the head of an informal “General Investment Authority,” which has been charged with overseeing the investment climate in Yemen and streamlining large investments into the country. This authority was organized in 2007, and is composed of twelve members, including Saleh, his son, and several trusted Ministers.
142 Interview by the author with a tribesman from middle Yemen, Sana’a, Yemen, winter 2006.
The concentration of military and private sector patronage in the hands of Saleh’s close relatives is creating deep pockets of resentment throughout the country. In the south, former military officers have organized a series of grassroots protests in opposition to what they view as regional discrimination against the southern military. Southerners also deeply resent the fact that military men from the Sanhan clan are appointed to their governorates to ensure security. In the north as well, powerful tribal families acknowledge and resent their gradual exclusion from military rank. The general mood of resentment against Saleh’s sons, nephews, and cousins is summarized nicely in a common play on the Arabic letters making up the word Sanhan: *Sawfa Nahkumukum Hata Akhir Nafs*. In English: “We will rule you until your last breath.”

Elites recognize that military/security patronage has always been distributed relatively narrowly. However, the extreme consolidation of military power, coupled with the Sanhan’s increasing dominance of private sector patronage, has left several prominent tribal families, especially the Ahmars, worried that they are being excluded from their rightful inheritance. In recent years, for example, Hamid al-Ahmar’s access to the oil sector has been curtailed, and his privileged position in the telecommunications sector is being challenged by government encouraged competition. His brother Hussein al-Ahmar recently lost his prominent position as a member of the GPC’s General Committee. The demotion of Ahmar’s sons, along with other prominent sheikhs, has ignited a series of political battles with the President aimed at redrawing the boundaries of appropriate patronage distribution. It has also set the political stage for an intense battle over who will control political and economic resources in Yemen after Saleh.
The last important sea change has been a shift on the demand side of the patronage equation. The incorporation of tribesmen into private business in the 1980s has produced a new generation of young sheikhs who expect private sector patronage. This new generation battles to protect their investments and they fight to ensure their competitors do not receive a greater proportion. They are particularly interested in securing privileged access to the oil/gas sector, government construction projects, and to the booming real-estate market.

The rise of private sector patronage as the new patronage *du jour* for a whole generation of sheikhs creates a new set of opportunities and constraints for Saleh. On one hand, these sheikhs are more financially dependent on the regime than their fathers, and therefore more likely to provide political loyalty, as long as their continued inclusion is secure. On the other hand, the rush on private sector patronage raises the issue of scarcity. Many prominent sheikhs vie for access to the lucrative oil sector. Yemen has limited oil wealth, and by some estimates its known oil reserves will be entirely depleted within the next 10-15 years.\(^{143}\) International observers and domestic critics of the regime argue that serious economic reform is needed, particularly in the area of fighting corruption, in order to grow the economic pie so that the government can survive once scarce oil resources are exhausted. These reforms are easier said than done, primarily because the regime is built on a web of material, patronage alliances. Despite warnings of an

\(^{143}\) The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 6.
impending financial crisis, the regime and the elites it supports continue unabated in their predation of public resources.  

**Summary**

This chapter has outlined the informal rules of the game that govern elite bargaining in Yemen’s neopatrimonial autocracy. It has argued that four guiding principles organize and structure elite behavior. First, patronage is distributed widely. Yemen is an inclusive as opposed to exclusive patronage system. Second, elites must accept some form of patronage inclusion. Rejecting patronage inclusion directly challenges the organization of power around the President and is therefore unacceptable. Third, patronage is not distributed randomly. When making decisions regarding the degree and type of patronage distribution, the President considers the type of elite under consideration, an elite’s grassroots popularity, proven loyalty, and finally an elite’s position in regional, family, and tribal alliances. Based on these factors, each elite essentially has a range of acceptable patronage inclusion. Fourth, in return for material benefits, clients must provide a minimum level of political support for the President and the corrupt political economy that supports his regime. In other words, elites can take no action that violently or non-violently threatens the highly personalized nature of authority around the executive. Elites who threaten the authority of the President, either violently, or by making a credible threat to strengthen formal institutions (crossing “red lines”), are

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subject to an array of political, financial, and physical punishments. Again, this section has simplified a complex empirical reality in order to clarify core dynamics. Guiding principles are not rigid laws, and they are constantly under negotiation as elites engage in boundary testing to improve their strategic positions. Nor do elites have perfect information as they engage in strategic bargaining.

The case studies that follow take place in the context of the informal system outlined above. They explore the micro-politics of elite bargaining that sustains and sometimes alters the neopatrimonial system. The elites under consideration are all insiders who benefit from networks of patronage, yet some have chosen to defect by strengthening formal political institutions. In Chapter Three, a young tribal elite defects from networks of political patronage by threatening to formalize and strengthen the ruling party. In Chapter Four, a Member of Parliament defects from networks of political patronage to strengthen Parliament relative to the executive. In Chapter Five, a particularly powerful young tribal sheikh, Hamid al-Ahmar, boldly defects from networks of private sector patronage by threatening to formalize Yemen’s nascent electoral institutions. In each case, the elite under consideration has crossed a clear red line for the use of formal democratic institutions, and in doing so risked political, financial, and even physical sanction. Understanding why these elites chose to defect, and what impact their defection has on the organization of power around Saleh, provides critical insights into how autocracy in Yemen survives and how it could change.
CHAPTER III: WITHIN-TYPE ANALYSIS: A POOL OF POTENTIAL DEFECTORS

On August 18, 2007 an independent newspaper, *al-shaari* *(The Street)*, published a controversial interview in which a young MP, Sheikh Yasser Ahmed bin Salim al-Awadi, publicly criticized the personalization of power around the President and called for strengthening the ruling party. As a member of the ruling party, Yasser lamented that “*Mu’tamar* [the GPC] is an institution that is ruled; it is not a ruling institution.”\(^{145}\) This comment, along with many others, unleashed a firestorm in the capital. In *gat* chews throughout Sana’a, some responded to the interview by praising Yasser’s courage and validating his critiques. Others attacked the sheikh as a spoiled client of the President who himself was the benefactor of corruption. Following the interview, Yasser more closely associated with prominent reformers and members of the opposition in Parliament, making his threat to institutionalize the ruling party even more menacing.

The following pages will explore Yasser’s move from loyalty to defection in more detail. From a theoretical perspective, his defection is insightful on two levels. First, it facilitates the exploration of a problematic type within the typological space. The basic test for the validity of a type is that cases with the same values on the independent variables have similar outcomes. In Yasser’s case, his value on the dependent variable changed without a corresponding shift in values on the explanatory variables. Equally

important, another elite actor, Sheikh Muhammad ibn Ali Abu Luhom, has the same values on all independent variables, yet he remained loyal to the informal system of patronage politics over the timeframe of analysis. As such, the combination of deeply included, political patronage, tribal elite, risk taker, and ease of defection two fails the basic test for the validity of a type. This combination warrants further investigation to uncover possible left out variables or measurement errors.

In order to better understand the impact of political patronage and to refine the distinction between types, the following section explores a series of paired comparisons. First, it will trace Yasser al-Awadhi’s move from loyalty to defection over time. Yasser constitutes two cases, one before defection and one after defection. Then, Yasser will be compared to Sheikh Muhammad Abu Luhom. These two sets of comparisons uncover two left out variables that explain within-type variation. They also lend credibility to the hypothesis that political patronage produces only weak incentives for loyalty when combined with a risk taking, tribal elite with an ease of defection of two or higher. In the Yemeni political context, this combination is volatile and may identify a pool of potential defectors.

In addition to refining hypotheses regarding when elites defect, these cases provide a cautionary tale as to the impact of defection on the survival of autocracy. Yasser’s dramatic defection has since lost momentum and has yet to produce tangible gains for the formalization of the ruling party. In fact, he has recently softened his oppositional stance and has seemingly returned to a position of loyalty. Ultimately, his
defection will likely rearrange, rather than attenuate informal networks of patronage extending from the President.

**Cases under Investigation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>IV #2 Deeply Included, Y/N?</th>
<th>IV #1 Military/Security or Public Sector Patronage, Y/N?</th>
<th>IV #3 Tribal Elite, Y/N?</th>
<th>IV #4 Life-cycle: Risk Taker or Risk Averse</th>
<th>IV #5 Ease of Defection Index: 0=incapable, 3=Very Capable</th>
<th>Outcome: Loyalty, Defection, Exit</th>
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<tr>
<td>#12: Mohammad Abu Luhom</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N (Political)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Risk Taker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13: Yasser al-Awadi (Before Aug. 07)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N (Political)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Risk Taker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
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<tr>
<td>#14: Yasser al-Awadi (After Aug. 07)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N (Political)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Risk Taker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Defection</td>
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**Sheikh Yasser al-Awadi (Case Number 13 and Number 14)**

*A Narrative of Defection*

Sheikh Yasser al-Awadi is an energetic and popular politician. He is part of a new generation in the ruling party that is composed mostly of well-educated, young tribal sheikhs. This group rose to political prominence at the 2005 GPC party conference in Aden when several from their cohort were elected to the party’s highest executive
organization, the General Committee, over more established party leaders. The new
generation (also referred to as “reformers”) was instrumental in mobilizing the party’s
grassroots base during the 2006 presidential and local council elections and it helped lead
the GPC to a landslide victory over its most formidable opponent, Islah.\textsuperscript{146} The group
verbally supports democratic reforms, institutionalization, and fighting corruption. Yet as
privileged insiders, they have a complex relationship with the status quo. Most members
lobby for gradual reforms behind the scenes in ways that do not directly threaten the
personalized authority of the President. Further, while they were active during the
election season, thus far they have failed to deliver on the party’s campaign promises or
to maintain party activism during non-election cycles. In other words, they generally stop
short of crossing red lines that would infuse the GPC with real political authority. In early
August 2007, however, Yasser stepped outside of the informal patronage paradigm by
aggressively lobbying for the formalization of the ruling party. This section tells the story
of his political career and move to defection. Given the challenge of recounting the
narrative on one hand, and parsing out variables on the other, a theoretical discussion of
independent variables, causal mechanisms, and outcomes will be addressed in a separate
section. For now, below is Yasser’s story:

Sheikh Yasser was born on March 1, 1975 in the governorate of al-Baydah.\textsuperscript{147} He
is a member of the al-Awadi tribe (approximately five thousand men strong) and hails

\textsuperscript{146} While a landslide in the Presidential race was to be expected, the GPC’s margin of victory was a
surprise in the local council elections. For an explanation of the GPC’s victory in the local council elections
see: Longley, 240-260.

\textsuperscript{147} Al-Baydah lies at the crossroads of former North and South Yemen. It has approximately six historically
strong tribal families, of which al-Awadi is one. While most tribes in Yemen trace their lineage through
the Hashid and Bakil confederation, Awadi is probably Madhaj, although they are sometimes considered a
part of Bakil.
from a long line of al-Awadi sheikhs. Like most young tribesmen, his place in contemporary politics and his perception of his role in the political arena is deeply tied to his tribal legacy. Yasser’s father and maternal uncle are considered heroes of North Yemen’s 1962 Republican Revolution, especially for their role in breaking the notorious siege of Sana’a. After the Revolution, Yasser’s father became a prominent military man and a close confidant of President Saleh. Yasser continued his family’s tradition of tribal leadership and loyalty to the President at a young age. When he was only fifteen years old, his maternal uncle, the sheikh of sheikhs of the Awadi tribe, was murdered in a tribal feud. Following his uncle’s death, Yasser was chosen in a tribal election over his close relatives to be the leader of al-Awadi.148

After becoming a sheikh, Yasser balanced his role as a tribal leader with his educational and professional aspirations beyond the countryside.149 He acquired a bachelor’s degree in International Relations in Amman, Jordan and he also attended a six-month post-graduate program in International Relations in the United States.150 While foreign education, travel, and business connections have often weakened the bonds connecting young sheikhs with their tribesmen, Yasser has maintained strong tribal connections. He spent his youth in al-Baydah and still travels frequently between the capital and the countryside. Moreover, Yasser is a special type of sheikh who is an expert

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149 Yasser’s education and travel experience place him squarely in the new generation of tribal sheikhs. Currently there is a generational shift within the tribes whereby young sheikhs (generally between the ages of 25-40) are assuming leadership roles from their ailing fathers. In contrast to their fathers, the new generation is educated outside of Yemen and they have extensive exposure, through travel and education, to cultures and ideas outside of the Arab world. Most live in Yemen’s capital, Sana’a, as opposed to in the countryside with their tribes. Often they are intimately involved in commerce and international business.
150 Yasser al-Awadi, Gat Chew, Sana’a, Yemen, March 18, 2006.
in tribal law, *urf.¹⁵¹ He is confident in his grassroots support among his tribesmen and his popularity in al-Baydah translates into political strength and influence in the capital.

Sheikh Yasser has only recently risen to prominence in the national political arena. In 1997, he was elected as an MP from a district in al-Baydah that roughly corresponds to the al-Awadi tribal region. Once in Parliament, he quickly ascended the ranks of the ruling party. He is currently the Deputy Chairman of the GPC parliamentary bloc, a position which makes him a powerful player in parliamentary politics. In addition, he is also the reporter for the prominent Foreign Affairs Committee. At the 2005 Aden conference, he was elected (with the blessing of the President) to represent al-Baydah in the GPC’s highest executive body, the General Committee.¹⁵²

Yasser’s accelerated rise to national prominence is a product of both his political skill and proximately to President Saleh. Before his defection, he was considered a loyal supporter of the regime, and particularly the President. GPC partisans described him as a “rising star,” and a personal favorite of Saleh within the party organization. As mentioned earlier, his father was a trusted friend of the President. Moreover, unlike other influential tribal families, such as the Abu Luhoms or the Abu Ras, there is no historical tension between Yasser’s family and the President. As such, he rose quickly to prominence in the political system.

Until August 2007, Yasser’s political rhetoric and actions remained within the boundaries of the patronage paradigm. At times he came close to crossing red lines in

¹⁵¹ Ibid.
¹⁵² The General Committee is comprised of several appointed positions and twenty one seats that are elected (one representative from each of the twenty one governorates). Yasser won the seat from al-Baydah in a tight match, and with the blessing of the President, over an older statesman.
Parliament, but ultimately he stayed within the boundaries of acceptable behavior. As mentioned earlier, he is a member of the reformist grouping within the GPC. Inside Parliament, this group forms a voting bloc that occasionally supports YemenPAC on important anti-corruption votes and on issues of parliamentary reform. A Yemeni parliamentary expert describes the split within the GPC bloc in this way: Hussein al-Ahmar, Muhammad al-Qadi, Yasser al-Awadi\textsuperscript{153} and others lead a group of about 50-60 parliamentarians who want parliamentary reforms and are discontented with the old leadership. The new generation often supports YemenPAC. They voted for Sakhir Wajih [a prominent reformer and defector within YemenPAC] in the last election for the Parliamentary Presidium. They have also voted with YemenPAC on several anti-corruption cases, including Oil Block 53 and the Hunt contract cancelation.\textsuperscript{154} The opposing faction inside the GPC is composed of the status quo leadership, among them: Sultan Barakani, Yahya Ray, and others in the “old guard.”\textsuperscript{155}

As a member of the reformist bloc, Yasser has taken several steps to reform parliamentary bylaws and curb grand corruption. In his view, the most important of these efforts include: first, amending parliamentary bylaws and working to enforce these rules in practice. In particular, he emphasized the significance of changing regulations to allow MPs to call ministers for questioning without the approval of the Presidium. He also mentioned limiting the term of Presidium members to two years in order to encourage

\textsuperscript{153} These men are distinct political figures with separate tribal affiliations and political agendas. Their association here is not meant to indicate anything beyond the fact that they all can be considered part of the “new generation” inside the GPC.

\textsuperscript{154} Both cases will be address in more detail in Chapter Four. In both instances, MPs accused the Yemeni government of selling the nation’s natural resources in a way that lined the pockets of corrupt government officials while neglecting the public interest.

\textsuperscript{155} Interview by the author with a former parliamentarian, Sana’a, Yemen, July, 2007.
accountability. Secondly, he has encouraged parliamentary oversight by supporting the rights of MPs to question ministers. In fact, he has personally participated in questioning ministers, including the powerful Minister of Defense. Third, he says that he has worked to enhance communication between MPs and their constituents by organizing and facilitating field meetings.\textsuperscript{156} In addition to these reform initiatives, Yasser also voted against the government, and with YemenPAC reformers, on several prominent pieces of anti-corruption legislation, including Oil Block 53 and the cancelation of the Hunt contract.\textsuperscript{157}

Yasser’s actions in Parliament place him in the reformist camp, yet for several reasons they do not constitute crossing red lines. As discussed in Chapter Two, the status quo for the Parliament is a passive institution that provides a rubber stamp for government proposed legislation and spending. Parliament is not a source of political authority from which MPs can freely legislate or hold other government branches accountable. MPs that make a credible threat to formalize and strengthen the Parliament relative to the executive cross a red line in Yemen’s neopatrimonial autocracy. With Yasser, and other GPC reformers like him, the concept of making a “credible threat” is particularly important. These individuals sometimes support more aggressive and consistent reformers in Parliament, such as Sakhir Wajih, on issues of internal parliamentary institutionalization, fighting corruption, and strengthening government accountability. Their actions often place them at odds with the old guard in the party and at times their votes draw the ire of the President. However, their actions fall a step short

\textsuperscript{156} Yasser al-Awadi, interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, August 6, 2007.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
of aggressively and consistently challenging the balance of power between the Parliament and the executive.

Yasser’s efforts to strengthen Parliament have been inconsistent and they have never aimed to directly curtail the authority of the President. Again, he has taken several positive steps to strengthen parliamentary authority, but he is not a consistent figure at the forefront of reform initiatives. Sakhir Wajih and Ali Ashal, both founding members of YemenPAC, have led a parliamentary campaign to fight corruption. These individuals are first movers who have very literally risked their political careers and even personal safety by initiating aggressive corruption investigations. Yasser and others in the GPC often join Sakhir and Ali, especially in cases where corruption has drawn the ire of the public, or in the case of the Hunt contract, the President, but they do not initiate these investigations.

Probably the closest Yasser has come to crossing a red line in Parliament was his support for Sakhir Wajih in elections for the Parliamentary Presidium in February of 2006. The Presidium is the highest administrative body in the Parliament and it is widely understood that the President gives his tacit approval of its members. The President vehemently opposed Sahkir’s candidacy and encouraged GPC MPs to vote against him. Ultimately Sahkir narrowly lost in a parliamentary vote.158 Yasser’s vote for Sakhir could be interpreted as a genuine attempt to strengthen Parliament relative to the executive. Alternatively, in light of the internal battle within the GPC between reformers and the old

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158 The dynamics behind the 2006 Presidium elections will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. For an account in the Yemeni Press, see: Mustafa Rajih, “Pressures force Parliament to retain former board,” Yemen Times, Issue: 921, Vol. 14, February 15, 2006. The broad contours of this narrative are also confirmed by USAID’s Yemen Corruption Assessment Report.
guard, it could be interpreted as an attempt to wrest power away from the aging GPC leadership.

As evidence of Yasser’s sporadic support for institutionalizing Parliament, a former MP notes that “Yasser is an ambitious politician who has been tolerant of corruption as the Deputy Chairman of the GPC bloc.”  

Expressing a similar view, another MP notes that members of the young generation in the GPC like to appear to be reformers, but do not want to take reforms too far. They are invested in the status quo and do not want to completely overturn informal access to patronage and power. Confirming Yasser’s hesitant commitment to comprehensive reforms, another parliamentary expert and member of the GPC claims that “the problem with even these young reformers is that if they have a personal interest in a position that may not be best for the country, they generally act in a self-interested manner. In other words, when reform conflicts with their personal benefits; they go with the status quo side of the government.”

In theory, Yasser’s support for internal parliamentary reforms and anti-corruption legislation are laudable, but in practice, as long as the Parliament is a passive institution dominated by a powerful executive, the reforms change little in the overall structure of authority. In fact, many Yemeni political analysts and journalists view the split within the GPC bloc as a struggle over resources and future leadership within the party, not as a challenge to the informal patronage system. From this perspective, Yasser and other

159 Interview by the author with a former Member of Parliament, Sana’a, Yemen, July, 2007.
160 Interview by the author with a GPC Member of Parliament, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
161 Interview by the author with a member of the GPC and a parliamentary expert, Sana’a, Yemen, June 2007.
powerful young sheikhs in the GPC are simply carving out a place for themselves in national politics by attenuating the power of the old guard in the GPC. In other words, the new generation is flexing political muscle not because they seek a break with the past, but because they want to establish their position in a more favorable patronage arrangement.

Within the party, Yasser also stayed inside the boundaries of acceptable bargaining behavior prior to August 2007. It is important to note that like many sheikhs in the GPC, Yasser’s tribal identity supersedes party allegiance. At a *gat* chew in March 2006, Yasser explained that parties are guided by ideology and ideologies may be wrong. Tribes on the other hand are held together by ‘*asabiyya*’\(^{162}\) and blood relations. In his view, these are true and trusted connections which are stronger and normatively superior to political bonds. For him, his tribal identity as the sheikh of al-Awadi comes before party affiliation. In his words, “my tribe is my party.”\(^{163}\) During the same *gat* chew, Yasser and his colleagues praised the non-ideological nature of the GPC in contrast with the Islamist party, Islah.\(^{164}\)

This type of discussion is typical, particularly in northern Yemen, where tribal affiliations are a revered and valued part of social and political life. As tribesmen and as vested players in the informal game of politics, these men place a premium on kinship based tribal affiliations over party allegiances. In fact, based on the author’s observations, it seems that Yasser and many sheikhs like him are at least in part affiliated with the

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\(^{162}\) In English ‘*asabiyya* roughly means solidarity.


\(^{164}\) *Ibid.*
ruling party precisely because the GPC is a weak, non-ideological institution that does not interfere with the informal production and transfer of power.

As will be discussed in more detail below, Yasser has a complex relationship with the idea of party development in Yemen. In fact, in August 2007, he defects from the informal system of patronage politics by publicly calling for the strengthening of the GPC as a governing institution. Even before his defection, he expressed a nuanced understanding of the potential challenges and benefits of political formalization, particularly party development, for existing tribal allegiances. In his view, “parties are the new ‘asabiyya,”’ and the future of Yemen will be one of party development. At the same time, he is aware that party development, as well as the strengthening of local councils, could encroach upon the responsibilities and authority of tribal sheikhs. Given the challenges to the tribal system of authority, he believes that civil society, and not the party, is the most appropriate replacement for the tribes. In his view, civil society is closer to the nature of the tribes because both are non-ideological and they aim to protect the material interests of particular groups in society.\textsuperscript{165} As the discussion above indicates, Yasser is aware of the challenges formalization poses to existing modes of authority and to the current status quo. His tribal allegiance in no way precludes a desire for democratization and/or some degree of formalization of the political sphere, yet these affiliations certainly guide, bound, and inform his vision of legitimate party development.

As a leader in the party, Yasser’s adherence to the informal rules of the game was particularly obvious during the presidential and local council elections of 2006. During

\textsuperscript{165} Yasser al-Awadi, \textit{Gat Chew}, Sana’s, Yemen, June 20, 2006.
the election period, Yasser represented a new, fresh face of the GPC to the Yemeni people. He frequently spoke with the press in Sana’a, campaigned widely in both the capital and in his district for GPC candidates, and represented the party at numerous political gat chews. True to party form, he paid lip service to the need for an opposition and then went on to praise the President’s democratic agenda and the progress Saleh had made towards economic and democratic development. At one memorable gat chew in Sana’a, Hamid al-Ahmar and Yasser fiercely debated several topics, including: the quality of the elections in Yemen; the dedication of the regime to democratization; and the legacy of President Saleh. At the gat chew, Hamid gave a fiery speech that directly attacked the President and the corrupt political economy in the country. According to him, Yemen has no institutions and no leadership to guide it at a critical point in state-building. He then went further to argue that the “ruling party is giving no choice but popular revolution at this point.”

Defending the status quo against Hamid’s harsh attack, Yasser argued that culture, not personal dictatorship was the source of Yemen’s economic and political ills. “The problems of democratic development in Yemen,” he said, “are cultural. The social and religious culture is patrimonial and dictatorial.” The reference to cultural “backwardness” is a common theme used by regime loyalists as they seek to divert criticism from the President and quell demands for a more formalized, meaningful democratic system. At the gat chew, Yasser skillfully and eloquently transferred blame away from the President and toward a more amorphous and acceptable point of critique, political culture.

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As the discussion above indicates, Yasser has generally played politics within the boundaries of the informal patronage system. While he was part of a reformist bloc in the party, his reform initiatives did not constitute a credible threat to the personalized authority of the President. Following the 2006 elections, however, Yasser’s rhetoric and actions began to undergo a gradual change. In a *gat* chew after the elections, the author was surprised to find Yasser more forthcoming in his analysis of the ruling party’s victory than his colleagues. While Yasser’s colleagues vehemently denied a biased playing field in favor of the GPC, Yasser was more realistic. He openly acknowledged the resource imbalance between the two parties. Moreover, instead of focusing on the GPC victory, he directed the conversation towards the implementation of the party’s platform. In particular, he focused on the need to attract investment, build infrastructure, and fight corruption.\(^{168}\) His comments in no way crossed a red line; however, they did indicate a more decisive reform posture. As further evidence of a gradual shift towards defection, one of the sheikh’s colleagues noticed Yasser began to “actively take himself into a new environment.” In addition to associating with various sheikhs, Yasser also associated closely with civil society groups, academics, and even women activists. This man suggested that Yasser’s association with reformers was significant, and signified a shift in the Sheikh’s thinking.\(^{169}\)

Yasser’s experience in Sa’dah may have had an impact on his eventual decision to defect as well. In June 2007, the Yemeni military and Huthi rebels entered their fourth


\(^{169}\) Interview by the author with a colleague of Yasser, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2006.
round of confrontation. This time, the war was unpopular with the urban population in Sana’a and the regime’s military action in civilian areas was widely condemned in the press and by local civil society groups. In an attempt to quell hostilities, Yasser and several others were chosen as part of a presidential delegation tasked with representing the government in negotiations with the Huthis. This delegation worked closely with a Qatari delegation sent to mediate between the two warring factions. In the summer of 2007, after numerous trips to Sa’dah, Yasser returned from the war zone expressing empathy for the needs of minority populations. In his words, the “real problem Yemen faces now is with a majority rule that does not protect and recognize minority interests.” He went on to critique the government in the capital for passing laws that protect their interests while neglecting important minority voices (including Zaydis in Sa’dah, former South Yemen, and even sheikhs in the periphery who feel excluded from power). “The danger to the central government,” he said, is that “these minority voices may one day become the majority.”

At the time, discussing minority rights was a sensitive topic, particularly given the growing discontent in the south. In this particular gat chew, Yasser again found himself in the minority as his fellow GPC colleagues largely dismissed the gravity of the situation in Sa’dah and the plight of geographic minorities in the country.

The major turning point for Yasser, and the moment that marks his defection from informal patronage institutions, was the August 18th interview in al-shaari’. The extended

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170 The Yemeni army and a group of Zaydi rebels have been involved in intermittent fighting since the summer of 2004. The government accuses the rebels, known as Huthis after their former leader Hussein al-Huthi, of waging a war to overthrow the Saleh regime and establish religious rule under a Zaydi Imamate. The wars in Sa’dah have cost thousands of lives, including many innocent civilians. The last round of fighting was particularly unpopular among average Yemenis, who generally support mediation and oppose military action to solve the festering crisis.

171 Yasser al-Awadi, Gat chew Sana’a, Yemen, August 6, 2007.
title of the interview paraphrases Yasser’s critique and sets the tone for the article. It reads: “He [Yasser] says that if the party that rules Yemen now will not transfer power peacefully to the GPC today, it will never transfer power to others. The GPC is far from power and the President rules the country with a traditional party that is joined by geography and interests.”

Yasser then goes further to explain and critique the contours of the informal system of authority in Yemen. In his words, “There are leaders in the opposition who share in decision making more than the leaders of the GPC.” He also critiqued biases in the patronage system by claiming that those sheikhs who received salaries from the outside [possibly insinuating Saudi Arabia] receive disproportionate benefits from the state. Further, he took the bold step of directly challenging the President’s bias in favor of the Hashid tribal confederation. According to Yasser, the President favors Hashid and his clan, the Sanhan, over other tribes. Saleh does this despite the fact that other tribes have played a critical role in supporting the Yemeni Revolution and unity, possibly even more than Hashid. Finally, and most importantly, Yasser made several comments which threatened to formalize and empower the ruling party. To paraphrase, he claimed that the new leadership in the GPC was striving to make the party an actual ruling party that is responsible for administering the government and implementing the party’s platform. According to him, a group of reformers were working to bring the President to their side and to encourage him to leave his traditional forces and choose a path towards modernity.  

173 Ibid.
With this interview, Yasser crossed a clear red line in Yemeni politics. Again, the GPC is an umbrella organization that houses a variety of social groups and political tendencies. It is a mechanism for the distribution of patronage, not a locus of political influence. As an organization, the party is activated only for the purpose of winning elections, which are already biased in favor of the regime from the beginning. The party is then quickly demobilized following electoral victory. Party activism is accepted during election periods, but strengthening the GPC during non-election cycles is unacceptable. Activism in the context of a socially influential coalition is particularly forbidden. Given the dispersed nature of social and political authority in Yemeni society, the President has long feared the potential of powerful social elites, especially tribal elites, to build a political power base inside the GPC.

Yasser, like other high ranking members of the GPC, knows the informal rules surrounding appropriate party mobilization and formalization. By calling for party formalization in the context of a young, predominately tribal coalition, he made a formidable political threat. The reformist bloc in the party is a known entity, but it is generally viewed as part of an inter-party political battle over resources rather than a credible threat to engender democratic change. In the interview, however, Yasser pitted the reformist camp directly against the informal patronage institution that supports Saleh’s regime. In sum, Yasser’s call for continued mobilization and activism during non-election cycles, in combination with his reference to a reform coalition inside the party, crossed a red line for the appropriate use of the GPC.
In addition to making a credible threat to strengthen the ruling party, Yasser also crossed a rhetorical red line in his discussion of elections and the GPC’s place in the political arena. Leaders in the party can engage in internal, behind the scenes discussions of the party’s shortcomings and political limitations. They can also lament the slow progress of democratic change, if they blame the lack of progress on an abstraction such as Yemeni culture. Publicly accusing the President and his close cohorts of controlling the political system through an “unofficial party” is completely outside appropriate avenues for political bargaining and/or encouraging political reform.

Yasser’s bold critique was not entirely blunt, nor did it represent a clean break with the regime. After aggressive attacks, Yasser peppered his comments with praise of Saleh. At one point, he returned to the common refrain of blaming Yemen’s economic and political ills on cultural legacies. He even suggested that the President was possibly a “victim” of the culture of personalistic rule in Yemen.174 Yet overall, the article marked a radical break with Yasser’s former rhetorical and political posture. His direct critique of the informal organization of power around the President and his subsequent demand for formalization of the party in the context of a reform coalition crossed a well-established red line for appropriate behavior.

After the article was published, Yasser became the center of a small storm of critique and activity. Many were skeptical of his intensions. In gat chews throughout the capital, many criticized him as an intimate part of the system of favoritism and corruption that he ostensibly desired to change. For his part, Yasser made his demand for

174 Ibid.
institutionalization more credible by association and cooperation with other prominent reformers outside the ruling establishment. Immediately after the article was published, a fascinating change of characters surrounded the sheikh. Yasser often chews gat at a political NGO known as Markez al-Roa. In general, the center is filled with GPC supporters. These men are intelligent politicians who offer insightful critiques and suggest reforms in private, but ultimately they are privileged insiders loyal to the status quo. They are included in networks of privilege and are loath to rock the proverbial boat. After Yasser’s defection, the center was filled with several new faces: independent journalists, a larger number of opposition members, independent academics, and most importantly, members of the anti-corruption group, YemenPAC.175

Yet Yasser’s association with influential reformers did not equate to full acceptance into these groups. The author learned that Yasser had inquired about joining YemenPAC previous to giving the interview in al-shaari’. The group, however, rejected his request in part because he had been tolerant of corruption as the Deputy Chairman of the GPC bloc.176 For his part, Yasser denies seeking formal membership in YemenPAC. Whether or not he sought formal acceptance is less important than the fact that he is still not a formal member. In fact, a source close to YemenPAC noted that Yasser is a powerful sheikh with close ties to the President. He expressed concern that men like Yasser, and other reformers in the GPC bloc, may try to control YemenPAC and use the organization for their own agenda.177 Other political actors were also skeptical of

175 Gat chew at the Markez al-Roa, Sana’a, Yemen, August 24, 2007.
176 Interview by the author with a parliamentary expert, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
177 Ibid.
Yasser’s motivations and sincerity. One prominent southern politician questioned the timing of the interview. According to him, “Yasser has been Deputy Chairman of the bloc for some time and he has had chances to speak up. So, why did he do it now?” In an answer to his own question, the man suggested that the timing reflects a personal dispute between the President and Yasser. He went further to say that he agreed with Yasser’s critiques, but that he did not think Yasser capable of leading change within the ruling party.\textsuperscript{178} Given Yasser’s prominent inclusion in informal networks of access, many were skeptical of his new found enthusiasm for radical reform.

While Yasser may desire a degree of formalization in the political sphere, his move to defection certainly did not occur in a political vacuum. In fact, during the late spring/early summer of 2007, Yasser’s relationship with the President was strained by a land dispute involving the President’s Sanhan tribe and Yasser’s tribe. Land disputes in Yemen are at the heart of tribal feuds, and in the last several years, disputes involving the President’s tribe have increased. During the dispute, a member of the Sanhan tribe killed a young child from al-Awadi. As the protector of the tribe, Yasser was incensed and proceeded to gather his tribe in the capital as a show of force and solidarity. After the incident, more than four hundred tribesmen journeyed to Sana‘a to show their support and to receive direction from Yasser. In addition to rallying his tribesmen, Yasser also chose a more formalized path of protest by sending a letter to the Yemeni press, the Minister of Interior, and to the President himself, criticizing the abuses committed by the

\textsuperscript{178} 
\textit{Gat} chew with a southern politician, Sana‘a, Yemen, August 2007.
Sanhan and calling for strengthening the rule of law.\(^{179}\) To the author’s knowledge, the land dispute is still languishing in Yemen’s painfully slow court system.

In addition to this land dispute, another behind the scenes event played a role in Yasser’s defection. Several independent sources confirm that prior to the interview *al-shaari’*, Yasser invested in the lucrative telecommunications sector. These sources confirm that Yasser had a stake in a new telecommunications company, which was attempting to enter the Yemeni market in the summer of 2007. For reasons that are unclear, the President sought to curtail and limit Yasser’s investment activities. While the majority of Yasser’s political peers are deeply embedded in the private sector, this seems to be the first time Yasser made a serious attempt to enter the business community. When interviewed in 2006, Yasser confirmed that he had no involvement in the private sector. In fact, he claimed to be a “shareholding in the GPC,” to which a friend jokingly responded that it “paid well.”\(^{180}\) In 2007, however, Yasser attempted to join the ranks of other young, powerful sheikhs who already reap the financial benefits of private sector access. His defection followed soon after the President’s bid to limit his involvement in the telecommunications sector.

When the author completed fieldwork in early September of 2007, Yasser was still at odds with the regime. By late 2007/early 2008, however, his oppositional stance had softened and he seemed to move back into a status quo position. To the author’s knowledge, Yasser’s critique of the informal organization of power subsided and he ceased his aggressive campaign in the Yemeni press. Given that he did not lose his

\(^{179}\) Interview by the author with a member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, summer 2007.

position in the party, it is possible that he was able to strike some sort of settlement with the President. More importantly, his defection has thus far failed to strengthen the GPC as an institution or to change the organization of power around Saleh. No coalition for reform emerged to challenge the status quo in the party and no new coalition was forged in Parliament. After a period of controversy, Yasser moved back into the patronage paradigm and politics continued as before. It remains to be seen whether or not Yasser will revive his public call to institutionalize the GPC. For now, it seems that his defection may simply rearrange rather than attenuate the patronage paradigm.

**The Narrative in Theoretical Context**

Now that the story of Yasser’s defection has been told, it is useful to put the narrative in theoretical context. This project proposes that five independent variables combine to determine if included elites will defect from networks of patronage by building formal political institutions. Briefly, Yasser’s values on each of the five independent variables are the following:

**Yasser al-Awadi’s Independent Variable Values (See Appendix B for Coding)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>IV #1: Type of Patronage Inclusion</th>
<th>IV #2 Degree of Patronage Inclusion</th>
<th>IV #3 Type of Elite</th>
<th>IV #4 Life-cycle Measurement: Risk Taker or Risk Averse</th>
<th>IV #5 Ease of Defection Index: 0=Incapable, 3=Very Capable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yasser al-Awadi (Case #13 and #14)</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Deeply Included</td>
<td>Tribal</td>
<td>Risk Taker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

181 Email correspondence between the author and a reliable Yemeni political observer, April 2006.
Based on initial working hypotheses, the combination of Yasser’s independent variable values do not produce strong incentives for either loyalty or defection. Two of the variables, deeply included and tribal elite, are hypothesized to push towards loyalty. Alternatively, risk taker and a value of two on the ease of defection index, provide incentives for defection. Political patronage is hypothesized to provide only weak incentives for loyalty, especially when combined with a risk taking elite who has a high capacity to defect in coalition and without jeopardizing his elite status. The details of Yasser’s case provide support for the preliminary hypotheses surrounding the independent variables. In other words, his actions as a sporadic reformer who plays a political game at the margins of defection are consistent with his values on the independent variables. Yet this project is concerned with uncovering and explaining pathways towards defection. In order to account for Yasser’s move from loyalty to defection, it is necessary to look beyond these five independent variables to a potential left out variable, namely a change on the demand side of the patronage equation.

Before exploring left out variables, it is useful to review how Yasser’s actions are consistent with initial working hypotheses. Interviews with both Yasser and his colleagues indicate that independent variable two (degree of inclusion) and independent variable three (elite identity) provided incentives for loyalty. Before Yasser’s defection, he claimed to be a “shareholder in the GPC,” a position his friends jokingly claimed “paid well.”

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182 Gat Chew, Sana’a, Yemen, March 18, 2006.
add to social respect and provide access to state resources that can then be redistributed. In conversations with the author, it was clear that Yasser was proud of and valued his prominent positions in the ruling party. Moreover, given that he is not independently wealthy, he most likely considered the cost of potentially losing his prominent party positions on his ability to provide resources to his constituents.

In addition to prominent inclusion in networks of political patronage, his status as a tribal sheikh also provided some incentives for loyalty to the status quo. As was discussed earlier, Yasser has a complex relationship with the idea of political formalization and particularly party development. As a sheikh, his political popularity is tied to informal networks of kinship and distribution. While Yasser could conceivably survive in a more formalized political arena, his ties to the informal system provide disincentives for dramatic change. In other words, although Yasser is a new type of tribal elite who is confident discussing and even playing politics in a more formalized democratic context, his interaction with a more formalized political game is colored by historical legacies. He may at times argue in favor of liberating the GPC from the grip of personal domination, but this does not mean that he desires a party system that would aggressively attenuate tribal lines of authority or existing pattern of distribution. Currently the GPC allows for informal, highly personalized networks of kinship and patronage to thrive. As such, Yasser has disincentives for radically altering the status quo.

While independent variables two and three provided incentives for loyalty, these incentives are tempered by Yasser’s values on independent variable four (life-cycle measurement) and independent variable five (ease of defection). Yasser is classified as a
“risk taker” because he is young, his children are not directly dependent on domestic networks of patronage, and because he has extensive exposure to formal democratic institutions. This variable cluster places him in a generational group that is relatively risk tolerant and comfortable bargaining outside of the informal patronage paradigm. The youth and children aspects of the life-cycle variable specifically affect Yasser’s risk tolerance. Yasser’s actions both before and after defection are consistent with the hypothesis that youth is associated with new ideas, change, and boldness of action. Yasser’s colleagues and his critics often mention youth in explaining Yasser’s political actions and reformist positions. In fact, when discussing the group of “reformists” within the GPC, Yemenis invariably mention the cluster of youth and education. In addition to youth, Yasser’s risk tolerance may be enhanced by the fact that his children are not old enough to be dependent on the patronage system. While Yasser must think of the impact defection will have on his tribe and his extended family, it will not have immediate implications for his children.

The final aspects of the life-cycle measurement, education and exposure to liberal democracy, shape the bargaining strategies of elites within the Yemeni context. Unlike the older generation of tribal sheikhs, Yasser has come to political maturity in a system that explicitly combines weak formal democratic institutions with powerful informal arrangements. Yasser is confident discussing and manipulating formal democratic

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183 In speaking with various clients in the Yemeni system, it seems that the material well-being of their children does play a role in their decision making process when considering stepping outside the patronage paradigm to push for reforms. Many technocrats, businessmen, and sheikhs educate their children outside of Yemen in part to provide an exit option. Those whose children (and extended family) are exclusively dependent on networks of patronage often admit that their families would suffer if they were to aggressively pursue democratic reforms.
institutions. In conversations with the author, he demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the challenges institutionalization and democratization would pose to the informal patronage system, and by extension his privileged access to power. He acknowledged for example the potential for party and local council development to alter the authority and responsibilities of tribal sheikhs.\(^\text{184}\) As an educated tribal elite, he is aware of the challenges of blending tribalism and informal politics with a formalized democratic system. This knowledge arguably provides him and others in the “new generation” with the confidence to utilize formal political institutions as a bargaining chip in their quest to guide political change and to ensure their place in future political arrangements. In addition to this strategic angle, it may also be the case that Yasser genuinely desires some degree of institutionalization. As a tribal sheikh who is confident in his own grassroots popularity, Yasser could benefit from a more formalized democratic system. Unlike some sheikhs who would lose in a more transparent electoral system, Yasser would more than likely triumph over an opponent, allowing him to capitalize on both electoral and traditional sources of legitimacy.

Yasser’s ease of defection value also provides incentives for defection when combined with his risk taker status. Yasser does not receive the highest mark on the ease of defection index because he does not have a substantial source of external patronage or personal wealth independent of domestic networks. However, he cannot lose his elite status in his tribe if he falls out of favor with the President. Further, he can depend on his tribe and other domestic elites to join him in a coalition. His ability to defect in a

\(^{184}\) Yasser al-Awadi, \textit{Gat Chew}, Sana’s, Yemen, June 20, 2006.
coalition provides him a degree of political protection from Presidential retribution, and it also enhances the probability that the President will negotiate to ensure Yasser’s return to the status quo.

Yasser’s comments, and interviews with Yemeni political observers, indicate that both his grassroots popularity and ability to defect with a coalition facilitated his move to defection. When Yasser defected, he placed his actions explicitly in the context of the reformist trend within the GPC, insinuating that other young, reform-minded elites would stand with him against the status quo. When asked in the al-shaari’ interview if he was “afraid of reprisals” that may come as a result of his direct critiques, Yasser’s simple response was “no, I am not afraid.”\textsuperscript{185} A Yemeni journalist claims that Yasser’s political strength is deeply connected to the political situation in al-Baydah and to Yasser’s personal popularity in his tribe. According to the journalist, al-Baydah is populated with sheikhs who are disgruntled with the President and could possibly cause problems for the central government if they were united in opposition.\textsuperscript{186} A prominent technocrat in the GPC also noted the importance of Yasser’s grassroots popularity. According to the technocrat, powerful grassroots appeal among the tribes forms the basis of political power and efficacy in Yemen. While other young, well-educated sheikhs have lost their deep connections with their tribesmen, Yasser is somewhat different. He is close to his tribesmen and even adjudicates tribal law. This grassroots support from the tribe gives him confidence to act where others may not.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{185} Yasser al-Awadi, Interview by Na’if Hassan, al-shaari’, August 18, 2007, Issue#12.
\textsuperscript{186} Interview by the author with a Yemeni journalist, Washington, DC, Summer 2008.
\textsuperscript{187} Interview by the author with a technocratic member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
As for the impact of political patronage, Yasser’s case lends credibility to the hypothesis that political patronage provides only weak incentives for loyalty when combined with a risk taking, tribal elite who has a relatively high capacity to defect. As a popular sheikh of a relatively powerful tribe, Yasser can expect a place at the top of the patronage chain. However, his inclusion at the top levels of political patronage seems to provide less than adequate incentives for loyalty. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the new patronage *du jour* for young sheikhs is private sector access. In particular, the sons of al-Ahmar, Abu Shawarib, Abu Luhom, al-Shaif, al-Qadir, and many others are becoming wealthy businessmen in part because of their close connections with the President. Yasser fits the profile of the new, tribal business class. Yet, he was only included in political patronage. In light of existing inclusion trends, relative deprivation and Yasser’s desire to enter the private sector may have played a role in the timing of his defection.

Together, Yasser’s independent variable values create competing incentive structures that do not produce a strong tendency for loyalty or defection. Consistent with this ambiguous cluster of variables, Yasser played a political game at the margins of red lines and then eventually moved to defection. To understand his shift to defection, one must look beyond existing variables to include a change on the demand side of the patronage equation. Yasser’s public demand for formalization of the ruling party followed on the heels of a dispute over access to the telecommunications sector. This seems to be the proximate cause of his defection and the missing variable in the larger equation that accounts for his change in behavior.
Sheikh Muhammad Abu Luhom (Case Number 12)

Like Yasser, Sheikh Muhammad Abu Luhom is a reform-minded tribal politician. Muhammad and Yasser have the same values on all independent variables, yet Yasser defects, while Muhammad remains loyal over time. This section will first discuss Mohammad’s actions as a reformer, explaining why his efforts do not constitute crossing red lines. Then it will place Muhammad’s story in theoretical context by reviewing his coding on the five independent variables and discussing how the interaction of these variables produce incentives for both loyalty and defection. Given that Yasser and Muhammad’s behaviors are both consistent with the same combination of independent variables, this cluster of variables is underspecified and fails the basic test for the validity of a type. To further refine this type, the following section will first explore potential measurement errors and then it will identify two critical left out variables. While slight variations not captured by independent variable coding begin to explain divergent outcomes, the more powerful explanatory factors are two left out variables: a change on the demand side of the patronage equation and tribal balancing. Together these two left out factors account for within-type variation and they assist in refining the typological space.

After discussing left out variables, the section will conclude by arguing that while Muhammad does not technically cross red lines for the use of formal institutions, he is precariously close, and more similar to Yasser than a simple dichotomous dependent
variable can reveal. His case further confirms the ambiguous nature of the combination of: deeply included, political patronage, tribal elite, risk taker and ease of defection two. This type seems to be unstable and could identify a pool of potential defectors in the Yemeni political arena. From a policy perspective, this finding is particularly useful for domestic or international organizations seeking to identify potential democratic reformers. In the Yemeni context, it is relatively easy to identify a group of elites who fit Muhammad and Yasser’s type and who could potentially defect individually or collectively in the future.

A Narrative of Loyalty

Muhammad Abu Luhom is the son of a prominent sheikh from the Nihim tribe in the Bakil confederation. Muhammad’s uncle, Sinan Abu Luhom, is one of the most revered sheikhs in Yemen and is a prominent leader in Bakil. The Abu Luhoms have a reputation as a special type of tribal family. They come from settled agricultural lands in the governorate of Ibb and have a reputation for scholarship and openness to the outside world. At a young age, Muhammad continued his family’s history of leadership and learning. He graduated from George Washington University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Masters in International Relations. After graduating, he returned to Yemen to work for the Ministry of Planning from 1983-1988. In 1988, he entered national politics by joining North Yemen’s Shoura Council, where he served as the chairman of the Development Committee. When North and South Yemen united in 1990, and their respective legislatures were combined, Muhammad became part of Yemen’s
first unified Parliament. In 1993 he maintained his seat by winning in the country’s first parliamentary elections. His time as an MP however was cut short by the civil war of 1994.\textsuperscript{188}

At unification, when political space opened for opposition parties, he and another prominent sheikh, Sadik al-Ahmar, established the Republican Party. The brief period of democratic competition however was short-lived. In early 1994, as hostilities between the former southern and northern regimes began to flare, Muhammad aggressively mobilized the Bakil tribal confederation against civil war. His actions placed him and his supporters squarely at odds with the Saleh regime. He was accused of sympathizing with the Socialists and immediately prior to the outbreak of violence, he left Yemen for the United States. Muhammad remained in self-imposed exile for nearly a decade.\textsuperscript{189}

In exile, Muhammad was an active leader in the ex-pat opposition. However he realized that he could only have a limited impact on the political system from outside the country.\textsuperscript{190} As such, in 2004 he returned, without his family, to Yemen. While he and Saleh had been bitter enemies in the past, the President welcomed Muhammad’s return to political life. In fact, a deal was struck by which Muhammad was guaranteed an appointed position on the GPC’s General Committee. Since that time, Muhammad has played a prominent role in the GPC. He is currently the head of the party’s Foreign Relations Committee and in this capacity he forms a critical link between the GPC and the international community. He is also a prominent member of the reformist trend in the

\textsuperscript{188} Interview by the author with Muhammad Abu Luhom, Sana’a, Yemen, February 5, 2006. Data also taken from Muhammad’s Curriculum Vitiate.
\textsuperscript{189} Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, July 31, 2007.
\textsuperscript{190} Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, February 5, 2006.
party and he played an active role in leading the GPC to victory in the 2006 local council elections.

By his own account, Muhammad is a reformer within the GPC. He verbally supports democratization and institutionalization in both the party and in the electoral system, and he also works for gradual change behind the scenes to achieve these goals. In an interview with the author, Muhammad claims to have entered the GPC with the specific hope of changing the party. His goal is to “build a serious institution inside the GPC, for it to really be an institution.” In his opinion, “Yemen is at a critical moment in history. Now is the time to build stable, democratic institutions, which are founded on a multi-party system. This will take time, but they [the Yemenis] must start building these institutions now.”

In conversations with the author, Muhammad was also careful to emphasize the need for a national agenda for reform. While his position as a Bakil sheikh is an important component of his social and political identity, he “knows that Yemen from a Bakil perspective is not feasible. Bakil is only a small part of the larger country.”

In light of his past political experience, he is far from an idealist and is keenly aware of political constraints. Muhammad admits that personalization of power and the absence of political and economic institutions is an obstacle to reform. Given these limitations, he insists that “change must come gradually.” In his words, “you cannot go sixty miles per hour on a narrow road that only allows for you to go twenty.”

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191 Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, July 17, 2007.
192 Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, February 5, 2006
193 Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, February 18, 2006.
194 Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, July 17, 2007.
speaking with Muhammad about democratic change, he gives the impression of an older statesman, one who has learned caution from experience, and who is willing to strategize and plan far in advance to achieve his aims.

Muhammad’s status as a reformer in the party is verified by colleagues and by international actors. A prominent diplomat claims that Muhammad and several others within the GPC are reformers who make genuine efforts to formalize politics and encourage democratic development. The same diplomat also noted that these reformers have limited success given the nature of the political game they must play. As mentioned in Chapter Two, to be a position to change the organization of power, reformers must be included in patronage arrangements. In effect, they strengthen and perpetuate the informal system they wish to alter. A prominent leader of the JMP also confirmed Muhammad’s status as a genuine reformer inside the ruling party, while at the same time emphasizing the political constrains under which Muhammad operates. According the JMP leader “the GPC is full of promising people who cannot act, like Muhammad Abu Luhom, who is now frustrated. The GPC is like a political freezer for potential reformers.”

While Muhammad is undoubtedly part of a reformist trend inside the GPC, many of his GPC colleagues question his motives and doubt his reform credentials. A member of the “new generation” in the GPC confirms that Muhammad shares a desire to strengthen the party, but he claims that Muhammad has a distinctly “Bakil political

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195 Interview with a prominent diplomat, Sana’a, Yemen, June 2007.
196 Interview by the author with a leader of the JMP, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
A technocratic member of the party says that he is “disappointed in Muhammad…..[we] expected Muhammad to come back from the United States acting like a Western educated politician and technocrat. Instead, Muhammad travels around the city with twenty armed guards. Underneath the educated surface, he has a tribal mentality and people call him ‘sheikh.’ He is looking for power and prestige and he is using his tribal roots to achieve this.”

These comments make several important points for the purposes of this study. First, tribal rivalries and the animosity between tribal and non-tribal elites are common cleavages within the Yemeni political system. These divisions fracture the Yemeni elite and create formidable obstacles for potential reform coalitions. For example, based on the author’s observations and discussions with GPC members, it seems that Yasser and Muhammad do not coordinate their reform agendas or work closely together to achieve their stated goals. The same is true for Muhammad and Sheikh Hamid al-Ahmar. All three men seem to genuinely want a degree of formalization in the political arena, but historical legacies of tribal competition often obstruct potential alliances. In addition to highlighting coalition obstacles, the comments also reveal the bounded nature of political change. Muhammad cannot separate himself from his tribal affiliations in Bakil (nor would he want to). Bakil is Muhammad’s constituency and it constitutes his domestic powerbase. Like most other sheikhs with long family traditions of leadership, Muhammad is deeply embedded in his family’s legacy of leadership and their relationships with other families and tribes. These affiliations in no way preclude a

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197 Interview by the author with a member of the new generation in the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2007.
198 Interview with a GPC technocrat, Sana’a, Yemen, October 2006.
national agenda for reform or a sincere effort to encourage democratic development. Yet they are a reminder that Muhammad’s historical affiliations guide how he can participate in politics. He must connect with his tribe and the Bakil agenda in order to have the stature and power to participate as an influential politician. The same of course also applied to Yasser. Historical legacies may also impact his preferences. As his tribal colleague suggests, Muhammad may be pressing for greater formalization in part because he believes this change will temporarily swing the power pendulum in the direction of Bakil and away from Hashid. Ultimately, Muhammad’s motivations, beliefs, and political aspirations are a source of debate. More than likely, both he and Yasser desire some degree of formalization, although given their tribal legacies and privileged positions in networks of patronage; they certainly do not seek a radical break with informal patterns of politics.

Regardless of his intentions, Muhammad’s actions and rhetoric as a reformer have remained within the boundaries of the informal patronage paradigm since his return to Yemen in 2004. Muhammad does not aggressively critique the regime in the press or in public forums. In fact, at critical junctures, particularly elections, he is a reliable and articulate spokesman for the status quo. The author has attended several gat chews and NGO forums where Muhammad has defended democratic and economic progress made under the Saleh regime. Muhammad is never blindly rosy in his defense, but ultimately he remains within appropriate rhetorical boundaries. He generally blames corruption, slow democratic progress, and a stagnant economy on the usual culprits: Yemeni political culture, late development, political instability, and a weak political opposition. Even in
private gat chews, Muhammad is careful never to directly critique the President, the President’s close family, or close presidential advisors.

Muhammad’s own account of the actions he and others have taken to strengthen the ruling party are a telling indication of the bounded nature of his reform agenda. In his words, he and a group of colleagues have worked to “open the GPC.” By this, he means “they have worked to make criticism and dissenting views acceptable within the party organization…… Before there was only one party line and everyone had to follow the party line. Now, they have ‘broken the fear factor inside the party.’”  

As evidence of success, he points to three victories for the reformers. First, they were able to change the party leadership at the Aden conference in 2005. Usually only a few leaders change, but in Aden, approximately seventy five percent of the old leadership was voted out. Secondly, he points to the process of candidate selection in the local council election of 2006. Before, the party had selected candidates through a top down process; in 2006, more power was given to the districts to select their own GPC candidates. Finally, he claims that the language and rhetoric of the GPC has changed. In his opinion, the party is more open and accepting of criticism. He gave the 2006 elections as an example. (During the elections, President Saleh faced his first real competition for the presidency and the regime tolerated a great deal of critique from the JMP opposition). Despite these accomplishments, Muhammad admits that the party has failed to move beyond talk to

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199 Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, July 17, 2007.
action. It has yet to implement the President’s program for reform. This, he says, is the next challenge.\textsuperscript{200}

While these reforms and accomplishments may be a genuine attempt to formalize and strengthen Yemen’s nascent democratic institutions, they fall short of crossing red lines. In fact, they could even fortify existing patterns of neopatrimonialism or alternatively encourage a more formalized autocracy. The change in party leadership following the Aden conference, for example, is merely symbolic as long as the GPC remains a toothless handmaid of the President. Again, the GPC is not a party that is continuously activated during non-election cycles. Nor is it an independent source of political power. Changing the faces that fill the party’s top executive committee, the General Committee, means nothing if this organization does not have the authority to independently coordinate party activities and encourage implementation of the GPC’s platform. Currently the General Committee is little more than a source of patronage for the President to distribute to top clients (the majority of positions are appointed and the elected slots are heavily influenced by Presidential favoritism in practice). It is an important status symbol as well as an avenue for acquiring political and material patronage that can be distributed down the patronage chain. Changing the membership of this organization does not equate to changing the nature of politics. Thus far, the new leadership has failed to work in coalition to implement the party’s platform or to continuously mobilize party support for reform. In fact, members of the General Committee did not openly support Yasser’s call for reform within the party. Instead of

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
capitalizing on potential momentum, Yasser’s defection faded into the political background, and the politics of behind the scenes negotiations and superficial reforms continued.

Several Yemeni political analysts suggest that the change in the leadership of the General Committee may simply allow the President to co-opt and control a potentially powerful new generation of reform-minded sheikhs. As mentioned earlier, a member of the JMP opposition calls the GPC a “political freezer” for reformers. Another Yemeni political analyst argues that the new generation of tribal elites has been encouraged to enter the General Committee precisely because they can have little impact on the political system from within the party organization. According to this analyst, “….the President does not want to give them [young sheikhs] real executive power. He puts them there [in the General Committee] so that they will be satisfied with the wealth that prestige that comes from the position.” A member of Islah expressed similar ideas. According to him, the incorporation or promotion of several prominent sheikhs to high positions in the GPC is part of an overall strategy to neutralize their political power. Including prominent young sheikhs in the General Committee is just another strategy of co-option and control.

In effect, the GPC offers a useful holding tank for potential reformers because it grants them prestige and access to state resources, while denying them a platform to affect policy or establish a political powerbase. Again, the historical legacy of the party is

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201 Interview by the author with a prominent member of the JMP, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
202 Interview by the author with a prominent member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
203 Interview by the author with a sheikh in Islah, Sana’a, Yemen, September 2006.
a catch-all, inclusive grouping with only minimal activation during election cycles. Several prominent statesmen throughout Yemen’s history tried to institutionalize the GPC by providing its leadership some autonomy from the President, routinizing internal bylaws, and working to implement the party’s platform. Until now these attempts have all failed. The President’s party either absorbs potential reformers, or these men become frustrated and leave the patronage system.

A similar argument applies to changes in the GPC’s candidate nomination process. Reformers in the party were able to transform the nomination process from a top-down to a grassroots election process in 2006. This change certainly improved the GPC’s margin of victory over the JMP opposition because it allowed the party to more effectively identify and co-opt popular local leaders. The grassroots orientation of the GPC’s nomination process could infuse the party with fresh ideas and new leadership at the local level. However, as long as the party remains an empty organization that is only active during election cycles, revived grassroots networks have little impact on the organization of power in the capital.

Finally, Muhammad’s vague claim to have “opened the GPC” is another example of reforms that stop short of directly challenging the existing organization of power. First it should be noted that the GPC has always been an umbrella organization for various social groups and political tendencies in the country. Therefore a degree of negotiation, dissent, and debate has always existed within the party. It is possible that Muhammad and his supporters have been able to expand debate around sensitive issues, such as how to effectively fight corruption or open space for political competition. Yet open dialogue
and policy debate may simply allow more accurate information to flow to the President. Currently, Saleh’s closest advisors are staunchly loyal to him and generally agree with his decisions. An observer who is intimately connected to the Presidential Palace notes that “around the President are a group of men who essentially tell him how great he is. He does not receive an accurate picture of the problems or challenges in the country from them.” These “yes men” limit the flow of information as well as useful policy options for the President. If these barriers are broken, it may simply arm the President with better information and more policy options to preserve his power and even transfer authority to his son.

Similarly, the party’s acceptance of oppositional critique does not necessarily threaten the informal organization of power. In comparison with other autocratic regimes in the Arab world, the Yemeni regime allows for a significant amount of dissent and opposition. The press and opposition leaders routinely attack the ruling party and governmental leaders on a wide variety of issues, particularly regarding corruption. Informal critique of the government, the ruling party, and even the President, is common practice in private gat chews throughout the country. Yet, Yemenis often comment on the abundance of talk and the dearth of political action. In other words, liberalization of the political sphere has certainly outpaced genuine competition.

Muhammad is correct to note that the regime tolerated a great deal of direct critique (even some of the President) during the 2006 elections. However, competition and critique functioned more as a safety valve for discontent, rather than a mechanism for

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204 Interview by the author with a political observer close to the President, Yemen, summer 2006.
attenuating informal patronage networks. The President’s ultimate victory was never in question, partly because he actually does have legitimate popularity in some northern constituencies, and mostly because he is able to mobilize the resources of the state to ensure his victory. The playing field was biased in favor of the President from the beginning. Allowing for a degree of competition and critique during elections did not threaten the President’s authority; instead it made his eventual victory appear somewhat legitimate.

In sum, since Muhammad has returned to Yemen, he has conscientiously pursued gradual reforms that could strengthen the GPC in the future, but have fallen short of crossing red lines in practice. He has not made a credible threat to change the organization of power, and in fact his participation in Yemeni politics has only served to perpetuate the informal patronage system around the President. Muhammad’s continued adherence to caution and gradualism, however, is not guaranteed. Muhammad openly states that if he fails in his efforts to strengthen the party, he will leave the GPC and attempt to reform from a different angle. This, he says, also applies to other reformers. For now, he is a loyal insider who talks of reforms and makes gradual changes at the margins.

The Narrative in Theoretical Context

Briefly, Muhammad’s values on the independent variables are the following:

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205 Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, July 17, 2007.
Neither Muhammad nor Yasser’s independent variable values produce strong incentives for loyalty or defection. While independent variables two (degree of patronage inclusion) and three (type of elite) provide incentives for loyalty, their values on independent variables four (life-cycle measurement) and five (ease of defection index) seem to provide incentives for defection. As discussed in the previous section, their inclusion in political patronage provides only weak incentives for loyalty in combination with their other values. Like Yasser, Muhammad’s actions are generally consistent with initial working hypotheses regarding the independent variables. Given that their typological type is underspecified, this section will examine slight variations not captured by their independent variable values as well as left out variables in an attempt to explain within-type variation.

While Muhammad and Yasser are both “risk takers,” Yasser is more strongly associated with this category than Muhammad. This project used three elements to evaluate the life-cycle variable: age, exposure to liberal democracy, and children’s dependence on domestic networks of patronage. Both Yasser and Muhammad have been
educated and traveled extensively in liberal democracies, and both have children that are not dependent on domestic networks of patronage for their education or careers.

However, Yasser is below the age for 40, while Muhammad is not. Muhammad was born in 1959, and therefore he is outside of the age range this study establishes for youth. The study hypothesizes that youth may be associated with defection because younger politicians may be more willing to take risks with their careers and experiment with different modes of political bargaining. Alternatively, the political experience that comes with age may make older politicians less idealistic and certainly more cautious. Youth is by no means a perfect indicator of risk tolerance. Certainly it is possible to find a young politician with an unusual depth of political experience, or whose personality tends towards caution. But in Muhammad’s case, age seems to be an accurate measure of risk. Muhammad has none of the bold idealism or propensity to embrace rapid change that is associated with youth. As discussed earlier, his attempts to mobilize the Bakil confederation and prevent civil war during the early 1990s resulted in self-imposed exile. His experience in exile molded Muhammad as a politician. Now he is a seasoned politician who is careful, calculating, and gradual in his approach to change.

Muhammad’s age and particularly his past political experience lessen the incentives for defection provided by the life-cycle variable. Similarly, his value of two on the ease of defection index may provide fewer incentives for defection when compared with Yasser’s matching value of two. Both Muhammad and Yasser have the exact same values on the ease of defection variable, and they have matching values for all of the questions used to evaluate the index. Neither Yasser nor Muhammad could completely lose their
elite status in Yemen upon defection. Both come from prominent tribal lineages and their names themselves guarantee continued elite status. Neither has a significant source of external patronage or wealth that would cushion the material blow of exclusion from domestic patronage. Finally, both can count on others to join them in coalition if they chose to defect. Beyond a small group of elites in the party, however, their support base may differ. Numerous sources suggest that Yasser’s personal popularity and influence within the tribes is greater than Muhammad’s influence. An astute technocrat within the GPC had this to say about Yasser in comparison with other sheikhs, such as Muhammad, in the new generation:

“Unlike their fathers, this new generation does not have the deep ties with their tribesmen. They do not live with the tribes and they are educated outside the country. They are often good men who understand the need for change, but the fact is that they do not command the loyalty of the tribes like their predecessors. They are trying to act tribal now in order to win respect and influence the system of politics created by the President, however, they are not strong enough to have substantial influence……Yasser al-Awadi is a bit different from these other sheikhs. Yasser’s father was also a powerful sheikh, but Yasser has maintained strong ties with his tribesmen. He has also won the trust of the President…..”

This is not to say that Muhammad is not revered by his tribesman. However, the fact remains that Yasser was raised in the countryside with his tribe and he is now the sheikh of sheikhs of al-Awadi. Muhammad on the other hand has spent the majority of his youth and adulthood outside of Yemen. He simply has less time on the ground. Moreover his uncle, Sinan, still occupies the top position in his tribe. Both men could count on the support of their tribesmen and aligned tribal sheikhs, however, Yasser’s base of support within his tribe may run deeper and provide a more formidable bulwark against Presidential retribution.

206 Interview by the author with a technocratic member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
Interestingly, Muhammad’s coalitional capacity extends to the international community, while Yasser’s does not. Through his time in the US and Britain, and in his capacity as the head of the GPC’s Foreign Relations Committee, Muhammad has established close working relationship with foreign governments and organizations, including the US Embassy, NDI, the European Union, etc. These organizations would more than likely strongly support Muhammad if he were to aggressively seek a more formalized democratic system. In his efforts thus far, Muhammad notes that the international community has provided opportunities for reforms to make minor changes. He believes that “reformers in the GPC could have pushed for reforms without the pressure from the international community, but the process would have been much slower.” However, these relationships may be less meaningful in the context of defection. The international community certainly provides a degree a political protection for defectors, but it seems that domestic coalitions have a greater impact on the risk calculus of elites. For example, several technocrats and businessmen in this study could count on the verbal and diplomatic support from the international community, but most chose to remain loyal. Technocrats in particular often have close ties with the international community, yet their domestic bargaining status is noticeably weak when compared with tribal sheikhs. Bargaining within the Yemeni context is realpolitik - it rests on material concerns and physical strength. In a political environment where defection may result in serious financial and even physical harassment, most defectors in this study have powerful domestic partners, particularly tribes, for support.

207 Muhammad Abu Luhom, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, July 17, 2007.
Slight variations within their independent variable values may begin to explain Muhammad’s loyalty in comparison to Yasser’s defection, but to fully account for within-type variation it is necessary to explore the possibility of left out variables. Based on Yasser and Muhammad’s narratives, it seems that two left out variables explain the difference in outcomes. First, while Yasser’s demand for private sector patronage likely triggered his move to defection, Muhammad seems content to remain only in the political sphere. There is no indication, from either Muhammad, Muhammad’s friends, or his critics, that he is actively trying to enter the private sector. He has relatives that are involved in business, but he has yet to make this demand. If he did try to enter private sector and was denied the access he desired, denial could trigger open defection, as it did in Yasser’s case.

Secondly, the difference between the two sheikhs could also be related to the tribal balance of power. One potential weakness of the independent variables as they are currently articulated is that they do not fully account for the communal aspects of patronage in Yemen. While the life-cycle variable accounts for the impact of children on the decision making process of elites as they weigh the cost of defection, collective bonds reach further in practice. When making decisions regarding defection, elites often consider the impact their actions would have on brothers, cousins, nephews, and even on their tribe or tribal confederation. In Muhammad’s case, his decision to remain within the patronage paradigm may be influenced by the larger struggle over what families and confederations will be favored as the political dust settles in the wake of Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar’s death. Muhammad is currently favored by the President within the Bakil
confederation at a time when the leadership of Hashid was is in flux. With Abdullah’s passing, there is no clear line of authority in the Hasid confederation, and as such, the sons of Abdullah, Saleh, and several other prominent sheikhs are vying for political influence. Before passing away, Abdullah appointed his eldest son, Sadik, to be the sheikh of sheikhs of the Hashid confederation. Yet, Sadik is no Abdullah. He lacks the leadership skill, charisma, and respect of his father. In fact, he is largely overshadowed by his two younger brothers, Hamid and Hussein, who are aggressively staking their claim to political and economic power. One expert on tribal relations believes that the President is using Muhammad to balance the potential influence of the Ahmar brothers. While the President has worked to attenuate the Ahmar brothers’ access to material and economic spoils in recent years, he has systematically favored Muhammad. Currently Muhammad has the ear of the President and a great deal of political clout. Given his favored position in the tribal balance of power, it is unlikely that Muhammad would defect now. If this power balance were to change, he could move from loyalty to defection.

These two left out variables seem to explain why Yasser defects while Muhammad remains loyal. Yet, it is critical to note that Muhammad and Yasser’s actions are more similar than a dichotomous variable can reveal. In many ways, Muhammad’s discussion of the GPC is similar to the critiques and demands made by Yasser in the *al-shaari‘* interview. The difference between the two is that Yasser made a credible threat to challenge the status quo by aggressively taking his demands to the press, criticizing the

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208 Interview with a tribal expert and member of the GPC, Sana‘a, Yemen, August 2007.
President, and then going further to call for change in the context of a coalition. While Muhammad has thus far failed to make a credible threat to challenge the informal patronage system, he may be closer to crossing a red line than his current actions suggest. Muhammad openly claims that he will leave the GPC, along with other reformers, if he fails in his efforts to strengthen the party relative to the informal system. In addition to Muhammad’s own statements, other elites in the GPC describe him as a strategic player who is biding his time until the moment is right to take more aggressive actions to institutionalize the political arena. One member of the GPC says that Muhammad goes through stages of opposition and loyalty. “Currently Muhammad is not doing anything to displease the President. He is someone who fights hard for a limited period of time and then rests. He is in a resting period right now and the President knows this. But, he [Muhammad] is just in the GPC at the moment for the lack of a better option. He will probably end up building his own party at some point.”

Clearly Muhammad is not a staunch status quo supporter. He is comfortable in a more institutionalized system and has taken bold actions in the past to promote democratic development. While he has not crossed red lines for the use of formal democratic institutions since his return to political life in 2004, he is closer to Yasser, and to defection, than a simple dichotomous variable can capture.

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209 Interview by the author with a high ranking member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, June 2007.
Conclusions and Preliminary Findings

Yasser and Muhammad’s cases yield several important findings. First they, along with three other unexplored cases within the larger typological space, suggest that the combination tribal elite, risk taker, political patronage, and ease of defection of two, is an unstable grouping of variables that provides incentives for both loyalty and defection. As discussed above, both loyalty and defection are consistent with Muhammad and Yasser values on the independent variables, and it is necessary to consider left out variables to explain within-type variation. Further, upon close examination, their actions were more similar than a simple dichotomous dependent variable could reveal.

In the larger typological space, cases 27-29 also lend credibility to the hypothesis that political patronage produces only weak incentives for loyalty when combined with a risk taking, tribal elite who has a relatively high capacity to defect. A comparison of Case Number 27, who will be called Ahmed, and Case Number 28, who will called Ali, provides a useful parallel to Yasser and Muhammad. Ahmed and Ali would be the same type as Muhammad and Yasser except for the fact that Ahmed and Ali are only “included” in political patronage, as opposed to “deeply included.” As is the case with Yasser and Muhammad, Ali and Ahmed have the same values on all explanatory variables, yet Ahmed defects while Ali remains loyal over time. The difference in their outcomes is partially accounted for by shifts on the demand side of the patronage equation as well as tribal balancing.

In addition to this parallel paired-comparison, Case Number 29 also lends credibility to instability of this independent variable combination. Case Number 29
combines: included, political patronage, tribal elite, risk taker, and ease of defection three, and also results in an outcome of defection. It is important to note that defection in this case is more predictable than in the previous cases because of the interaction effect of the values “included” elite and ease of defection three. In this case, the elite under consideration hails from one of the most powerful tribal families in Yemen, yet his patronage inclusion is shallow when compared with his tribal/family status. Based on the rules of the game explored in Chapter Two, his degree and type of patronage inclusion falls outside of an acceptable range. In light of this discrepancy, elite Number 29 defects at least in part as a bargaining strategy to re-establish his “rightful” position in the political arena. In sum, while the details of Cases 27-29 are not explored in this study, on the surface they confirm the finding of Muhammad and Yasser’s cases: political patronage is a particularly weak link to the informal patronage system when combined with a risk taking tribal elite who has a relatively high capacity to defect in coalition and without jeopardizing his domestic elite status.

Understanding the unstable nature of this combination is important because it helps policymakers identity a pool of potential defectors in the Yemeni context. Without conducting a full sample of included elites, it seems that the majority of elites who fit this combination are part of the “new generation” inside the GPC. While the JMP opposition presents itself as the most likely source of democratic change in Yemen, gradual institutionalization and democratization may emerge from within the ranks of the ruling party. Young reform-minded politicians within the GPC have the strategic positions, material resources, and social clout to affect change. While these privileged politicians
often seek bounded change, or possibly only a better position inside the informal establishment, their defections could provide a window of opportunity for gradual institutionalization.

In addition to identifying a pool of potential defectors, Yasser and Muhammad’s cases also suggest two left out variables that further refine the typological space. In order to understand variation within their type, it is necessary to consider the impact of both a change on the demand side of the patronage equation and tribal balancing. The usefulness of these two variables is further confirmed by their ability to explain anomalies in another set of cases. As mentioned above, tribal balancing and a shift in the demand side of the patronage equation also explain divergent outcomes between Ahmed and Ali.

It seems that a change in the demand side of the patronage equation plays a particularly important role in shifting an elite’s defection calculus. Again, Yasser’s move to defection was more than likely triggered by his desire to enter the private sector and the problems he faced in making this transition. Had he been content with political patronage, it is likely that he would have continued to pursue limited reforms within the boundaries of the patronage paradigm. On the other hand, there is no indication that Muhammad has tried to gain access to the private sector. For now, he is content to bargain from his position as a member of the General Committee and as Chairman of the party’s Foreign Relations Committee. Lending greater credibility to the impact of a change on the demand side of the equation, a preliminary evaluation of Case Number 27 indicates that a desire to move into the public sector also played a role in Ahmed’s move to defection. Ultimately, Ahmed was reincorporated into the public sector and since that
time he has curtailed his critique of the regime and ceased his aggressive efforts to encourage formalization of politics.

The importance of a shift on the demand side of the patronage equation could have important political implications for the Saleh regime. Currently, President Saleh seems intent on placing well-educated, young tribal elites in the top echelons of the ruling party. However, he may have misjudged the extent to which this type patronage inclusion ensures loyalty to the existing mode of governance. As demand for access to the private sector continues to rise, it is likely that political positions will become less coveted. If the President fails to distribute private sector benefits to young and powerful sheikhs, others like Yasser may move to defection. More importantly, if enough are disgruntled, it is possible that they may temporarily overlook tribal animosities to form a coalition.

Finally, the case studies provide a cautionary tale for scholars and policymakers who see elite defection as a source of democratic change. In Yasser’s case, defection may simply reinvent or reorganize networks of patronage. While it is too early to make a final judgment on the impact of Yasser’s actions, thus far they have not yielded substantive results in either the Parliament or the party. His defection was clear and dramatic in the beginning, but it did not produce momentum or a strong coalition for genuine reform. Ahmed’s (Case Number 27) case provides an even clearer example of how defection may simply reinvent networks of patronage. Following his defection, the regime encouraged

210 In addition to misjudging the ability of political patronage to engender loyalty, it is also important to note that the rush on private sector patronage is partly an unintended consequence of Saleh’s own policies in the 1980s. As noted in Chapter Two, Saleh intentionally chose to incorporate tribesmen into the private sector in the eighties to ensure their political quiescence and loyalty. Now Saleh cannot quell demand for private sector access quickly enough.
tribal feuds in his district. His relatives suffered politically for his decision, and eventually the regime utilized financial pressures to coax him back into the patronage paradigm. Ultimately he was reincorporated into a prominent public sector post. Again, while it may be premature to make a final judgment on the impact of Yasser’s defection, it seems to be moving in the same direction as Ahmed’s case: defection, followed by behind the scenes negation, ending in re-incorporation into a better patronage position.

These cases of defection highlight the bounded nature of political change. Yasser, and elites like him, benefit from the informal system of patronage politics. They are privileged players who have a stake in maintaining the status quo. However, they are also capable of bargaining within, and may to some extent genuinely desire, a more formalized democratic system. Regardless of their intentions, as they bargain for better positions in informal arrangements and or seek to make gradual changes that strengthen formal democratic institutions, they are unlikely to break completely with the past. If they are offered a better position within the established system, they are likely to cease disruptive activities and return to the informal game. Defection therefore provides an opportunity, and only an opportunity, to challenge the informal patronage system. Ultimately the impact of defection may depend upon the ability of other actors to capitalize on the window of opportunity by forming a coalition with the defecting elite. The next chapter will explore a case where a domestic reformer has used the defection and close defection of regime insiders in ways that have achieved some degree of institutionalization in the Parliament.
CHAPTER IV: A DEVIANT, YET PROMISING CASE OF DEFECTION

The name Sakhir Ahmed Abbas al-Wajih is now synonymous with reform in Yemen. An outspoken proponent of fighting grand corruption and encouraging democratization, Sakhir’s current political stature far exceeds his social and tribal rank. Unlike Yasser al-Awadi or Muhammad Abu Luhom, Sakhir does not represent a tribe or hail from a long lineage of sheikhs. In fact he possesses few of the tribal, military, technocratic, or business connections that make men dominant players in the Yemeni political system. Yet he is a rising star in Yemeni politics, who has on numerous occasions brazenly crossed red lines for the use of formal political institutions. More importantly, his efforts have produced small yet tangible results in the Yemeni Parliament and in the fight to curtail networks of patronage and corruption supporting the regime.

Sakhir’s defection is interesting for several reasons. Theoretically, he constitutes a deviant case. Based on preliminary working hypotheses, Sakhir’s values on the independent variables strongly point towards loyalty. Yet despite these incentives, he defects. Even more surprising, of the three cases of defection examined in this study, Sakhir constitutes the most consistent and clear example of crossing red lines. Given that preliminary hypotheses fail to account for Sakhir’s actions, his case requires a search for left out variables and potential measurement errors. Beyond refining the typological space, Sakhir’s story also provides insights into an instance of successful defection.
While Yasser’s case offers a cautionary tale, Sakhir’s story is a ray of hope and an opportunity to explore the circumstances under which defection strengthens formal, democratic institutions.

This chapter will proceed by first telling the story of Sakhir’s political career. In doing so, it will highlight the numerous times he has crossed red lines in his efforts to strengthen Parliament and to fight corruption. After recounting the narrative, a second section will place his story in theoretical context. It will argue that Sakhir’s actions are inconsistent with his values on the explanatory variables mainly because of a left out factor: belief or conviction. This section will also briefly address a potential measurement error associated with independent variable three: elite identity. After explaining the why of Sakhir’s defection, it will conclude with a discussion of the impact of his defection on Yemen’s Parliament and the corrupt political economy. A preliminary assessment indicates that Sakhir’s limited success in encouraging formalization and transparency is directly related to the intersection of three main factors: 1) strong personal belief and resolve, 2) a specific set of domestic coalitional dynamics (which combines a small group of dedicated reformers with an internally fractured ruling coalition), and 3) strategically placed international support. While this study is not designed to fully determine the conditions under which defection successfully alters neopatrimonial autocracy, Sakhir’s story suggests that the constellation of these three factors provides a favorable environment for formalizing politics.
A Narrative of Defection

Sakhir al-Wajih was born in 1962 in the countryside surrounding the historic city of Zabeed.\textsuperscript{211} He is a member of a tribe, but does not hail from a line of prominent sheikhs. In fact, Sakhir describes his family as “normal,” an average part of Yemeni society.\textsuperscript{212} Sakhir’s exposure to the world outside of Yemen is limited, and primarily centered on the former Soviet Union. As a young man, he attended a Military Academy in the Soviet Union and then returned to Yemen to complete a Bachelor of Arts in Engineering at the University of Sana’a. In Sana’a he also completed post-graduate work in International Relations. After university, Sakhir worked for the Yemeni army as a brigade technical deputy before beginning his political career. He entered national politics in 1993 as an MP in Yemen’s first unified Parliament. Since then, he has been re-elected in each subsequent parliamentary cycle (1997 and 2003) and he plans to compete in the upcoming 2009 elections.\textsuperscript{213}

Until his resignation in August 2006, Sakhir was a long-time member of the GPC. Yet his relationship with the party leadership has always been rocky. Sakhir is a self-proclaimed “black sheep” whose outspokenness and efforts to uncover grand corruption have attracted the ire of the party leadership and at times the direct disapproval of the President. As evidence of his early willingness to cross red lines in the Yemeni political

\textsuperscript{211} Zabeed is located in the governorate of Hodeiah on the western coast of northern Yemen. It was famous through the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century as a center for Sha’fi religious thought.

\textsuperscript{212} Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.

\textsuperscript{213} Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006 and July 29, 2007.
system, Sakhir (along with a hand full of other GPC reformers) voted against the 2001 constitutional amendment to extend the term of the presidency from five to seven years. Rejecting the extension was a direct challenge to presidential authority and the ability of the executive to curtail, manipulate, and create laws to suit his needs. In 2001, the extension of the presidential term was particularly important. At that time, most Yemenis believed that Saleh would allow his son, Ahmed, to run in the next presidential election. Based on constitutional age requirements, Ahmed would have been ineligible to compete if the presidential race was held on schedule in 2004. By extending his term in office, the President could buy more time in power while also ensuring his son’s eligibility in the next election cycle. Sakhir’s rejection of the extension was an affront to presidential supremacy and it was particularly offensive given that he was a member of the ruling party. According to one parliamentary expert, after Sakhir voted against the extension, Sultan Barakani, the long standing Chairman of the GPC parliamentary bloc, launched a character attack against him and others who had voted against the amendment. It should also be noted that Sakhir was briefly expelled from the GPC in 2002. Shortly before the 2003 parliamentary elections, however, he rejoined the party and campaigned on the GPC ticket.

Two thousand three was a momentous year for Sakhir. In that year, he established himself as a clear defector and as a leader in a larger movement to formalize and strengthen parliamentary institutions. The real turning point in his career occurred in late 2003 when he and his colleague, Ali Ashal, played a leading role in uncovering a

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214 Interview by the author with a former parliamentarian, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
215 Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.
corruption scandal surrounding Oil Block 53. 216 Block 53 is now a notorious example of
government corruption in Yemen and it serves as one of the few cases of Parliament
exercising its authority to check the executive branch. The basic contours of the scandal
are succinctly conveyed by a high ranking member of the GPC in this way:

“Basically a group of GPC insiders got together with a foreign investor and tried to cut a
deal in the Parliament where Block 53 would be sold to the foreign company. The deal
was corrupt and would have lined the pockets of the GPC members involved. Those who
could not get their share of the cake learned of the deal and became angry. When they
were excluded, they leaked the rotten deal to other members of the GPC [in
Parliament].” 217

Given the importance of Block 53 in defining Sakhir’s career, it is useful to
review the case in detail. East Saar Block 53 is located in the oil rich governorate of
Hadramawt. A small British based company, Dove Energy, won exploration rights to the
block, and in 2000 the company discovered oil. 218 In the original production sharing
agreement (PSA), the operator, Dove Energy, obtained 24.45% interest. A company
owned by the Yemeni government, The Yemen Oil Company (YCO), held 25 percent
shares, and the remainder was split between three other partners. 219 In late 2003 the
Yemeni government decided to sell 60 percent its 25 percent shares to a foreign investor
for an official selling price of $13 million. The details of this transaction were

216 Ali Ashal is an MP and member of Hizb al-Islah. He comes from a prominent family in the governorate
of Abyan who have historically been political and military leaders. He is not included in the typology as a
defector because as far as the author knows, he has remained completely outside of patronage inclusion.
Sakhir was marginally included in political patronage until his resignation from the GPC. Ashal, however,
has not received any form of patronage inclusion. Sakhir and Ali are friends and colleagues in Parliament.
When Yemenis speak of reform in Parliament, they generally refer to Sakhir and Ali as a two-man team.
217 Interview by the author with a high ranking member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
2008).
http://www.allbusiness.com/sector-21-mining/oil-gas-extraction-crude/1183310-1.html (accessed June 27,
2008).
immediately leaked to the Oil and Development Committee in Parliament and MPs learned that the Yemeni government had essentially “cooked the books.” In reality, the foreign investor paid a selling price of nearly $50 million, while the Yemeni government only reported $13 million. The price differential was used to line the pockets of corrupt government officials who facilitated the sale. To further complicate the corruption charges, MPs accused Dove of being a shell company designed specifically to allow corrupt Yemeni government officials access to Block 53.  

After the sale of government shares was leaked to the Oil and Development Committee, Sakhir and Ali Ashal played a pivotal role in bringing the issue to the media and in rallying MPs against the transaction. Despite intense pressure from within the GPC and from powerful members of the government, these men relentlessly fought to expose the corruption scandal. Together they brought the issue to the Ministry of Oil and Minerals, at which point “all hell broke loose.” For nearly a year the Oil and Development Committee of Parliament battled with the Ministry of Oil and Minerals. On October 10, 2003, al-Ayyam newspaper reported that the Development and Oil Committee sent a letter to the Minister of Oil and Minerals demanding clarification and justification of the transaction. When the Minister failed to respond within two weeks, the Parliament then sent a letter (signed by the Speaker) to the Prime Minister requesting that he send the Minister of Oil and Minerals to the Parliament for questioning. In an effort to avoid Parliament, the Minister wrote two letters: one excusing his absence and the other defending the government’s decision. Labeling his answers as “vague and ambiguous,”

220 Interview by the author with members of YemenPAC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
221 Interview by the author with a parliamentary expert, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
the Oil and Development Committee recommended suspending the contract until the
Minister appeared in person for questioning. The back and forth between Parliament
and the Ministry continued for over a year. During that time, the government and
powerful GPC officials placed continuous pressure on parliamentarians to cease
interference in government decisions.

To the government’s chagrin, the Oil and Development Committee eventually
issued an official report documenting the underreporting of revenues. Needless to say, the
report was embarrassing for the government and politically explosive for the President.
Immediately the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Oil and Development Committee
came under intense pressure to stop the distribution of the report, and eventually they
relented. The Parliamentary Presidium also attempted to repress the report by refusing to
have it printed and distributed to the entire majlis. According to a parliamentarian close
to the event, “an order came from ‘upstairs’ [referring to the President] that the report
should be buried.” Sakhir and Ali, however, could not be silenced. Instead of allowing
the report to be buried, they had it printed and distributed themselves. In a story that has
now become a legendary example of bold determination, Sakhir and Ali walked from the
Parliament to nearby Tahrir square and had the document printed in private print shops.
Then they returned to Parliament and personally distributed the report. Once distributed,
the scandal was explosive and widely covered in the media. At that point, Sakhir and Ali
were able to rally the majority of MPs behind their cause. In early June 2004, Parliament

Access through NewsBank, Inc: Access World News (Record Number OFF42D1696453359).
224 Interview with a parliamentarian, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
voted to give the government sixty days to cancel the sale of the state’s shares of Block 53, and threatened a vote of no confidence if the government did not comply. While the government eventually agreed to rescind the deal, in the fall of 2004, parliamentarians accused the government of not following through on its commitment. In the end, the contract was canceled, but corrupt government officials were never held accountable. Moreover, the government compensated the foreign investor $21 million against the recommendations of Parliament.

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of Block 53 on internal parliamentary dynamics and on the political relevance of Sakhir and Ali. The corruption in Oil Block 53 involved top members of the government, including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Oil, and even the President. Challenging and exposing corruption at this level was risky. Sakhir and Ali’s boldness in confronting the issue broke the status quo in Parliament and it inspired other MPs to mobilize against corruption. Again, the Parliament is known to be a weak and subservient institution. Even MPs complain of irrelevance and bemoan their inability to affect change. Now Oil Block 53 is often cited as a moment of strength, and Sakhir and Ali are referred to as the exception to the rule of passive, obedient MPs. One parliamentary expert suggests that Block 53 was the beginning of a “small revolution” inside the Parliament which united an array of reformers: old generation, new generation, GPC partisans, and the opposition against government corruption. The momentum created by the Oil Block 53 eventually

227 This amount was reportedly part of a supplemental budget for the following fiscal year. By law, Parliament is only allowed an up or down vote on the annual and any supplemental budgets.
formed the basis of YemenPAC and it propelled Sakhir and Ali to the forefront of national politics.228

After their success in rallying a group of reformers against the sale of government shares in Block 53, Sakhir and Ali have been at the forefront of the fight against corruption and a struggle to strengthen parliamentary authority. Both men played a prominent role in stopping the renewal of the Hunt Oil contract in 2005 and in halting an investment deal in the port of Aden in 2006. In each case, they argued that the way in which the Yemeni government sold the nation’s natural resources lined the pockets of government officials while neglecting the public interest. It should be noted, however, that these cases are less clear instances of defection than Block 53. In both cases, the President eventually supported the Parliament against the government, essentially giving Parliament a “green light” to move forward with corruption investigations.229

228 Interview by the author with a member of YemenPAC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
229 The political dynamics behind the cancelation of the Hunt contract were particularly complex. While Sakhir and Ali were more than likely correct in their accusations of government corruption in the negotiation of the Hunt contract extension, curtailing grand corruption was not the only dynamic at play. The issue was drenched in national/populist rhetoric and there is little doubt that public hostility towards “foreign” ownership of oil played a role in the President’s and the Parliament’s opposition to the contract renewal. Moreover, behind the scenes there was a power struggle between Yemeni elites over who would profit from the oil in Hunt’s Block 18. Powerful Yemeni players who benefited from Hunt’s continued presence argued for the renewal of the contract, while other power players in Parliament who wanted access to the same oil lobbied against it. Ultimately the deal was cancelled, but at great cost to the Yemeni government’s reputation. Again Sakhir and Ali were more than likely correct in their allegations of corruption and they were correct to demand that government first get the approval of Parliament before extending the contract (the Prime Minister at the time, Abdul Qadir Bajammal, had extended the contract without consulting Parliament). Yet by canceling the contract, the Parliament undermined the reliability of domestic contacts. In November 2005, Hunt (and its partner Exxon Mobil) took the unusual step of filing for arbitration against a sovereign government with the International Chamber of Commerce in London. In August 2008, the arbitration committee dismissed the complaint, upholding the necessity of parliamentary approval for the extension of the contract. See: “US companies’ complaint against Yemen dismissed,” Yemen News Agency, Newswire, August 12, 2008, In Lexis-Nexis Database, Georgetown University, Lauinger Library (accessed August 13, 2008).
Beyond exposing prominent corruption scandals, Sakhir has struggled in less public ways to strengthen Parliament as an independent institution. He worked closely with Yasser al-Awadi and others in the “new generation” of the GPC bloc to reform parliamentary bylaws. In the summer of 2005 Parliament passed several amendments to its bylaws, which among other things limit the term of Presidium members to two years and facilitate oversight powers by allowing MPs to call ministers for questioning without Presidium approval. While many “reformers” in the GPC stop at making legal amendments to parliamentary bylaws, Sakhir has made a credible threat to implement and institutionalize these rules in practice. In addition to verbal support for calling ministers, he has personally questioned over ten ministers over the past five years.230

More importantly, Sakhir has made a credible threat to limit executive control over Parliament by competing for a seat on the powerful Parliamentary Presidium in February 2006. The four member Presidium, consisting of the Speaker and three deputies, is the highest administrative body in Parliament. Among other things, the Speaker, and in his absence the deputies, preside over parliamentary sessions and sign contracts and agreements in the name of the majlis. The Presidium has broad powers over all administrative functions, including recording and documenting sessions, reviewing the legality of resolutions and bills in coordination with the Constitutional Committee, and setting the parliamentary agenda for each session.231 Theoretically, the Presidium should enforce bylaws and encourage the institutionalization of parliamentary procedures.

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230 Email correspondence between the author with a member of YemenPAC, July 2007.
Historically members of the four-man Presidium have either been personally vested in the informal system of patronage politics, or they have been too weak to independently strengthen parliamentary authority.

According to several MPs and other parliamentary experts, the Presidium is the main obstacle to strengthening the institutional capacity and authority of Parliament. Until his passing in December 2007, Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar was the Speaker of Parliament and Chairman of the Presidium. During his seventeen year reign, Abdullah ruled the Parliament like a monarch, often ignoring protocols and internal bylaws.\textsuperscript{232} The long serving Deputy Chairman of the Presidium, Yahya Ray, was and still remains an obstacle to strengthening parliamentary institutions. Yahya is a former military man and a staunch ally of the President. He is a notorious “yes man” who provides the President an inside track for controlling parliamentary debate and action. Yahya has a reputation for insulting MPs, side-lining rules, and taking orders directly from the Saleh.\textsuperscript{233} As for the other two members of the Presidium, MPs are often complementary of these men, saying that when they can, they follow parliamentary protocols. However, they are beholden to the President for their positions and politically too weak to take an aggressive stance in favor of strengthening the authority of Parliament. In sum, the Parliamentary Presidium perpetuates the status quo of a weak Parliament and a highly personalized system of authority centered on the President. Saleh utilizes the Presidium, as well as the leader of

\textsuperscript{232} This fact was unanimously verified by the approximately fifteen parliamentarians interviewed by the author. For one of numerous examples in the Yemen press, see: “MPs Call for Dissolution of the government,” \textit{Yemen observer}, September 9, 2005, Front Page.

the GPC bloc, to thwart potential reform initiatives, and to intimidate potentially problematic MPs.

Interfering with the President’s indirect influence over the Presidium poses a credible threat to the informal organization of power. Reformers in the GPC bloc have approached crossing red lines by working to amend bylaws in ways that limit the term and authority of the Presidium. But these actions stop short of making a credible threat to attenuate the President’s control. On paper, new bylaws are an improvement, but in practice they have little impact as long as Saleh is able to fill the Presidium with status quo loyalists. An outspoken reformer like Sakhir in the Presidium, however, could use the post as a platform to enforce bylaws, facilitate oversight, and in general buttress the powers of Parliament relative to the executive. Therefore, Sakhir’s bid to win a seat on the Presidium, against the President’s wishes, crossed a clear red line for appropriate behavior.

By law, each member of the Presidium must be elected by an absolute majority in Parliament. Elections are theoretically done by secret ballot and in two phases, one election to determine the four members and a second to determine which will become the Speaker. Before votes go before the entire majlis, the GPC coordinates voting within its bloc by selecting a candidate list. Unofficially, the President exercises a great deal of influence, through his supporters in the party leadership, over who makes the final cut on the GPC list. According to Sakhir, before voting within the party caucus, the GPC leadership first asked if there were any “orders from the top.” When there were none,

234 Saif, 125.
they proceeded with voting. In 2006, the top three candidates after internal party voting were the following: Yahya Ray, Sakhir Al-Wajih, and Muhammad Ali al-Shadadi. Both Sakhir and Shadadi are known reformers and could potentially use the Presidium as a platform for change. Almost immediately, the party leadership mobilized against the official vote and began to put pressure on Sakhir and Shadadi to relinquish their place on the party’s candidate list. Shadadi eventually succumbed to pressure and withdrew his candidacy. Sakhir, however, remained. In his words, he did not withdraw his candidacy “because he knew the Presidium was a center of power and because many in the Parliament had complained that it was a major obstacle preventing Parliament from becoming a stronger institution.”

Prior to voting in the full majlis, the President and the party leadership worked hard to sabotage Sakhir’s potential election. In addition to direct pressure on him to withdraw, they also instructed GPC members to vote for alternative candidates. Before the elections were held in Parliament, the President directly violated the integrity of GPC internal voting by ordering that the party submit four instead of three candidates (by submitting four, this allowed GPC partisans to vote for three candidates approved by Saleh plus Sheikh Abdullah). Ultimately, when the final vote tallies were counted, the President was victorious. Sakhir lost the election and the Presidium remained

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235 Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.
236 This dynamic was confirmed by numerous sources, including: Sakhir, two other members of YemenPAC, three GPC parliamentarians who are not members of YemenPAC, one JMP leader, and one independent political analyst.
237 Sakhir al-Wajih, interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006. This dynamic was also confirmed by a status quo member of the GPC in an interview with the author in Sana’a during July of 2007.
unchanged. 238 Despite direct Presidential pressure, Sakhir was able to garner a total of 125 votes. In other words, he secured all of the opposition votes as well as around seventy votes within the GPC bloc from MPs who were specifically directed to vote against him. 239 While his bid to enter the Presidium ultimately failed, it highlighted internal divisions within the GPC bloc and strengthened his reputation as a genuine reformer. 240

Sakhir’s defeat in the Presidium elections was a turning point in his political career. After this experience, he “knew that it would be difficult to push for reform within the [GPC] caucus because the top leadership was opposed to change.” 241 He tried to utilize the reformist trend in the party to gain a position from which he could have strengthened Parliament, but in the end he failed to garner enough support. Soon after this explosive incident, Sakhir refused to support the government’s supplemental budget, an act which again put him at odds with the party leadership. Feeling that there was no hope for reform within the party, he publicly resigned from the GPC in August 2006. 242

Sakhir’s public resignation from the GPC was also an act of defection. In leaving the party, he rejected what little ties he had to informal networks of patronage and exposed himself to the full gambit of regime retribution. Resigning was also a powerful statement against the corrupt political system and the inability, or unwillingness, of the

238 Reformers won a victory in February 2008 when Sakhir’s colleague and partner in reform, Muhammad Shadadi, won a seat in the Presidium. Unfortunately, Yahya Ray, maintained his position and even became the Speaker.
239 Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.
241 Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.
242 Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.
party leadership to reform the corrupt political economy. Immediately following his resignation, Sakhir was aggressively attacked in the state controlled press.

Representatives of the GPC denied Sakhir’s claim to have resigned and argued instead that they had expelled him from the party. According to Sakhir, these claims were “unbelievable” because he had submitted his letter of resignation to the press before the GPC could spin his resignation. 243

In addition to the press smear campaign, the regime also punished Sakhir by harassing his supporters in Zabeed. In the 2006 presidential and local council elections, Sakhir reports that a fight broke out in his constituency. When the director of political security came to the area, he arrested four individuals involved. Soon after the incident, the director received a call from a senior security officer in the governorate’s capital of Hodeidah. The district director was asked why he had not targeted Sakhir’s supporters more aggressively. As punishment for not sufficiently harassing Sakhir’s sympathizers, the local security director was transferred to a different location. 244

Reflecting on his experience in the GPC, Sakhir notes that during all of his years as a reformer, the party never wrote one good thing about him. In his efforts to uncover corruption scandals, they harassed him and warned others not to follow his example. When the corruption scandals broke in the press, party leaders then took credit for having thwarted and uncovered abuse. These experiences taught him that he could not struggle for change within the party any longer. In his words, “The Golden Rule of the GPC is that they are not a party that seeks popular confidence. They do not seek to implement

243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
what they have promised.”  

Despite his exasperation, his final decision to leave was difficult, both because it would cost him politically and because he had been with the party for so long. According to Sakhir “leaving the party was like leaving home because I had been with the GPC for over thirteen years.” Now that he has left the party, he knows that his political future is uncertain. When he ran in the parliamentary race in 2003 on the GPC ticket, there was no competition in his district. Now that he has left the party, “people in the leadership have a personal vendetta” against him. He is sure to face “stiff competition in the parliamentary election of 2009.”

Sakhir’s resignation from the GPC solidified his status as a defector and concomitantly severed his limited ties to the patronage system. While his actions place him at odds with the regime, he has still maintained his elite status and his influential position in Parliament. Sakhir has been able to do this partially because he has successfully formed a small but dedicated domestic coalition. Again, when Sakhir first made a clear move to defection in the Block 53 scandal, he could not count on support of powerful parliamentarians. At that time he could only depend on Ali Ashal and a few close friends. Block 53 however produced a reform momentum that culminated in the formation of a group known as YemenPAC.

YemenPAC is a non-partisan, cross-party grouping of current and ex-parliamentarians whose stated goal is to work towards “strengthening Parliament’s

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245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
effectiveness as the first line in the fight against corruption.”

It was officially founded on December 9, 2005 on the anniversary of international anti-corruption day and it is part of a larger network known as the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC). YemenPAC currently has seventeen members, including six from the GPC, six from Islah, two socialists, and two Nasserites. Sakhir is the president. Its members, particularly the leadership, are all respected reformers who have played an active role in strengthening Parliament’s oversight powers and formalizing its internal procedures. While the strength of the organization comes first from its dedicated members, the international community has played an important role in establishing and supporting the group. Shortly after YemenPAC’s official founding, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) sponsored a retreat to the southern city of Mukullah where YemenPAC members formulated their goals, bylaws, and organizational components. Since then, NDI has maintained friendly relations with the group but has not continued financial assistance. YemenPAC has since obtained financial support from the Dutch government and has been promised assistance by several other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

As an organization, YemenPAC can boast a number of small successes in Parliament, some more substantive than others. On the less substantive end of the

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247 Yemen Parliamentarians Against Corruption, “Constitution of the National Chapter of Yemeni Parliamentarians Against Corruption: Preamble” (2005). The author obtained a hard copy of this document from a member of YemenPAC.

248 GOPAC is a non-profit, non-governmental organization established in October 2002 in Ottawa, Canada. It has representatives in over 90 countries and over 900 members. For more information on the activities and chapters of GOPAC consult their website at: http://www.gopacnetwork.org/main_en.htm

249 Email correspondence by the author with a member of YemenPAC, July 2008.
spectrum, YemenPAC played a prominent role in lobbying for a series of anti-corruption statutes aimed at curtailing rampant government abuse. Most prominent among the initiatives have been Yemen’s endorsement of the United Nations Agreement for Fighting Corruption and the passage of a law establishing the National Anti-Corruption Authority (NACA).\textsuperscript{250} In theory these two initiatives should limit informal networks of privilege, but in practice they pose little threat to the corrupt political economy. Although powerful on paper, there are no mechanisms or lines of accountability to ensure the enforcement of the UN Agreement for Fighting Corruption. As for the NACA, it technically has extensive authority to oversee the implementation of anti-corruption and financial liability laws. Its legal authorities are extensive, but there is no indication that the legal jurisdiction of this body will be respected in practice. More troubling, members of the eleven person commission, with the exception of Dr. Saadaldeen Talib and possibly two others, are widely seen as extensions of the government corruption networks. For example, one of the members was the former Minister of Telecommunications. Like many service ministers, he established a company within the Ministry and then awarded the company lucrative non-bid contracts.

In addition to objecting to the personalities on the Authority, several critics point out that the institutional framework for the organization is a step in the wrong direction with regards to clear lines of accountability. The Central Organization for Control and Audit (COCA) already has a broad mandate to uncover and report government abuse of

public funds. One prominent journalist argues that establishing another organization with a similar mandate is consistent with the President’s style of rule. According to him, Saleh perpetually seeks ways to undercut existing institutions by establishing a new one with a similar mandate. The constant flow of new institutions ultimately creates competing power centers and undercuts long term institutionalization.

While members of YemenPAC point to the anti-corruption law and to the NACA as instances of partial successes, they are not blindly optimistic. YemenPAC members admit that they were not able to achieve all they wanted with these reform initiatives. For example, they were only able to get one of their strong supporters, Dr. Talib, onto the board of the NACA. The remaining ten members were essentially appointed by the President and top members of the GPC through their influence over the Shoura Council and Parliament. In a statement to the press, “Ali Ashal declared that he has doubts that the newly established authority will succeed in fighting corruption for numerous reasons.” In his words, “observers of the Anti-Corruption Law understand that it is the product of a government initiative made in response to the International Agreement for Fighting Corruption….This response doesn’t reflect the government’s will.” In other words, given that the regime is built on networks of corruption extending from Saleh, there is little to no chance that the executive will systematically enforce the new anti-corruption statutes.

251 Interview by the author with an independent journalist, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
252 This strategy is typical in the developing world and is painstakingly explored by Joel Migdal. See Joel Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third Word (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).
Neither the anti-corruption law nor the anti-corruption authority poses an immediate, credible threat to the organization of power around President Saleh. Yet other YemenPAC activities are more menacing and affective. In particular, YemenPAC has been at the forefront of a movement to strengthen parliamentary oversight powers through the questioning of government ministers. Over time, members of YemenPAC have called the Ministers of Interior, Transportation, Communication, Construction, and Information, as well as two Prime Ministers to the floor of Parliament for questioning. In several instances, questioning has led to a more serious process of interpellation (in Arabic: \textit{istajwaba}), which can lead to a vote of no confidence or alternatively to the impeachment of the prime minister, a minister, or a deputy minister. In the summer of 2007, for example, one member of YemenPAC called the Minister of Construction to the Parliament for questioning on corruption charges. After intense questioning, the Minister was eventually forced to resign. As further evidence of questioning elevating the political stature of Parliament, during the summer of 2007, the Minister of Information was called to Parliament on charges that he had unfairly suspended several news agencies under the pretext that they did not have the proper licenses. Soon after the questioning, these news organizations were allowed to continue their mobile news service.

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\item[\textsuperscript{254}] The oversight powers of Parliament take three forms: oversight through annual reports, oversight through questioning ministers, and oversight through investigatory committees. Questioning ministers can take various forms. MPs may make a simple request for information or they may call a minister to Parliament for questioning. A more serious form of questioning is interpellation. Interpellation can lead to a withdrawal of confidence in the government or it could start impeachment proceedings for the Prime Minister, a Minister, or a Deputy Minister. For a detailed explanation of the oversight authorities of Parliament, see: Saif, 134-136.
\item[\textsuperscript{255}] Interview by the author with a Yemeni parliamentary expert, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
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\end{footnotesize}
Much debate centers on the meaning of increased parliamentary activism. Some GPC members claim that the trend is part of the President’s plan and that MPs are “allowed” to call ministers because they have a “green light from Saleh.” Yet these accusations seem to be the result of individuals exaggerating Saleh’s efficacy in a fluid and often unpredictable political playing field. Certainly the President will try to manage this new activism. But ultimately Saleh cannot fully control parliamentary politics, nor is there any evidence that YemenPAC’s effort to question ministers is anything but a sincere attempt to strengthen parliamentary prerogatives.

In addition to questioning government ministers, YemenPAC is behind several other initiatives that directly challenge the informal patronage paradigm. Currently YemenPAC (and particularly Ali Ashal) is leading an investigation into a government corruption scandal involving land in the port city of Aden. This corruption scandal points to senior regime officials, and one member of YemenPAC claims that this controversy will be the next Block 53. Ashal is also leading a struggle to pass a controversial piece of legislation that would allow Yemeni citizens free access to government information. The Freedom of Information Act, or more precisely, The Law for the Right to Obtain Information, is important for several reasons. First, Ashal claims that it is the first politically substantive piece of legislation to be fully initiated by the Parliament. While the Parliament in Yemen is technically the supreme legislative body, in practice the

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256 This accusation was made by several GPC members and two independent journalists in discussions with the author during the summer of 2007.
257 Interview by the author with a Yemeni parliamentary expert, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
258 Hamid al-Ahmar initiated a piece of legislation restricting smoking and the Agricultural Committee has proposed legislation dealing with gat, but Ali claims that the Freedom of Information Act is the first politically substantive piece of legislation to be fully initiated by the Parliament. Ali Ashal, interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, July 29, 2007.
majority of laws originate in the executive branch and are sent to Parliament for a stamp of approval. In addition to developing Parliament’s legislative prerogatives, if passed, the legislation could provide another avenue for the independent press and reformers in Parliament to extend their watch-dog capacities. The dearth of reliable data covering government activities and financial transactions in Yemen is a notorious obstacle to transparency and accountability. As Sakhir explains, “If we ask many MPs and Consultative Council Members [Shoura Council Members] about the oil production statistics, we find contradictory figures….Sometimes we find that the Central Bank bulletins report certain figures, while the Ministry of Oil and Minerals come up with different figures for the same statistic.”259

Arguably, YemenPAC’s most credible threat to the organization of power around the President comes through its ability to shape and influence coalitional dynamics. Currently, YemenPAC is at the center of a complex game of political bargaining in which powerful young reformers in the GPC align with YemenPAC against status quo players in their party. As mentioned earlier, there is a split within the GPC parliamentary caucus between the old guard and the new generation. The split is largely related to an internal party battle for access and privilege. Many in the new generation are deeply tied to networks of patronage, yet recently they have taken some actions to formalize parliamentary bylaws and strengthen the majlis relative to the executive branch. Whether they are doing this as a ploy to oust the old guard or out of a genuine desire to alter the

259 Almiddad Mojalli, “Yemeni citizens should have access to information, say MPs,” Yemen Times, Issue: 1166, Vol. 16, 23 June 2008.
nature of authority, or a little of both, is a matter of debate. Either way, they are inconsistent reformers who have bounded agendas for democratic reform.

Understanding this dynamic, members of YemenPAC have been able to capitalize on divisions inside the GPC to further their anti-corruption agenda. On issues of exposing government corruption, reforming parliamentary bylaws, and supporting Parliament’s right to question ministers, YemenPAC has won the support of powerful young sheikhs such as Muhammad al-Qadi, Hussein al-Ahmar, and Yasser al-Awadi. Again, these men control a group of approximately 50-60 reformers in the GPC bloc. If it were not for these votes, Sakhir’s efforts to uncover corruption in Block 53 would have been stifled, as would his continued efforts to hold ministers accountable, regulate government spending, and strengthen parliamentary bylaws. In addition to working with this group, Sakhir also notes that YemenPAC is able to take advantage of instances where the GPC is not well organized. Sometimes he says, “The GPC gets sleepy and they forget to send directives to MPs on how to vote. When this happens, YemenPAC can take advantage of the situation. But, on really important votes, the leadership is usually not sleepy.”

It remains to be seen if this politically expedient cooperation between Sakhir and the reformists in the GPC develops into a more powerful coalition for reform, or whether the alliance will weaken once the battle between the reformers and the status quo is resolved. The 2009 parliamentary elections will certainly be a turning point for the nascent coalition. Sakhir will undoubtedly face stiff competition for his parliamentary seat, as will other “trouble-makers” in the GPC. For now, YemenPAC continues to foster

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a reform dynamic that most likely extends beyond the immediate goals of tactical coalition partners inside the GPC.

As the above section demonstrates, Sakhir has crossed red lines on numerous occasions. The clearest instances of defection in his political career are: his actions in uncovering the corruption in Oil Block 53; his bid to enter the Presidium; his subsequent resignation from the GPC; and finally, his activities as the President of YemenPAC. Evidence that Sakhir has made a credible threat to the organization of power around the President is abundant. Sakhir’s harassment in the state controlled press and his exclusion from the Parliamentary Presidium is evidence that the regime views him as a political threat. As further evidence, the Yemeni government has repeatedly denied YemenPAC’s formal request to obtain status as an official NGO.261 This should be a routine procedure, especially since the organization is already internationally recognized as a chapter of GOPAC. Finally, recent presidential support for transforming the Shoura Council into a second legislative branch may be connected to gains in parliamentary activism. Currently the Shoura Council is appointed by the President and is limited to an advisory role. This may soon change if the President and his supporters in the Shoura Council are successful in plans to transform the Council into a partially elected body with legislative authorities. Ostensibly this would be done to provide further checks and balances in Yemen’s “democratic” system, and to add an element of experience to the notoriously youthful Parliament. In practice, it will more likely be used to curtail parliamentary authority and further secure executive dominance.

261 Interview by the author with a member of YemenPAC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
While Parliament remains a subservient institution, governed by presidential prerogatives rather than representational mandates, Sakhir and his partners have achieved limited success in formalizing and strengthening parliamentary authority. He and his supporters have institutionalized the fight against government corruption and the struggle to strengthen Parliament in the organization known as YemenPAC. This group has successfully capitalized on and even augmented the split between reformers and status quo players in the GPC bloc. As an organization, YemenPAC is quickly becoming an independent locus of power and political bargaining. Thus far, members of YemenPAC have successfully utilized the Parliament as a platform to uncover and in some cases thwart grand corruption. They have also begun to fortify and institutionalize Parliament’s oversight capacity by questioning ministers. In sum, while a great deal remains to be done to strengthen the authority of Parliament, Sakhir’s case confirms that defection can strengthen formal democratic institutions relative to informal patronage arrangements.

*The Narrative in Theoretical Context*

In combination Sakhir’s independent variable values create strong incentives for loyalty, yet as the above narrative demonstrates, he defects. For this reason, he constitutes a deviant case within the typological space that demands further explanation. Briefly, his values on the five independent variables are the following:
Sakhir al-Wajih’s Independent Variable Values

(See Appendix C for Coding Details)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case #26</th>
<th>IV #1: Type of Patronage Inclusion</th>
<th>IV #2 Degree of Patronage Inclusion</th>
<th>IV #3 Type of Elite</th>
<th>IV #4 Life-cycle Measurement: Risk Taker or Risk Averse</th>
<th>IV #5 Ease of Defection Index: 0=Incapable, 3=Very Capable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sakhir al-Wajih</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Included</td>
<td>Tribal</td>
<td>Risk Averse</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interaction of the variables above should produce loyalty. Three of the independent variable values: tribal elite, risk averse, and ease of defection zero, are hypothesized to provide strong independent incentives for loyalty. Sakhir’s values on independent variable one (type of patronage) and two (degree of inclusion) could produce incentives for defection under certain conditions. But, in combination with his other values, they should also create incentives for loyalty. More specifically, while this project hypothesizes that “deep inclusion” provides stronger incentives for loyalty than “inclusion,” (because the former creates greater vested interests in the existing distribution of power) the impact of these values is contingent upon their interaction with other factors, particularly the ease of defection measurement. As explained in Chapter Two, elites expect a certain range of patronage distribution. This range may change over time and it may be perceived differently by the President and his clients. It is not, however, arbitrary or un-patterned. Powerful tribal elites with a high value on the ease of defection variable generally expect to be included at the top levels of patronage distribution. If they do not receive this level of access, these elite actors are likely to
bargain for more substantive inclusion, either through defection or through informal techniques that are acceptable within the patronage paradigm.\textsuperscript{262} Alternatively, elites like Sakhir who cannot expect top level inclusion should be relatively more satisfied with an “included” status. Stated differently, a value of “included” when combined with an elite with a value of zero on the ease of defection index should provide the same incentives for loyalty as the combination of “deeply included” with an elite who has a three on the ease of defection index. Sakhir cannot expect “deep inclusion” in networks of patronage; therefore, what inclusion he does receive should provide strong incentives for loyalty.

The same logic can also apply to the type of patronage variable. Unlike Yasser al-Awadi, Sakhir is not a powerful tribal sheikh whose colleagues are regularly included in lucrative private sector patronage. Given his position, Sakhir’s access to political patronage should be within an acceptable zone of inclusion and should have produced loyalty. In sum, the combination of Sakhir’s five independent variables creates strong incentives for loyalty, and few for defection.

There is evidence to suggest that the interaction of these variables did provide incentives for loyalty. It was clear for example that their limited coalition building capacity gave Sakhir and Ali pause as they considered aggressively uncovering the corruption in Block 53. According to Ali, their “first fear was the danger that there would be no response from the GPC bloc in their favor.” While Sakhir and Ali knew that they could depend on each other, they needed a larger coalition to support their efforts if they were to succeed. They also knew that a coalition could shield them from potential

\textsuperscript{262} Refer to Chapter Two for a discussion of defection and acceptable bargaining behavior within the patronage paradigm.
retribution. Ali compares their decision to “putting your finger in a beehive. Ultimately, [he says] they were afraid that the GPC would blacklist them in Parliament.” When asked to explain blacklisting, the two reformers mentioned several components. First, the GPC leadership could have stopped service projects in their constituencies. Both Sakhir and Ali come from rural areas that desperately need development projects. They knew that if the GPC decided to blacklist them, they would lose projects in their areas and subsequently the support of their constituents. Secondly, they claimed that “those in power” could hint to local authorities in their constituencies that they should not cooperate with Sakhir and Ali. Others in their tribal areas could be ordered to work directly against them. Noncooperation from local officials would also harm their reputation, hinder the flow of services, and ultimately result in a loss of support among their constituencies. Thirdly, blacklisting could also result in the GPC leadership humiliating them or insulting them on the floor of Parliament. Finally, blacklisting would exclude them from influential committee appointments and from acquiring leadership roles on these committees.264 In the end, neither Sakhir nor Ali was blacklisted by the GPC because they won the critical support of insiders such as Muhammad al-Qadi, Yasser al-Awadi, and Hussein al-Ahmar. In this case, and in other instances of defection, Sakhir was keenly aware of the risks associated with his political decisions.

Despite strong incentives against defection, Sakhir chose to cross red lines. This unexpected outcome can be explained by a combination of a critical left out variable and to some degree a measurement error. Of these two factors, the left out variable of

belief/conviction is the most important. While material incentive structures go far in explaining the actions of Yemeni elites, in some cases, belief/conviction may override mundane considerations. In this regard, Sakhir is indeed an outlier. He is an unusual first mover- the individual who fires the first shot in a revolution without the assurance that others will follow. Sakhir’s unique dedication to democratization and fighting corruption are confirmed by his actions, his rhetoric, and by his Yemeni colleagues. As the previous section demonstrates, Sakhir crossed red lines on numerous occasions in Parliament. In challenging the status quo, he risked political blacklisting, media smears, and embarrassment to strengthen the formal political arena. In light of his bold, and some would say reckless actions, Yemenis of all political stripes are convinced of his genuine and unique commitment to reform. A powerful member of the reformist trend in the GPC claims that, “Sakhir Al-Wajih is the best MP in Parliament. He is honest and truly dedicated to fighting corruption. He is very brave.” He goes further to complement Ali saying that “Ali Ashal is also very good. These two are the best in Parliament, even better than me.”

Respect for Sakhir extends beyond the reformist trend in the GPC. An older statesman and prominent member of the JMP opposition complements Sakhir’s actions in Parliament and particularly his efforts to enter the Presidium. According to him, Sakhir’s bid to win a position in the Presidium is evidence that the GPC’s leadership is opposed to democratic change. Sakhir is a real reformer and therefore the party cannot accept him in a leadership position. Even status quo members of the GPC who are critical of YemenPAC attest to Sakhir’s unique sincerity. One such member says that he is not

265 Interview by the author with a prominent GPC sheikh, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2007.
266 Interview by the author with a leader in the JMP opposition, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
convinced that all of YemenPAC members are really committed to fighting corruption. But there are a few, like Sakhir, who are truly dedicated. 267 A GPC member and former MP, summarizes the prevailing hope in Sakhir and Ali’s continued struggle in this way: “If we cannot believe that they are not corrupt, there is no hope in the country. They are a small flame and only a small flame of hope. At least we have something.” 268

Sakhir’s unusually strong belief in the need for political reform was also evident in conversations with the author. While many in the GPC express a desire for transparency, accountability, and institutionalization, these individuals generally preface their discussion with praise of the President or a list of excuses as to why democratic developments have been slow in coming. Sakhir on the other hand is more direct and aggressive in his critiques. He expressed none of the cautious reserve of Muhammad Abu Luhom, or the excuses typical of those who have one foot on the side of formalization and one foot on the side of the status quo. When asked to discuss the role of democratic institutions in Yemen, Sakhir argues that “the country is characterized by false democracy and what really exists is individual rule.” He then goes on to compare the GPC to a priest who commits all sins during the week and then comes to church on Sunday to lead the service in front of God. 269 In other words, while party rhetoric may call for fighting corruption, it is insincere. In his view, change from within the party is unlikely. There are many “so called reformers” in the GPC, but they are “reformers in the mafraj [meaning in words], not in reality.” If he thought there were bold reformers inside

267 Interview by the author with a GPC Member of Parliament, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
268 Discussion with a member of the GPC, Beirut, Lebanon, June 2008.
269 Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.
the party he says that he would have stayed and tried to fight from within. While there are some reform-minded members, they do not want to pay the price for challenging the system.²⁷⁰ Like Yasser in his al-shaari‘ interview, Sakhir is highly critical of the President’s personal control over the party. In fact, one of his favorite summary statements on Yemeni politics is: “The GPC is the party of the ruler, not the ruling party.”²⁷¹

Sakhir’s bold actions and his clear rhetoric, coupled with the unusually consistent evaluation from various Yemeni politicians, suggest that in his case conviction and belief trumped material incentive structures. However, a measurement error may also partially explain the unexpected outcome. In particular, it should be noted that Sakhir’s categorization as a tribal elite is somewhat problematic. Most other tribal elites in this study hail from prominent tribal lineages. Their fathers, grandfathers, and uncles are, or were, sheikhs in their respective tribes. As privileged insiders in the informal system of tribally based patronage politics, these individuals have disincentives to radically formalize political arrangements. Sakhir however is not a tribal sheikh and as such the connection between a tribal identity and maintaining informal kinship networks is less clear. Based on conversations with Sakhir and others who know him well, he is not dependent on tribal lineage for his elite position. His elite status is more the product of personal popularity in his district and his ability to rally colleagues in the Parliament.

While most elite insiders fit primarily into one of the four elite categories identified in this study, Sakhir’s case points to the need for a possible fifth category which covers

²⁷¹ Sakhir al-Wajih, Interview by the author, Sana‘a, Yemen, October 1, 2006.
those who are new political elites based on personal popularity or in other cases those who have unique party affiliation. 272

In addition to refining hypotheses regarding when elites defect, Sakhir’s case provides useful insights into the impact of defection on the existing mode of autocracy. This study is not designed to provide definitive conclusions as to when defection alters or sustains neopatrimonial autocracy. However, Sakhir’s story uncovers one set of conditions in which defection facilitates both the formalization and democratization of the political arena. 273 It seems that the longevity and success of Sakhir’s defection is a product of the combination and interaction of three factors: 1) strong beliefs/personal convictions, 2) a specific set of domestic coalitional alliances (which combines a small group of dedicated reformers and a fractured ruling coalition), and 3) targeted international support.

As stated earlier, Sakhir’s defection seems to be a product of belief/conviction rather than a strategic maneuver to gain a better position in patronage networks. His personal belief in the need for political reform largely explains his unlikely decision to defect, and it also plays a role in explaining the duration of his defection. In particular, his beliefs have likely shielded him from the temptation of using his new status as a successful defector to bargain for more lucrative patronage inclusion. Sakhir’s personal belief/conviction, however, cannot fully explain his limited success in strengthening

272 Had this project included members of the Nasserite party, the Yemeni Socialist Party, or the Baath party, many of these individuals would have also defied the four categories of “elite identity.”

273 As Chapter One notes, the formalization of politics is not always associated with greater democratic accountability. Any formalization of the political sphere that infringes on the personalized authority of the executive represents a break with the status quo in neopatrimonial regimes. However, formalization could theoretically create a more institutionalized form of autocracy. In Sakir’s case, defection has made small, but tangible gains for democratization.
parliamentary institutions. Sakhir could not have achieved success alone. Once he and Ali had achieved a degree of success in uncovering corruption in Block 53, they gradually built a domestic support base inside the Parliament known as YemenPAC. This small but dedicated coalition has supported and augmented Sakhir’s defection in numerous ways. First, in a limited capacity it provides political cover for Sakhir and his colleagues as they fight corruption and institutionalize the authority of Parliament. It is more difficult to successfully discredit and attack a group of respected reformers than it is to silence a single outlier. Moreover, although it does not have domestic recognition as an official NGO, YemenPAC is internationally recognized as part of GOPAC, and it receives support from both NDI as well as the Dutch government. While these associations cannot guarantee protection from political blacklisting, they do provide a deterrent to more aggressive forms of harassment.

More importantly, YemenPAC has institutionalized and broadened the reach of Sakhir’s initial reform agenda. It has provided a forum where like-minded MPs can coordinate and strategize their efforts. Further, it has created an identifiable locus of coalition building which has facilitated a temporary alliance with the new generation in the GPC on important reform initiatives. Again, YemenPAC’s efforts to institutionalize Parliament are fought in the context of intense inter-regime competition for access to patronage within the GPC. Political entrepreneurs in Parliament often seek to co-opt YemenPAC and to use the group as leverage in their struggle against the status quo in the party. The split between reformers and status quo players within the GPC played a

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274 Currently direct financial assistance is limited to the Dutch Government.
critical role in sustaining and strengthening Sakhir’s effort to reform Parliament. Without the 50-60 reformist GPC votes, Sakhir’s effort to uncover corruption scandals, change the bylaws of Parliament, and encourage oversight, would have certainly been slowed and more than likely would have failed.

Finally, international assistance has also played a small, but important role in facilitating Sakhir’s success. International NGOs such as NDI cannot take credit for facilitating Sakhir’s first move to defection, but these groups did provide financial support and training for Sakhir and his colleagues as they established YemenPAC. YemenPAC is now an important locus of political competition and it has made great strides in strengthening the authority of Parliament as a formal political institution. While the long term impact of YemenPAC remains to be seen, it provides a useful example of an avenue through which the international community can support and prolong successful domestic initiatives.

In conclusion, Sakhir al-Wajih constitutes a theoretically deviant, yet promising case of defection. While material incentives structures are generally a powerful indicator of when elites in Yemen’s neopatrimonial system risk defection, in Sakhir’s case, belief/conviction trumped material incentives. This chapter has argued that Sakhir’s unique conviction played a central role in both his move to defection and in his limited success in combating corruption and formalizing Parliament. Based on his story, it seems that the combination of: 1) a dedicated reformer, 2) a specific set of domestic coalitional alliances (which combines a small group of dedicated reformers and a fractured ruling
coalition), and 3) strategically placed international support, produces a fruitful environment for the formalization and democratization of politics.
CHAPTER V: A POLITICALLY PROMINENT CASE OF DEFECTION

In the summer of 2006, a young businessman turned politician, Sheikh Hamid bin Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, stood before a massive tribal gathering in his home governorate of Amran and called for the electoral defeat of President Saleh. A powerful orator, Hamid lamented the spread of oppression and poverty under the Saleh regime. He went further to claim that nothing had changed since Yemen’s historic Republican Revolution and that the country was in desperate need of new direction and leadership. As such, he urged hundreds of thousands of his fellow tribesmen to reject Saleh and support the opposition candidate, Faisal Bin Shamlan.275

The tribal rally in Amran was a turning point in the 2006 elections. Following the event, competition intensified and for a brief moment the President’s electoral support in the tribal heartland seemed uncertain. Soon however, Hamid’s father Abdullah, the late sheikh of sheikhs of the Hashid confederation and the former head of Islah, intervened to calm the political storm. Abdullah announced his personal support the President, ensuring Saleh would maintain his tribal base of support in Hashid. Hamid, on the other hand, remained loyal to the opposition for the duration of the election. By placing his full political, tribal, and financial weight behind the opposition candidate, Hamid crossed a clear red line for the use of electoral institutions. His actions broke with long established

patterns of political engagement between the Ahmars and Saleh and ushered in a new era of political competition.

This chapter will examine Hamid’s move to defection in the 2006 elections and the implications of his defection on the political arena. For the purposes of this project, his defection is important for two main reasons. First, it is a politically prominent case that is critical for understanding the future dynamics of Yemeni politics. Currently, Hamid is at the center of a brewing struggle over economic and political resources in the approaching post-Saleh era. As such, understanding the motivations behind his defection provides insights into current bargaining dynamics and into the survival of neopatrimonial politics after Saleh. Secondly, Hamid’s narrative allows for further refinement of the typological space. While previous chapters dealt with defection from networks of political patronage, Hamid’s story addresses one pathway of defection associated with private sector patronage. Like the previous chapters, this chapter will proceed by first telling the story of Hamid’s move to defection. The second section will then place the narrative in theoretical context.

A Narrative of Defection

Of the elites examined in this study, Hamid al-Ahmar is the most powerful and politically influential player. Like Yasser and Muhammad, Hamid is embedded in a long, rich tradition of leadership, and his place in contemporary politics is shaped by his tribal legacy. Hamid was born in 1968 into one of Yemen’s most powerful political families, Bayt al-Ahmar. Bayt al-Ahmar are the preeminent sheikhs of the Hashid tribal
confederation. Hamid is named after his paternal uncle, Hamid bin Hussein al-Ahmar, who (along with his father Hussein bin Nasir) was brutally executed by Imam Ahmed in 1960. Hamid’s father, Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, is a legendary player in Yemen’s political arena. After the execution of his father and brother, Abdullah became a staunch opponent of the Imamate and eventually a hero of the Republican Revolution. Until his passing on December 29, 2007, Abdullah was the sheikh of sheikhs of the Hashid confederation. He was the President’s sheikh, and essentially ruled in coordination with Saleh beginning in 1978. Given Abdullah’s prominent place in the regime, the Ahmars occupied pinnacle positions in networks of domestic patronage. Further, they also enjoy international patronage from the Saudi Arabia.

Hamid is clearly a son of privilege. Yet he is far from a spoiled heir who is content to spend family wealth and enjoy political stature. From an early age, he prioritized education and set his sights on expanding the family’s commercial empire. As a young man he traveled to the United States during the summers where he lived with American families to learn English. Today Hamid speaks flawless American English, a skill which has undoubtedly served him well as a businessman. In the 1990s, he attended the University of Sana‘a and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics with honors.

After university, Hamid established his place as one of Yemen’s most successful young business tycoons. He inherited a substantial business from his father and

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277 While Saleh has tense relations with Saudi, the Ahmars have fostered amicable ties. It is widely known that Sheikh Abdullah received a large monthly stipend from the Saudi state, although estimates varied widely on the amount. He also received additional material benefits, including travel and medical expenses.
developed it into a vast commercial empire known as the Ahmar group. The Ahmar group was established in 1980 and is essentially a holding company for approximately twelve subsidiaries involved principally in trade, electricity and water, computer and communications systems, lifts, oil exploration, marketing, and services.\textsuperscript{279} The company has a wide reach into diverse sectors of the Yemeni economy and its activities include: representing international companies in Yemeni government and private sector tenders; importing military and air force equipment; crude oil and natural gas sales and exploration; mobile phone services; power generation; computer hardware and software sales; computer networking; international exhibition organization; importing food stuffs, medicines, building supplies and clothing; exports; tourism; banking; and international franchising.\textsuperscript{280}

As chairman of the Ahmar group, Hamid has actively expanded the family’s wealth and influence in the domestic economy. In 1998 he established the Ahmar Trading and Investment Company (AITCO), which now represents several prominent international brands, to include: Bally, Baskin Robins, Ecco, the Nature Shop, and KFC.\textsuperscript{281} He is also deeply involved in the airline business as the sole representative of Emirates Airlines in Yemen.\textsuperscript{282} In 2001, Hamid began his most famous business venture by establishing a GSM service provider, Sabafon. Sabafon is now Yemen’s largest GSM provider. Today the company uses more than five hundred satellite relay stations to


provide service to approximately 1.2 million subscribers.\textsuperscript{283} Hamid has also aggressively entered the banking sector. He is the Deputy Chairman of one of Yemen’s largest banks, the Saba’a Islamic Bank. In addition to all this, he has expanded the Ahmar group’s reach into the oil and gas sectors.\textsuperscript{284}

Hamid’s business success is partially a product of hard work and ambition, and partially the result of his privileged position in Yemen’s neopatrimonial system. Almost universally, members of Yemen’s traditional merchant class are critical of Hamid’s success. These merchants correctly point out that his initial success as a businessman was directly related to his father’s political/tribal stature. Indeed, Hamid has benefited from direct private sector patronage as well as a business climate that rewards proximity to the President and raw power.

From its inception, the Ahmar group has benefited from direct private sector patronage. The group was formed in the 1980s at a time when the Yemeni government controlled import licenses. During that time, the government awarded lucrative import licenses to powerful tribal families, like the Ahmars. Even after the import licensing regime ended, private sector patronage continued but in different forms. Today private sector patronage can include privileged access to: oil and gas concessions, government tenders, state land, informal tax exemptions, government licenses, or semi-monopolistic status in certain sectors. Patronage could also include the regime supporting, or at least


\textsuperscript{284} Details of his involvement in the oil and gas sector will be discussed below.
tacitly approving, illegal business practices such as smuggling or confiscating assets (particularly land).

Hamid has certainly received many of the benefits listed above. In particular, he has benefited from privileged access to the lucrative oil and gas sectors (which will be discussed in detail below). While difficult to document, it is also likely that his subsidiary companies dealing in construction, electricity, and imports have benefited from preferential access to government tenders and relatively smooth interactions with the Yemeni bureaucracy and licensing agencies. As evidence, the Ahmar group has a history of business interactions with the Yemeni armed services. The group’s company profile reports that one of their subsidiaries, Al-Salam Establishment for Trading and General Agencies, has a Military Department that specializes in supplying the armed services with equipment. In addition, their commodities department sells various foodstuffs to the government, army, and police. Business connections with the armed services in Yemen are a secretive, highly protected portion of the domestic economy. Only those with close ties to the President and his family are allowed to enter this sector. In addition to the benefits listed above, in 2001 Hamid was permitted to enter the lucrative telecommunications market. At that time, there were only two service providers allowed to operate in the Yemen’s tightly controlled telecommunications market. Acquiring the license to establish Sabafon required close ties to the President and to top government officials. Finally, Hamid also received private sector patronage in the form of illegal land acquisitions. He, along with many powerful northern sheikhs, was allowed to confiscate

large swaths of land following the civil war. As evidence, the anthropologist Paul Dresch reports that in 1994, “a son of perhaps the most famous of northern shaykhs asserted rights over property on the Aden waterfront… in the years to follow; there were endless cases of those with good connections seizing property.”

In addition to direct patronage distribution, it is also important to note that Hamid has benefited in less direct ways from the system of tribally based patronage politics. In an environment where guns and proximity to the President protect private property, Hamid and other sheikhs have an advantage over the traditional merchant class. According to a prominent technocrat, Hamid is a good example of the new, tribal business class in the country. In his view, the difference between the new and old business class is that the former do not think they need state law to protect their interests. Hamid for example does not care whether state institutions are strong enough to protect his business. He is strong enough to do it himself. In fact, he expanded his political influence by extending the same protection to other, less powerful merchants. While this project will suggest that Hamid’s need for legal protection increased over time, and in response to his relationship with the President, in the beginning of his business career he was a clear benefactor of the informal patronage arrangement. His position as a sheikh allowed him to protect his own investments from domestic predators, including the corrupt Yemeni bureaucracy. It also allowed him to capitalize on his ability to extend protection to less powerful investors, both international and domestic. His ability to protect resources and ensure smooth interaction with the Yemeni government

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286 Dresch, A History of Modern Yemen, 198.
287 Interview by the author with a prominent GPC technocrat, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2006.
undoubtedly facilitated his acquisition of international franchises and his partnership with international investors.

Before documenting how Hamid’s access to private sector patronage has decreased over time, it is important to briefly review his connection with the lucrative energy sector. Oil revenues are a central pillar supporting the regime. Although Yemen is a small oil producer when compared to its neighbors, oil revenues composed over seventy percent of the Yemeni government’s annual budget for 2007. Beyond financing the lion’s share of the national budget (to include the civil service and military salaries), oil revenues are a lucrative source of patronage for Yemen’s political elite. To the author’s knowledge, there are five main types of patronage associated with the oil and gas sector. First, privileged clients may obtain the right to sell the Yemeni government’s share of extracted crude on international markets. While Yemen is a net importer of diesel, the government exports a small amount of crude oil annually. Technically a subsidiary of the Ministry of Oil and Minerals (MOM), the Yemen Oil and Gas Corporation, is responsible for marketing and selling Yemeni crude. Unofficially, powerful domestic clients serve as middlemen between the government and international markets.

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289 In 2006 the Yemeni government estimated that its share of total crude oil exports totaled 63,599,248 million barrels (approximately 4.5 million barrels from this amount went directly to the Aden and Marib refineries for local consumption as opposed to export). From their share of extracted crude, the government reported earnings of 4,006,453,697 dollars in 2006. Ministry of Oil and Minerals Statistics Technical Committee, “Oil, Gas and Minerals Statistics: 2006, Annual Bulletin, Issue #6,” (Sana’a, Yemen: Ministry of Oil and Minerals, 2006), 33 and 37.

A second avenue of patronage involves domestic actors representing large international oil and gas firms interested in investing in Yemen. While MOM representatives officially deny the existence of domestic intermediaries, interview data, business wires, and even the Ahmar group’s business portfolio suggests otherwise.\footnote{The author visited the Ministry of Oil and Minerals on August 26, 2007. During the visit, the author attempted to acquire information on partnerships between domestic actors and international investors. The author also inquired about the role of local actors in the sale of the Yemeni government’s share of extracted crude. Representatives of MOM categorically denied the existence of domestic facilitators for international firms seeking to invest in the oil/gas sector. They also denied the role of domestic agents as buyers and sellers of Yemeni crude. The trip to the MOM was long, tedious, and unhelpful. The author was passed between at least twelve offices and three different buildings during the course of one day. Each time a question was asked, a MOM representative would claim that it could be answered by a different department or office.} To obtain exploration or extraction rights from the Yemeni government, international investors generally rely on local agents to navigate Yemen’s corrupt bureaucracy. Domestic agents use inside contacts, bribes, and threats to obtain access to concessions. Again in this case, local agents are extracting rents by acting as middlemen. In some cases, domestic actors have established shell companies, with only a phone number and an address, to obtain exploration and/or production rights. After obtaining legal rights to a block, the faux company then re-sells the rights to a legitimate investor. A domestic agent’s ability to acquire access to concessions is a product of their proximity to the President and to top government officials in MOM.

The third type of patronage surrounding the energy sector is budgetary in nature. Top clients may be allowed to buy rights to the Yemeni government’s oil/gas concessions at deeply reduced prices. Alternatively, as was the case with Oil Block 53, government officials may underreport the sale price of a concession and then pocket the difference between the actual price and the reported price. Underreporting is not limited to the sale
of oil and gas concessions. Parliament has accused the central government of intentionally underestimating profits from the sale of crude on the international market as well.\textsuperscript{292} Whatever particular accounting method is used, the common factor is that privileged clients are allowed to rob state coffers for personal gain. In addition to this budgetary corruption, it is also important to note that a fourth avenue of patronage includes all subsidiary services surrounding the oil and gas sector. For example, it is commonly known that Ali Mushin is involved in the transport of oil. Privileged clients are given access to every step in the exploration, extraction, refining, and exporting process.

Finally, the fifth type of patronage involves the illegal smuggling and sale of subsidized diesel. Yemen is currently a net importer of diesel, which is sold on the domestic market at a subsidized price. Clients who are lucky enough to be at the top of the patronage chain are permitted to purchase imported diesel at the subsidized domestic price only to re-sell it on the international market. This diesel is generally re-sold in the horn of Africa. Diesel smuggling is a lucrative form of corruption and is usually reserved for military personnel or a small group of merchants who control shipping.

To the author’s knowledge, Hamid is not involved in the latter type of corruption. He has however enjoyed privileged access to the energy sector through the other avenues explored above. Hamid has leveraged his tribal status and proximity to the President to partner with international firms interested in investing in Yemen’s oil and gas resources.

According to the Ahmar group’s business profile, they “represent international oil and gas companies and help them acquire blocks for oil exploration and share in the Yemen LNG project.” The profile goes further to claim success in this endeavor. In 1995, at the height of Hamid’s access to the energy sector, a business wire from Vancouver Canada confirms the Sheikh’s privileged access to government concessions. According to the wire, a Canadian Company, Dusty Mac Oil & Gas Ltd., sent a delegation to Yemen to review various oil and gas concessions made available by MOM. The delegation was sponsored by the Ahmar group, which was reportedly described by the Canadian Embassy as “the most powerful and influential group in Yemen.” While on the visit, the delegation was “promptly introduced to all senior members of the Ministry of Oil and Mineral Resources, including on numerous occasions the vice-minister (acting minister), the deputy minister and officials of the Ministry of Supply and Trade (Sana’a).” Prior to departing Yemen, the company made a formal offer, presented through the Ahmar group, to the Yemeni government to acquire a concession.

Probably the most notorious of Hamid’s dealings with the oil sector involves Oil Block S-1 in the governorate of Hadramawt. The Ahmar groups profile cites Block S-1 as an example of successfully representing an international firm in securing rights to the Yemen oil sector. The company profile claims the Ahmar group helped secure Block S-1 for an American company, Vintage Petroleum Inc. As part of the contract, an Ahmar

subsidiary, al-Salam, received a share of production. Behind this claim is a story of patronage and corruption that is now infamous in Parliament. According to a Yemeni oil consultant, in 1998 Hamid conspired with several members of MOM to acquire access to Block S-1. After Hamid won production rights to the concession from the Ministry, under suspect conditions and for an unreasonably low price, information about the production sharing agreement (PSA) was leaked to the Oil and Development Committee in Parliament. Several reliable parliamentarians familiar with the deal confirm that once the issue was raised in Parliament, Sheikh Abdullah and his sons directly interfered with Parliament’s oversight role. When the issue was under review by the Oil and Development Committee, Abdullah insisted on personally presiding over the Committee’s meetings. During deliberations, several members of the Committee objected to the contract, pointing out that the PSA did not protect the public interest. At one point during the negotiations, Sheikh Abdullah threatened to beat two of the objecting committee members with a cane if they continued their oppositional stance.

Under pressure from Abdullah, the PSA was approved by both the Committee and the Parliament, and eventually signed by the President. After acquiring legal rights to the concession, Hamid then sold the production rights to a Canadian Company, TransGloble. TransGloble then sold the majority of their shares to the company mentioned in the Ahmar group’s profile, Vintage Oil. In January 2006, the American Oil giant,


296 Interview by the author with a Yemeni oil consultant close to negotiations involving Block S1, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2007. This narrative was also confirmed by two GPC members of Parliament.
Occidental Petroleum Corporation (Oxy), acquired Vintage Oil.\(^{297}\) Currently Oxy is the sole operator of Block S1.\(^{298}\) Until now, Block S1 is a reminder for Yemenis of Hamid’s part in networks of grand corruption. In this case, he and his family were able to successfully strong-arm the Yemeni Parliament into approving their acquisition of state assets at a grossly reduced price and at a substantial loss for the Yemeni government.

As further evidence of Hamid’s access to the oil sector, it is widely known that he has received privileged rights to sell the Yemeni government’s share of crude on the international market. Again, the company’s profile claims that their oil department “represents oil companies and refiners and helps them to purchase Yemen Marib and Masila crude on term contracts and spot lots.” They also claim to have “the best purchase record in Yemen.”\(^{299}\) While it is difficult to know the exact percentage of Yemeni government crude Hamid has sold on the international market, especially since MOM denies that domestic agents play a role, several sources close to the oil industry confirm that Hamid has enjoyed access through unofficial channels. A domestic oil consultant and a high ranking member of the GPC both suggest that at one point Hamid had exclusive, or near exclusive, rights to sell government oil. They also estimate that this unofficial agreement ended sometime around 2002.\(^{300}\) A prominent Yemeni merchant also

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\(^{300}\) Interview by the author with a high ranking member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007. Interview by the author with a Yemeni oil consultant, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2007.
confirmed that in the past there “was an unofficial agreement between Hamid and the
government that he would receive a certain amount of the country’s oil for export.”

The oil and gas sector is the most lucrative source of patronage and rent in the
Yemeni economy. The President’s family, along with other prominent sheikhs and
technocrats, has grown wealthy through the practices mentioned above. Details
concerning the behind the scenes bargaining and bribes which determine access to this
sector are difficult to document. MOM is notorious for providing only superficial
information and for avoiding researchers, parliamentarians, and members of the press
seeking more sensitive data. The energy sector is simply too close to the nerve center of
the regime to allow transparent information. This being said, there is significant evidence
to confirm two important points. First, Hamid has received privileged access to the
energy sector in the past, and second, his access has been curtailed in recent years.

There is ample evidence to suggest that Hamid’s access to the oil sector, as well
as to other forms of private sector patronage, has been significantly reduced. According
to a high ranking member of the GPC, a change began to take place in 2001. This insider
claims that before 2001, Hamid received a great deal of patronage directly from Saleh. In
particular, he received rights to sell the Yemeni government’s oil on the international
market. He was also given the privilege of transporting arms and other goods for the
Yemeni military. As the President’s son and nephews grew up, however, Hamid (and the
Ahmar sons in general) began to lose access. Now Hamid’s access to Yemeni
government crude is limited. Further, Saleh will not allow him to buy exploration rights

301 Interview by the author with a Yemeni businessman, Sana’a, Yemen, fall 2006.
to new concessions. Finally, Hamid is also suffering because the President has given the “green light” for more competition in the mobile phone industry. In sum, “The President is strategically grooming his kin to run Yemen and he is marginalizing the Ahmars. The President’s main problem with Hamid is ambition. To gradually exclude him from power the President has taken away his access to oil and arms, and he is now threatening Hamid’s most lucrative business, the telecommunications industry. Now, Hamid is angry and bitter.”

The claim that Hamid faces reduced access to the energy sector is corroborated by numerous sources. A well-connected Yemeni oil consultant claims that 2002 was a turning point for Hamid, and for the relationship between the Ahmars and the Salehs writ large. He explains that the Yemeni elite with access to the government’s share of extracted crude make a profit by taking a percentage of each barrel they sell to international buyers. In 2002 these elites collectively decided to increase their profit share per barrel. With this new source of revenue available, “the President divided the new spoils between the usual suspects. The Ahmars at that time felt they were equal partners with the President. However, when the President divided the expanded pie, he gave shares to his son, Ahmed, as well as to his nephews. Previously the spoils had been divided between the President, the Ahmars, and Ali Muhsin only.” The details of this story are nearly impossible to verify. There was no written agreement between these actors, nor could the author acquire information about domestic agents from MOM.

302 Interview by the author with a high ranking member of the GPC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
303 Interview by the author with a Yemeni oil consultant, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2007.
However the general contours of the narrative are corroborated by three unrelated sources who also have intimate knowledge of the oil sector.

As additional evidence of Hamid’s attenuated access to the energy sector, over the last few years, he has been publicly excluded from several prominent oil deals. For example, in 2005 he was unable to secure access to Block 18 after the cancelation of the extension of Hunt Oil’s contract. A great deal of debate surrounds Hamid’s role in the Hunt contract cancelation. Hamid was an active proponent of canceling the extension of the contract. Then, once the contract was canceled, he proposed a plan by which the concession would be administered by a public company. Some argue that Hamid supported the cancelation so that he could secure a “crooked deal” that would give his oil subsidiary better access to Block 18. Others, even members of YemenPAC, argue that Hamid’s proposal was fair and beneficial for the domestic economy.\textsuperscript{304} Irrespective of the merits of his alternative proposal for Block 18, the important point is that his proposal was rejected by the President. In the late 1990s, the Ahmars could run roughshod over Parliament with the tacit support of the President. In 2005, Hamid’s proposal was summarily rejected. In addition to being denied access or influence in Block 18, Hamid was also estranged from corruption surrounding Oil Block 53. In the case of Block 53, he strongly supported Sakhir and Ali.\textsuperscript{305}

Hamid’s loss of private sector patronage is not limited to the energy sector. As mentioned earlier, his privileged status as an importer for the Yemeni army has been significantly reduced. Moreover, in 2006, the Yemeni government opened the door to

\textsuperscript{304} Interview with a member of YemenPAC, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
\textsuperscript{305} Email correspondence between the author and a member of YemenPAC, summer 2008.
more competition in the mobile phone industry by approving a fourth provider. Before there were only three mobile phone companies in the country: SpaceTel (now MTM), Yemen Mobile (government owned), and Sabafon. The government’s support for a new service provider could be further evidence that Hamid’s favored status is waning.

When the author interviewed Hamid in 2006, it was obvious that he felt under attack by the regime. In fact, he argued that he must strategically use his position as a sheikh to protect his legitimate business interests from an arbitrary state. As an example, Hamid spoke of an instance where he won a competitive tender for a government project. When the President heard that Hamid had won in open bidding, he contacted the Minister in charge and ordered him not to award the tender to Hamid. At this point, the Minister was in a difficult position. Caught between two powerful political players, he did not want to deny Hamid the tender without written instructions from the President. When the President did not provide the written instructions, the Minister awarded to the tender to Hamid. As a consequence, the unfortunate Minister was fired by the President. As the narrative indicates, Hamid feels threatened by the personalized nature of authority around the President. While he benefited from the informal paradigm of patronage politics in the past, more recently it has worked to his detriment.

Hamid’s gradual exclusion from private sector patronage precipitated more aggressive political activism. Before 2006, he played politics within the boundaries of the informal patronage paradigm. In fact, he was known primarily as a businessman, more interested in profits than politics. By 2006, however, Hamid had moved squarely into the

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306 Hamid al-Ahmar, Interview with the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 8, 2006.
political arena, establishing himself as a rising star in Yemen’s nascent political opposition. During the local council and presidential elections, he boldly redefined the parameters of political competition through his direct critique of the President and his relentless support of the opposition candidate, Faisal Bin Shamlan. His actions made a credible threat to alter the organization of power and therefore constitute crossing a red line for the use of electoral institutions.

Before documenting Hamid’s defection, it is useful to briefly outline the contours of his political career. Hamid is a member of the most powerful opposition party, Hizb al-Islah. He joined Islah in 1990 when the party was first formed, but has only recently taken a leadership role.\(^{307}\) In fact, Hamid’s original association with Islah seems to be a product of his father’s political position rather than a prior ideological affiliation with the Muslim Brothers. A Muslim Brother and member of Islah described Hamid in this way: “Hamid is a first a tribesman, secondly a businessman, and thirdly a member of Islah. Like most tribesmen, he considers himself to be religious, but this type of religiosity is different than that of the Brothers.”\(^{308}\)

Hamid entered national politics in 1993 when he won a seat in Yemen’s first unified parliamentary elections. Since then, he has won in each subsequent election (1997 and 2003). He is an Islah parliamentarian, but his election is based on tribal, not party affiliation. The Ahmars are the preeminent sheikhs of Amran and are elected based on tribal status. In fact, before Abdullah’s death, the family held a total four seats in Parliament. Abdullah and Hamid represented Islah, while Hussein and Sadik represented

\(^{307}\) Hamid was appointed to the Islah’s Shoura Council following the 2006 elections.
\(^{308}\) Interview by the author with a member of Islah, Sana’a, Yemen, October 2006.
the GPC. In practice their party affiliation has little to do with ideology and more to do with forming inroads into the two main political parties in the country: Islah and the GPC.

Until recently, Hamid has perpetuated the informal system of tribal politics. In the Parliament, he has never played a leading role in fighting grand corruption, nor has he taken bold steps to strengthen Parliament relative to the executive. In fact, as the story of Block S-1 confirms, he has at times used his family’s position to run roughshod over parliamentary institutions for personal gain. A well respected parliamentary expert and member of the GPC believes Hamid is an obstacle to reform inside the majlis. He goes on to say that Hamid has a hand in the oil industry and that at one point he “actually took a concession for himself [reference to Block S-1].” According to this expert, “Hamid sometimes supports reform measures, but his positions are dependent upon his financial and political needs at the time.”

Despite Hamid’s recent support for YemenPAC, and their anti-corruption agenda in Parliament, his past actions have tainted his credibility and created skepticism among his fellow MPs.

In addition to his less than exemplary role in Parliament, Hamid and his family also have a history of interfering in free and fair elections. In the 1993 parliamentary elections, Hamid actually stole ballots boxes at gunpoint in the governorate of Hajjah. Even in the most recent parliamentary elections, his family brazenly violated electoral transparency. In the parliamentary elections of 2003, one of Hamid’s brothers was in a tight race with an Islah candidate. Instead of allowing the elections to proceed normally,

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309 Interview by the author with a GPC parliamentary expert, Sana’a, Yemen, June 2007.
310 Dresch, A History of Modern Yemen, 194.
his brother switched to a less competitive electoral district only one day before Election Day. To the author’s knowledge, Hamid was not directly involved in this maneuver. However, he did not publicly object. As such, the incident is an indication of his and his family’s history of fickle commitment to transparent, free elections.

As the examples above confirm, Hamid has not always been a defector. In fact, he has actively perpetuated the informal system of patronage politics and attenuated formal institutions when it served his interests. Yet, as he was progressively excluded from lucrative private sector access, his political stance began to change. When asked to reflect upon his political career, Hamid says that while he became a member of Islah in 1990, he “started thinking about the political situation in Yemen more seriously around 2001 or 2002.” Interestingly, journalists, political analysts, and politicians suggest that at the same time, a rift began to develop between the Ahmars and the Saleh. As discussed earlier, the President began to curtail the Ahmar family’s access to patronage. Concomitantly, Saleh began to promote his son and nephews in the armed forces. While Saleh and Abdullah had ruled in coordination in the past, it seemed that Saleh was preparing the political playing field for his family in the next iteration of leadership.

As this dynamic became evident, Hamid’s actions also underwent a transformation. An Islah MP notes that while Hamid does not take a leadership role in the Parliament, in recent years he has voted on the side of reform. The MP goes further to explain that “currently Hamid’s interests are in line with the institutionalization of

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311 Interview by the author with a prominent Yemeni journalist, Sana’a, Yemen, August 2007. This story was also confirmed by an Islahi politician as well as two GPC partisans.
312 Hamid al-Ahmar, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 2, 2006.
Parliament.” In fact, he says, Hamid has progressively taken a more active role in supporting reformers in the Oil and Development Committee. Given the activism of this Committee, the status quo leadership in the GPC has purposefully appointed regime loyalists to counteract the impact of reformers. When reformers feel pressure from these status quo forces, Hamid “can step in to set things straight.” He is “a balance to regime loyalist like Muhammad Najih Shayif in the Committee.”  

Hamid has also supported YemenPAC on several critical anti-corruption votes, including Block 53 and Hunt. Further, he worked with the reformers in a failed attempt to prevent the sale of Yemen’s natural gas without the required approval of Parliament. While Hamid benefited from networks of patronage and corruption in the past, as he was excluded from these networks, he changed his political tune and began to support an anti-corruption agenda.

The real turning point in Hamid’s political career, and the moment that marks his defection, occurred in 2006. During the campaign for the 2006 presidential and local council elections, Hamid crossed a clear red line for the use of formal electoral institutions by aggressively placing his full political and financial weight behind the defeat of President Saleh and the victory of the JMP opposition candidate, Faisal Bin Shamlan. As discussed in Chapter Two, elections are an accepted part of the political landscape, but they are not an avenue for challenging executive authority. The 2006 elections were unique in Yemen’s history in that for the first time the opposition fielded a viable opposition candidate. Yet from the beginning of the electoral cycle, the President and his close supporters encouraged the opposition to nominate and support a JMP candidate.

313 Interview by the author with an MP from Islah, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
candidate. In other words, a degree of competition was acceptable and even encouraged
by the Saleh regime. But, the regime tolerated only bounded opposition. Those members
of the opposition who verbally supported Shamlan (without personally attacking the
President), who went to Shamlan rallies, and who spoke to the press in favor of free and
fair elections were all within the boundaries of acceptable behavior. Personally attacking
the President for the ills of the country, and taking actions that could realistically lead to
Shamlan’s victory and the President’s defeat, were well outside the boundaries of
permissible political behavior.

Hamid understood these red lines, yet he deliberately chose to cross them. While
the leadership of Islah remained within the boundaries of acceptable behavior, he
aggressively broke rhetorical boundaries by attacking the President for lack of democratic
and economic progress in the country. He also crossed a red line by placing his full
financial and political influence behind Shamlan’s victory. During the election campaign,
Hamid traveled throughout the country with Shamlan criticizing the President and urging
Yemenis to vote against Saleh. As the election approached, Hamid was fond of calling
for a “popular revolution” to alter the political course of the country. In interviews with
the press, at political rallies, and in gat chews, he claimed that the regime’s neglect of
political and economic development left Yemeni citizens with no choice but
revolution.315 According to Hamid, at a critical point in the country’s history, Yemen
lacked visionary leadership and was in need of radical change.316

315 Yemen Times Staff, “Al-Ahmar rejects JMP’s possible nomination of Saleh,” Yemen Times, May 25-28,
Hamid’s call for a popular revolution was an explosive and symbolic element in his anti-regime rhetoric. As mentioned earlier, Hamid’s father was a hero of the Republican Revolution and he is named after his uncle, who was executed by the Imam. By using the term “popular revolution,” Hamid made reference to his family’s historic role in the first Revolution, and hinted that he was prepared to play a similar part in Yemen’s future. Moreover, by claiming that nothing had changed since the Revolution, Hamid directly attacked a critical component of Saleh’s legitimacy formula. While Saleh’s rule is largely based on a combination of material incentives and fear, what little effort is made to legitimize his rule centers around a nationalist narrative that emphasizes his role as a son of the Revolution. In accusing Saleh of failing to uphold the ideals of economic progress and development enshrined in that Revolution, Hamid struck at a closely guarded political nerve.

Hamid’s fiery rhetoric drew national attention and energized the JMP base. It also infuriated Saleh. As the competition began to escalate, Saleh showed signs of public frustration and anger. He regularly labeled the opposition as “separatists” or “dissidents” in the Yemeni press. In a clear reference to Hamid, he also accused the JMP leadership of “planning to control the Ministry of Oil and Minerals and petroleum companies, as well as the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology.” He went on to describe JMP leaders as “symbols of corruption.”

317 According to a presidential advisor,

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Saleh was “extremely angry with Hamid,” and as punishment the President promised to keep Hamid’s finances restricted.\footnote{Interview by the author with an advisor to the President, Sana’a, Yemen, fall 2006.}

In addition to breaking rhetorical boundaries protecting the President, Hamid also crossed a red line by placing his full financial and political weight behind Saleh’s defeat. Hamid used his personal wealth to finance a large portion of Shamlan’s presidential campaign. Even more important, he leveraged his tribal influence in Hashid to challenge the President’s tribal base of support. In the summer of 2006, Hamid along with his brothers, gathered the Hashid tribe in a massive rally in support of the JMP opposition in their home governorate of Amran. The rally is estimated to have drawn approximately 300,000 tribesmen from both the Hashid and Bakil confederations, and it far outnumbered the President’s rally in the governorate.\footnote{Estimates of the number of people attending the rally were provided by the editor of the independent newspaper \textit{al-ayyam}, Bashra Bashrahill. Bashra Bashrahill, interview by the author, Aden, Yemen, September 12, 2006.} By organizing the rally in the Ahmar tribal area of Amran, the heart of Hashid, Hamid and his brothers threatened to fracture the President’s support within the confederation. As such, the rally posed a credible threat to the continuation of the Saleh regime. The Amran rally enraged the President and it immediately raised the stakes of the electoral game. Yemenis throughout the country spoke of the event in gat chews and many discussed the possibility that the electoral competition could turn violent.

The Amran rally solidified Hamid’s place as a political defector. In taking a bold stand behind Shamlan, he broke with past political patterns by directly challenging the President in the context of formal electoral institutions. One prominent Hashemite
politician noted that Hamid’s actions were especially groundbreaking from a historical perspective. Hamid’s forefathers had sworn that “An Imam [or leader of Yemen] will never come from the Bab al-Yemen,” meaning that a leader of Yemen will never come from the south. Hamid redefined the boundaries of competition and of appropriate alliances by supporting the candidacy of a southerner from the Hadramawt (Faisal Bin Shamlan) against a northern tribesman from Hashid (President Saleh).

While Hamid broke with traditional political patterns, his father quickly restored old alliances. In response to the tense political climate created by the rally in Amran, Sheikh Abdullah calmed the growing political storm by personally endorsing the President. In an interview given to the Army’s political mouthpiece, 26 September newspaper, Abdullah publicly endorsed the President and criticized his son’s outspoken opposition, calling much of the rhetoric “political propaganda.” While Abdullah claimed that his endorsement of the President was a personal decision that did not reflect the official view of other members of Islah, his comments were a devastating blow to the opposition. Yemenis are intimately aware of the long standing relationship between Abdullah and Saleh and of the close historical allegiances between the Muslim Brothers and the Saleh regime. While fielding an alternative presidential candidate was evidence of a genuine opposition, Abdullah’s endorsement of the President was a reminder of the lingering reality of powerful tribal and patronage based connections.

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320 Interview by the author with a Sayyid politician, Sana’a, Yemen, July 2007.
After Sheikh Abdullah’s comments in 26 September, gat chews in the capital were consumed by explaining the developing relations between the Ahmars and Saleh. Some proposed a genuine difference in opinion between Abdullah and his sons on the appropriate mode of engagement with Saleh. While Abdullah preferred to avoid direct conflict with the President, his sons advocated a more aggressive stance in claiming their share of the political and economic pie. Others argue that Abdullah was actually behind his sons’ aggressive political posture. In this line of thinking, Abdullah was sending a message to Saleh through his sons’ actions that the future of Yemen was not the sole prerogative of the Sanhan tribe.

The inter-family dynamics behind the public disagreement between father and son are opaque. More importantly, even after his father’s comments, Hamid continued to support Shamlan. In fact, he steadfastly stood behind Shamlan and the JMP for the duration of the competition. One prominent and well respected Yemeni reformer praised Hamid’s bold commitment to the JMP and the Shamlan candidacy. According him, “Hamid was a dedicated supporter [of Shamlan] and he burned bridges with the regime along the way.” Even those who were skeptical of Hamid’s long term intentions acknowledged his bold political stance. A prominent Yemeni merchant was hesitant to place too much faith in Hamid’s long term commitment to democratization and formalization. Yet he acknowledged that Hamid had taken a serious risk by supporting Shamlan. “He [Hamid] knew that Shamlan would not win the presidency, yet he went

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322 Interview by the author with a respected Yemeni reformer, Sana’a, Yemen, October 2006.
ahead and burned bridges that would in the end probably hurt him financially."\(^{323}\) While some were complimentary of Hamid’s new political role, and others critical of his motivations, he had crossed a clear red line for the use of formal political institutions. In doing so, he tested old alliances and opened the door for more intense political competition in the future.

Immediately following the elections, it seemed that Hamid would continue his strong support for the opposition. In early October 2006, the JMP held a conference at the Movenpick Hotel in Sana’a to discuss election outcomes and to thank Faisal Bin Shamlan for his historic service to the country. At the conference, Hamid delivered a powerful speech in which he criticized the regime for impeding free and fair elections and defended the opposition’s refusal to congratulate the President for his victory.\(^{324}\) Hamid presented a poignant list of electoral violations before concluding with a sarcastic thank you to the regime for allowing the opposition a chance to compete and to “make their dream of participation a reality.”\(^{325}\) The youthfulness and passion of Hamid’s speech were a stark contrast to the aging leadership of the JMP and to the elderly presidential candidate Bin Shamlan. Hamid appeared to be a new face of the party and a source of potential dynamism in the future. In the months that followed, he ascended the ranks of Islah with an appointment to the party’s Shoura Council. It seemed that he would now play a more active role in Islah and possibly the JMP as well.

\(^{323}\) Interview by the author with a member of the traditional merchant class, Sana’a, Yemen, fall 2006.
\(^{324}\) After the election results were announced, the JMP accepted Saleh’s victory as a “political reality;” however, they did not recognize the legitimacy of the electoral competition. In fact, Faisal bin Shamlan refused to congratulate Saleh on his victory.
\(^{325}\) JMP conference at the Movenpick Hotel, Attended by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 9, 2006.
Following his father’s passing in December 2007, however, Hamid’s aggressive political rhetoric softened and rumors spread that an informal agreement was reached between his father and Saleh in order to re-establish political and economic power-sharing between the two families. A well connected Yemeni journalist explains that a deal to mend the relationship between Abdullah’s sons and the President was reached shortly before the Sheikh’s death. According to the informal agreement, Hamid could continue to critique the government and the regime, but he must stop short of directly attacking the President. Instead of directly criticizing the President in the press, Hamid agreed to offer advice behind the scenes. In return, the President would not interfere in Hamid’s business affairs. According to the journalist, it is understood by all parties that the deal only applies for the period of time in which Saleh is in power. In his opinion, there will be intense competition over who rules Yemen after Saleh because Hamid and other powerful players will not accept Ahmed as president.\textsuperscript{326} While intense conflict will more than likely follow Saleh’s term as president, for now Hamid has softened his oppositional stance. He is no longer attacking the President in the press or discussing the topic of a “popular revolution.” Instead, he seems to have refocused his attention on his commercial empire and relinquished the reigns of political opposition. An exciting moment of defection seems to have only solidified old patterns of distribution and political privilege.

\textsuperscript{326} Interview by the author with a prominent Yemeni journalist, Washington, DC, USA, June 2008.
The combination of Hamid’s independent variables should produce strong incentives for defection and this is indeed the observable outcome. This section will proceed by first explaining how Hamid’s actions are consistent with the incentives created by his independent variable values. Hamid’s case lends support to many of the initial working hypotheses, and it provides an opportunity to explore in detail one pathway of defection associated with private sector patronage. A close examination of Hamid’s narrative also lends credibility to the usefulness of a left out variable identified in Chapter Three: tribal balancing. After utilizing Hamid’s narrative to test and refine the typological space, the section will conclude with a discussion of the consequences of Hamid’s defection on the organization of power in Yemen.

The interaction of private sector patronage, included, risk taker, and ease of defection three provide strong incentives for defection. In particular, it seems that the combination of included and ease of defection three plays a central role in explaining
Hamid’s aggressive posture towards the Saleh regime in 2006. Hamid has the highest possible value on the ease of defection index. Under no circumstances could he lose his elite status in Yemen. In fact, one could argue that as a son of Bayt al-Ahmar, his status is even more secure in the long term that that of the President or the President’s kin. Moreover, as a powerful tribesman and member of Islah, Hamid can depend on strong coalitional support for his political decisions. Finally, his family’s financial and political connections with Saudi Arabia guarantee an external source of patronage that is relatively unaffected by networks extending from President Saleh. Together, these factors make Hamid a particularly powerful player with a uniquely high risk tolerance. While there are still risks associated with defection for any player, relatively speaking, Hamid enters the political bargaining arena in a strong position.

As discussed in Chapter Two, elites expect a certain degree of patronage based on their social and political status. Given his values on the ease of defection index, as well as his family’s historical ties with Saleh, Hamid can expect the most lucrative and privileged forms of domestic patronage inclusion. As such, Hamid’s value of “included,” as opposed to “deeply included,” violates one of the guiding principles of the patronage system. In other words, a value of included is outside of an acceptable range of patronage inclusion for an elite of Hamid’s stature and influence. The President’s decision to gradually curtail Hamid’s private sector access was risky for Saleh (it almost divided the Hashid tribal confederation in the 2006 elections) and it was done in the context the future battle over who will inherit the spoils of Yemen. While it is technically outside the temporal boundaries of this study (which are 2003-2007), it is important to note that
Hamid would have been categorized as “deeply included” prior to 2001/2002. At that time, the President was careful to honor the range of acceptable patronage inclusion, and Hamid remained loyal. When Hamid’s status was down-graded, his degree of patronage inclusion fell below an acceptable range, and serious conflict ensued.

It is important to emphasize the interaction effect of a change in the degree of patronage inclusion with the ease of defection index. When elites experience shifts in their degree of patronage access, this insecurity creates incentives for seeking a more reliable patron, protecting assets by exiting the political system, or possibly defection by seeking formalization of the domestic political sphere. The choice between remaining loyalty, bargaining within the existing system, exit, or defection, however, depends on an elite’s ability to bargain and/or his ability to exit and survive outside of Yemen. Traditional merchants, for example, are more likely to exit the political arena when faced with unstable patronage inclusion. These elites are particularly vulnerable in the Yemeni context. Most could completely lose their domestic elite status upon defection (again the protection of assets depends on proximity to the President and raw force, not law) and they can rarely count on coalitional support. Under these circumstances, traditional merchants are more likely to exit by moving all or most of their assets abroad. This is the case with the traditional merchants examined in this study (Case Numbers 19, 23, and 24). Each of these individuals hedged their bets by remaining loyal to the informal patronage system domestically, and at the same time moving part or the majority of their assets abroad to more predictable markets.
In addition to the combination of included and ease of defection three, Hamid’s decision to defect is consistent with this values on the life-cycle measurement and the type of patronage variable. These two variables in particular seem to have shaped his incentives to defect by building formal democratic institutions as opposed to lobbying for access within the informal patronage paradigm. Hamid is a risk taker because he is young, his children are not directly dependent on domestic networks of patronage, and because he has extensive exposure to liberal democracies. These factors further buttress his risk tolerance and provide incentives for him to engage in new methods of political bargaining outside of the patronage paradigm. More specifically, Hamid has extensive personal exposure to formalized democratic systems and there is little doubt that he is comfortable manipulating these institutions for political gain. As mentioned before, he lived in the United States and has traveled extensively in Europe. He is knowledgeable of the challenges a more formalized system will present to his privileged status as a powerful sheikh. While he has benefited from and understands the old system, there is no fear of the unknown as Hamid contemplates a more formalized political economy. Like Yasser and Muhammad, he is aware of the threats a formalized system poses to his status, and he is prepared to manage these challenges.

Hamid’s age and the status of his children also buttress his willingness to utilize formal institutions. Hamid is part of an emerging new generation who are taking the reins of politics from the revolutionary generation. Like his cohorts, Hamid’s youth provides a fresh approach to politics, a willingness to use new methods, and a proclivity for risk. Finally, Hamid’s risk tolerance is bolstered by his children’s relative independence from
domestic networks of patronage. While his children are involved in the private sector, their education and skills insulate them from the devastating impact of potential exclusion. They could easily leave Yemen and move to Saudi Arabia, or any number of locations where the Ahmars have business connections. As these factors indicate, Hamid is squarely within the risk taker category of the life-cycle measurement variable. This variable tempers the status quo incentives produced by his status as a tribal elite. While he certainly is the benefactor of the informal system of tribally based distribution, he has the knowledge and confidence to manipulate a more formalized arena, and the youthful energy to take that risk.

Private sector patronage inclusion also played an important role in his decision to defect by strengthening formal democratic institutions. This project hypothesizes that private sector patronage may allow elites to develop the skills and resources necessary to guarantee their continued survival if networks were re-aligned, or possibly even attenuated. More specifically, private sector patronage rewards clients with large sums of cash. Cash is fungible, which in theory could allow an elite to buy their way into a different patronage arrangement or to compete in a more formalized political economy. Concomitantly, private sector engagement could produce competitive skills and knowledge that would allow the elite to survive, and even thrive, in a more formalized and transparent system. Lastly, private sector elites with capital investments in Yemen could develop an interest in a more predictable legal system capable of consistently protecting their assets.
Hamid’s case lends credibility to the proposed causal mechanisms linking private sector patronage with defection, while also suggesting a refinement. In an interview with the author in the fall of 2006, Hamid expressed frustration with the personalized nature of authority in Yemen and the negative impact it was beginning to have on his business dealings. He claimed that his tribal authority was protecting him from the arbitrary state. Had his tribal position been weak, he would not have been able to secure government tenders won in open bidding. He then went on to express his desire for a more formalized political and legal system. He claimed that while some would lose in the short term, in the long term, everyone would benefit from a more institutionalized environment. As further evidence, during the summer of 2006, he proposed a program for national reform that would have among other things prevented the President, the President’s sons, Abdullah, or Abdullah’s sons from running in the next presidential elections. Knowing that the President would certainly never accept this proposal, Hamid’s requests may have been a political ploy to improve his democratic credentials relative to Saleh. However, his proposal to exclude himself from the top political office could also be evidence of his confidence in buying his way into a different patronage system, or possibly his willingness to compete in a more formalized political arena.

Interviews with businessmen, politicians, and journalists lend credibility to the hypothesis that Hamid’s experience as a businessman created a genuine need for a more formalized political arena. According to a member of the JMP,

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327 Hamid al-Ahmar, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 8, 2006.
“Hamid is different from his father and from the current rulers because he actually has an interest in building state institutions. He is a businessman and someone who has been excluded from the inner political circle. Therefore, in order to protect his investments and in order to share in rule, he needs law and the development of a civil state. It is true that originally Hamid benefited from his personal connections and position in society. He became rich easily because of his father. At that point, he did not want institutions. However, the new situation has forced him to follow new steps. Now he wants law, while before he jumped over the law. He still uses the tribe to rally behind him, but they are rallying behind his cause of building law and the state. He will not go back to the tribal mentality he had before.”

A member of YemenPAC also believes that over time Hamid’s experience in the private sector has impacted his current political activism. According to him, Hamid’s business interests now give him a real interest in building institutions and seeking reform, which is very different from his family history. Both of these men stress the distinction between Hamid and his family, particularly his father. They suggest that Hamid’s experience with and investments in the private sector have created financial incentives for predictability and transparency.

The extent of Hamid’s dedication to a more formalized political arena is unknown. While most Yemeni political observers acknowledge that Hamid’s has a growing need for law to protect his investments, many doubt that he would actually continue his support for a more formalized political system if he were to once again be at the top of the political/economic patronage pyramid. One member of the traditional merchant class expressed both a desire to believe in Hamid, and hesitancy to do so in light of his family connections. According to the merchant, he and others in the traditional business class “really want to believe in him [Hamid], but they cannot because of his connections.” He goes further to explain that if Hamid had not been favored by the

329 Gat Chew with a member of the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), Sana’a, Yemen, October 2006.
330 Gat Chew with a member of YemenPAC, Sana’a, Yemen, October 2007.
President, he would not be a profitable businessman today. As a consequence, the business community cannot trust Hamid because he is too much a part, and a product, of the corrupt system. In his words, “the ‘real business community [a reference to the traditional merchant class] was so happy when Hamid began to speak out. They want so much to believe what he says……because he has the guns and political clout to really push for change, while they do not.”

Over time, Hamid has accumulated wealth and skills that give him the confidence and the ability to compete in a more formalized arrangement. While further investigation is required, an initial assessment of Hamid’s experience suggests that his desire for a more legalized system comes primarily from his experience in productive, semi-competitive sectors of the economy. His profits from the oil sector were purely a product of his proximity to the President. In comparison, his success in other industries, including banking, the mobile phone industry, computer services and franchising, have involved a degree of competition. These sectors have required him to invest in infrastructure and human capital domestically. Therefore, it could be that involvement in productive and semi-competitive sectors of the economy support the mechanisms examined in this study, whereas purely rent based private sector profits are more similar to public sector patronage. Access to the oil and gas sectors of the Yemeni economy provide incentives to support the existing hierarchy of patronage distribution. By contrast, private sector actors involved in productive sectors are more likely to have the skills, resources, and capital investments to make a predictable, formalized political economy more attractive. If this is

331 Interview by the author with a member of the traditional merchant class, Sana’a, Yemen, fall 2006.
the case, it is possible that private sector patronage associated with the energy sector in Yemen should be considered in a category with public sector, as opposed to private sector patronage.

Hamid’s actions are consistent with his values on the independent variables. However, the story of his defection is not complete without reference to its collective component. His narrative lends further credibility to the left out variable identified in Chapter Three: tribal balancing. As discussed previously, this project’s initial conceptualization of the independent variables does not adequately address the collective nature of patronage. The life-cycle variable partially accounts for this factor through an analysis of an elite’s children; yet in reality, the decision making calculus of tribal elites is more complex and contingent. Elites in Yemen routinely weigh the costs of defection for themselves, their immediate families, and often for their tribe. If an elite’s tribe is favored by the regime, the elite may be more hesitant to defect. If a tribe has lost status and is perceived as neglected by the central government, their sheikh may be more likely to choose defection.

Just as Muhammad Abu Luhom’s decision to remain loyal was related to his favored position within the Bakil confederation, Hamid’s decision to defect was connected to the status of the Ahmar family. Hamid did not defect simply because he was personally demoted within networks of private sector patronage. He also considered the status of his family. As mentioned previously, Sheikh Abdullah viewed himself as a full partner in the regime, not as a client. As the sons of Saleh and Sheikh Abdullah grew older, the equitable balance between the two families began to tilt in the direction of
Saleh’s kin. In light of this change, a rift developed between Abdullah and Saleh, which surfaced in a public fashion during the 2006 elections. When discussing electoral dynamics, Yemenis from diverse perspectives claimed that the real battle was not between Saleh and Shamlan; rather, it was a struggle within Hashid over who will rule Yemen. In the words of one prominent Yemen journalist, “The current political show and elections is about who will rule Yemen for the next seven years after President Saleh. The competition is between Ahmed Saleh and Yahya [the President’s son and nephew respectively] on one hand, and Hamid and Hussein al-Ahmar on the other. In other words, which sons of Hashid will inherit the throne of Yemen?”33 The perspective was shared by journalists, members of the opposition, and GPC partisans alike. There is little doubt that the 2006 elections were an opportunity to set the stage for the coming battle of succession. Certainly Hamid’s actions were guided at least in part by his family’s marginalization in comparison with Ahmed Saleh and Saleh’s nephews.

In addition to refining the typological space, and particularly the casual mechanisms linking private sector patronage with defection, Hamid’s case provides insights into the impact of defection on the survival of autocracy. Hamid is at the heart of political alliances that control Yemen. His defection therefore reverberated throughout the political system and was closely analyzed by both domestic and international observers. By choosing to use formal democratic institutions to directly challenge the authority of the President, Hamid broke with long-standing patterns of elite bargaining between Saleh and Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar. His efforts in the 2006 elections raised the

33 Interview with a prominent Yemeni journalist, Yemen, September 2006.
profile of electoral institutions and he set the political stage for an intense battle between the sons of Saleh and the sons of Ahmar in the post-Saleh political future.

Hamid’s ultimate dedication to establishing a more formalized democratic system is debatable. Many Yemenis viewed his actions as purely instrumental. From this perspective, Hamid used the elections as an opportunity to demonstrate political strength and to show the President that the future of Yemen would not be left to the sons of Sanhan. Stated differently, Hamid worked to strengthen the opposition and electoral institutions only to abandon them once he had repositioned himself in patronage networks. From an alternative perspective, many Yemenis believe that Hamid was motivated both by the desire to ensure his place in the future political order and by a sincere need to alter the nature of political power in the country.

Whatever Hamid’s motivations, the short-term impact of his defection on the neopatrimonial system was mixed and the long-term impact uncertain. In the short-term, Hamid’s actions certainly challenged rhetorical red lines protecting the President and his family. They also in some ways elevated the importance of elections as a forum of genuine political contestation. For the first time, an opposition party ran a competitive electoral campaign for the presidency. In contrast to the previous presidential elections, there was real uncertainty surrounding the percentage of the vote President Saleh would win. This uncertainty was intimately tied to Hamid’s alliance with Faisal Bin Shamlan and his decision to bring tribal support behind an opposition candidate. Moreover, both during and after the elections, Hamid played an active role in uncovering and discussing inadequacies in Yemen’s electoral apparatus. He was particularly critical of the Supreme
Commission for Elections and Referendum and was intimately involved in an attempt to rectify the Commission’s biases before the beginning of the election period. As a result of his and others’ relentless critique, the regime has been forced to at least superficially re-evaluate the election laws. When the author left Yemen in the fall of 2007, parliamentarians were discussing possible amendments to the elections law. However, after much debate between the JMP and the GPC, the ruling party recently blocked a package of reforms.

By faithfully supporting the opposition candidate and encouraging a competitive election, Hamid and others in the opposition could lay the groundwork for more competitive elections in the future. This is especially true if Islah can successfully redefine itself and strengthen its grassroots appeal in a post-Abdullah environment. On the other hand, the JMP’s efforts may simply encourage the President to devise more creative or possibly more brutal mechanisms for winning elections. In many ways, Hamid’s efforts during the elections had the unintended consequence of legitimizing the President’s authority. Saleh won in a semi-fair and semi-competitive election, which gave him a degree of domestic and international legitimacy.

Ultimately, the impact of Hamid’s defection will depend on his future commitment to the formalization of politics. Immediately following the elections, it seemed that Hamid would continue his high profile oppositional stance. At a conference in the Movenpick Hotel, Hamid gave a short, yet inspiring speech criticizing the regime.

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333 Hamid al-Ahmar, Interview by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 8, 2006.
for interfering with free and fair elections and praising Shamlan and the JMP for their historic efforts. Yet as months passed, and particularly after the passing of his father, Hamid was less visible. His aggressive critiques subsided and he was less frequently in the press. In particular, to the author’s knowledge, he has not called for a “popular revolution,” nor has he directly critiqued Saleh since his father’s passing.

Several Yemeni political analysis hypothesize that Hamid’s quiet posture is evidence of a negotiation between his family and President Saleh before Abdullah’s passing. If indeed a deal has been struck between the families, then his case supports the initial working hypothesis that defection may reinvent rather than alter the informal organization of power. If, however, Hamid continues his struggle to formalize the political system through continued support for the JMP, critique of the regime and the electoral system, and increased activism in Parliament, his defection may indeed encourage formalization of the political sphere. At this point, his case will more than likely support the former hypothesis. Even if Hamid returns to a strong oppositional stance, his case is a reminder that while Yemen’s autocracy is fraught with conflict and bargaining, the guiding principles of the political system are resilient. Rarely will elites completely break with the past. Hamid was, and still is, a benefactor of the informal patronage system. While he chose to cross red lines in the 2006 election, he seems to have made this decision as part of a bargaining strategy to ensure his and his family’s privileged position in future iterations of patronage distribution.

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335 JMP conference at the Movenpick Hotel, Attended by the author, Sana’a, Yemen, October 9, 2006.
This study has explored two related research questions. First, under what conditions do elites in neopatrimonial regimes, who are embedded in networks of patronage, defect by building formal political institutions? Second, what is the impact of their defection on the existing mode of autocracy? The research design focused attention primarily on the former question, while providing only tentative hypotheses regarding the latter. Both questions were addressed in the specific context of Yemen. To conclude the project, this chapter will review the study’s main findings. First it will outline the results of the case study sections, focusing on how these cases refined the original typological theory proposed in Chapter One. It will also summarize what these cases suggest regarding the impact of defection on the durability of neopatrimonialism in Yemen. After making a brief prediction on the future of Yemeni autocracy, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of generalizability. While the details of the typological theory do not travel beyond Yemen, the study provides analytical insights and raises questions that can inform analysis of neopatrimonial regimes more broadly.

This project hypothesized that five independent variables combined to determine if included elites would defect from networks of patronage by building formal political institutions. It also hypothesized that elites rarely break completely with the past. Rather, if elites chose to defect by building formal institutions, they might do so as a bargaining tactic to reposition themselves in informal networks of patronage. In doing so, defection
may reinvent, rather than alter the organization of power. To refine the initial working hypotheses, this study strategically selected five cases for further analysis. Process-tracing in the context of the case studies helped confirm, and in other instances refine, initial working hypotheses. The main findings of the case study chapters are summarized below.

Chapter Three examined an underspecified type within the typological space. After cases were coded and placed in the typology, it became clear that the combination of deeply included, political patronage, tribal elite, risk taker, and ease of defection two was problematic. This combination of independent variables resulted in both loyalty and defection. Therefore, it failed the basic test for the validity of a type and warranted further investigation to uncover potential left out variables and possible measurement errors. To better understand the impact of political patronage, and to further refine the distinction between types, the project conducted a detailed analysis of three cases represented by two tribal elites: Sheikh Yasser al-Awadi (Case Number 13 and Number 14) and Sheikh Muhammad Abu Luhom (Case Number 12). (Yasser’s actions changed from loyalty to defection over time and therefore he constituted two separate cases). The study first traced Yasser’s move from loyalty to defection over time in the ruling party. It then compared Yasser’s defection with Muhammad Abu Luhom’s loyalty. Finally, the study also conducted a cursory analysis of a similar underspecified type that combined the same values on all independent variables with the exception of the degree of patronage. While Yasser and Muhammad were “deeply included” in networks of patronage, Ahmed (Case Number 27) and Ali (Case Number 28) were only “included.”
Like Yasser and Muhammad, Ahmed and Ali had the same values on all independent variables, yet Ahmed defected, while Ali remained loyal.

These sets of comparisons produced three main findings. First, they identified a pool of potential defectors in the Yemeni context. A detailed comparison of Sheikh Yasser and Sheikh Muhammad, and a cursory comparison of Ahmed and Ali, suggests that the combination of political patronage, tribal elite, risk taker, and ease of defection two, is an unstable combination of variables that provides incentives for both loyalty and defection. Pinpointing this volatile combination is valuable for policymakers and domestic reformers seeking to identify potential defectors in the Yemeni context.

Interestingly, Yemeni elites in this category are typically GPC partisans who self-identify with the “new generation” inside the party. While the JMP opposition claims to be the main locus of democratic change, it may be that defectors inside the GPC are a more likely source of change in the political system.

In addition to identifying a pool of potential defectors, Chapter Three discovered two critical left out variables: a change on the demand side of the patronage equation and tribal balancing. These variables not only account for differences in outcomes between Yasser and Muhammad, but they also seem to explain Ahmed’s defection in comparison with Ali’s loyalty. In addition to explaining variation within the “pool of potential defectors,” the tribal balancing variable was useful in explaining Hamid al-Ahmar’s move to defection from networks of private sector patronage in Chapter Five.

Including a tribal balancing variable into the larger typology addresses an inherent weakness in the original conceptualization of the independent variables. Through its
consideration of children, the life-cycle variable begins to incorporate collective
considerations into the strategic calculus of elite actors. However, the collective nature of
patronage in Yemen certainly extends beyond the immediate family. This is especially
ture for tribal sheikhs who must consider how their actions will impact larger tribal units.
A consideration of tribal balancing, or where one’s tribe falls in networks of privilege,
would significantly improve the study’s ability to address the collective aspects of
patronage distribution.

Beyond refining the typological space, Chapter Three also lends credibility to the
hypotheses that defection may actually re-invent rather than alter networks of patronage.
Yasser’s narrative provides a cautionary tale as to the impact of defection on the existing
mode of autocracy. While his defection was dramatic at first, over time, his aggressive
political opposition subsided and it seems that he has been reincorporated into the
patronage paradigm. The same is also true of Ahmed. For both, dramatic defection was
followed by harassment from the regime, behind the scenes negotiation, and finally
reincorporation. These cases are a reminder of the complex incentives structures faced by
elite defectors. While both Yasser and Ahmed have a limited desire to formalize the
political arena, they also have an interest in preserving and improving their positions in
networks of privilege.

After Chapter Three conducted a within-type analysis, Chapter Four examined a
deviant, yet promising case of defection. Based on initial working hypotheses, the
combination of included, political patronage, tribal elite, risk averse, and ease of
defection zero, should have produced strong incentives for loyalty. Despite these
incentives, Sakhir Wajih defected. The story of Sakhir’s move to defection in the Parliament demonstrates the limits of the model in explaining every case of defection. While process-tracing confirmed that Sakhir’s independent variable values did provide strong incentives for loyalty, in the end, he chose defection despite material, physical, and political risks. Sakhir’s defection was primarily explained by a left out variable: belief/conviction. While many of the actors examined in this study may have an interest, or even a genuine belief, that the Yemeni political system should be formalized, Sakhir’s conviction was unusually strong. This project proposes that he is a genuine outlier in Yemeni politics. His beliefs and conviction allowed him to move beyond material incentive structures that would normally bind him to the status quo.

In addition to explaining a theoretically deviant case, Chapter Four also contributed to the second portion of the research question: the impact of defection on the existing mode of autocracy. While Yasser’s story offered a cautionary tale as to the impact of defection, Sakhir case offers insights into a potential constellation of factors that could facilitate the formalization and also the democratization of politics. Theoretical outliers like Sakhir may offer a critical opportunity to formalize the political arena. In fact, Sakhir’s limited success in strengthening Parliament relative to the executive seems to be a product of the interaction of three factors: 1) strong beliefs/personal convictions, 2) a specific set of domestic coalitional alliances (which combines a small group of dedicated reformers and a fractured ruling coalition), and 3) targeted international support.
Finally, Chapter Five examined a politically prominent case of defection: Sheikh Hamid al-Ahmar. Hamid’s case facilitated the exploration of a pathway to defection associated with private sector patronage and it provided critical insights into the future of Yemen’s neopatrimonial autocracy. His case lends credibility to the initial working hypothesis that private sector patronage creates both the skills and resources that allow elites to either survive in a more formalized political environment or to buy access into a different patronage arrangement. His narrative could also refine initial working hypotheses by bounding the categories of private sector patronage to which these mechanisms apply.

Hamid’s decision to defect by using formal political institutions, as opposed to engaging in more acceptable forms of bargaining, seems to have been a product of the long term impact of private sector patronage as well as his values on the life-cycle measurement (risk taker). Concerning the impact of private sector patronage, Yemeni merchants and politicians suggest that Hamid’s experience as a businessman has given him the skills and incentives to participate in a more formalized political arena. Moreover, the cash he accumulated as a prosperous businessman is fungible and allows him the luxury of buying his way into a different patronage arrangement (if the main patron were to change). Members of the merchant class are careful to point out that Hamid has developed an interest in the rule of law because his assets and capital investments in Yemen are, for the first time in his life, vulnerable to predation and state interference. His case therefore suggests a refinement of the hypotheses surrounding private sector inclusion.
It is possible that a distinction should be made between private sector patronage involving the oil and gas sector and other forms of private sector inclusion. While inclusion through the oil and gas sector does provide a large flow of fungible resources, this type of patronage inclusion is less likely to foster a desire for, or the skills necessary to compete in, a more formalized political economy. The oil and gas sector is tightly controlled by the President; therefore, those clients who gain access to these resources are dependent upon the continuation of the existing patronage hierarchy. Profits from this sector are purely based on rent. They do not afford the opportunity to develop competitive skills, knowledge, or capital investments that associate private sector patronage with defection. Parsing the impact of different types of private sector patronage is difficult in Hamid’s case. Further investigation of this finding is needed, but it may be that the oil and gas sector should constitute a separate type of patronage category, or should possibly be included with public sector patronage.

As for the impact of defection on the neopatrimonial system, Hamid’s case, like Yasser’s, offers a cautionary tale. Hamid’s support for Faisal Bin Shamlan during the 2006 elections, and particularly his attempt to fracture the President’s electoral base of support in Hashid, were a dramatic break with the past. Previously Hamid’s father and Saleh ruled together through behind the scenes negotiations and compromise. In this case, Hamid directly challenged the President’s authority in the electoral arena. His actions in the 2006 elections laid bare a brewing struggle within Hashid over who will inherit the spoils of Yemen after Saleh. In the months following the election, it seemed that Hamid would continue his bold oppositional stance. However, his critiques eventually softened
and, at least for now, he has been re-incorporated into the patronage system. Hamid’s impact on the political arena remains to be seen, but for now his case lends credibility to the hypotheses that defection may reinvent, rather than attenuate the neopatrimonial mode of autocracy.

**The Future of Yemen’s Neopatrimonial Autocracy**

The case studies confirm that Yemen’s neopatrimonial autocracy is dynamic. Elites who are embedded in networks of patronage are constantly bargaining for better strategic positions and some have even crossed red lines by making credible threats to strengthen formal democratic institutions. Occasionally, genuine reformers like Sakhir Wajih have even achieved small democratic gains. Still, vested interests, old rivalries, and distrust between potential coalition partners perpetuate the existing mode of autocracy.

In the immediate future, the bargaining dynamic addressed in this study is unlikely to alter the personalized organization of power around President Saleh. As the case studies demonstrate, defection may simply re-invent rather than attenuate the informal patronage paradigm. Elites who have the political and social resources to affect change are generally too invested in the existing system to seek radical reforms. Even those who would benefit from some degree of formalization, like Yasser and Hamid, are unlikely to abandon completely existing political patterns. This is especially true when they know that their abandonment of these rules would mean their exclusion and someone else’s gain. Moreover, historical animosities between powerful tribal families
and distrust between reluctant reformers prevent even the occasional instance of
defection from gaining political momentum.

The informal patronage paradigm is resilient, but limited gains in the area of
formalization are possible. In particular, the reform dynamic created by Sakhrir Wajih and
YemenPAC may continue to institutionalize Parliament and curtail networks of grand
corruption extending from the President. YemenPAC’s ability to align with the reformist
trend in the GPC parliamentary bloc may also create a positive reform dynamic in the
long term by engendering trust and a formalized avenue of cooperation between
reformers in the ruling party and in the opposition. In addition to gradual changes in the
Parliament, the efforts of new generation leaders within the GPC may prepare the party
for a greater political role after Saleh. While these efforts, and others like them, do not
fundamentally alter the organization of power in the short term, they can establish a
favorable political playing field for greater formalization and potential democratization
once Saleh leaves office.

As long as Saleh continues to distribute patronage broadly, and as long as the new
generation of tribal elites remain internally fractured by legacies of competition and
conflict, the system of personalized bargaining between the President and his clients will
endure. Yet it is important to note that the micro-politics of elite bargaining is not the
only factor determining regime longevity in Yemen. The economic foundation of Saleh’s
neopatrimonial system is brittle at best, and it raises the possibility of regime collapse if a
certain constellation of factors were to converge. Regime survival is intimately connected
to the continued flow of oil revenues into state coffers. While many predict that Yemen’s
known oil reserves will be exhausted in approximately 10-15 years, it is possible that gas revenues could begin to fill the vacuum after a decline in oil. As long as oil and gas revenues fund the lion’s share of the central government’s budget, the neopatrimonial system can survive. If natural gas does not adequately compensate for the loss of oil revenues, the government will find itself unable to pay civil servants and, most importantly, military personnel. If this fiscal crisis were to correspond with a spike in the southern insurgency, a rekindled Houthi rebellion, and intensified attacks by al-Qaeda, the regime in Sana’a would falter. Unable to pay soldiers, the army would fracture into tribal components and the government would lose control of the geographic periphery. While this scenario may seem extreme, it is possible given the regime’s tenuous economic base and its precarious grip on powerful social forces.

Barring a perfect storm of economic crisis and social unrest, the more likely scenario for the Yemen regime is a continuation of the status quo. Saleh will remain in power and continue to facilitate the predation of public resources until he is able to transfer a plundered state to the next generation. When Saleh eventually decides to transfer power to his son, Ahmed, the transition will constitute a critical juncture in which the rules of the game will briefly be suspended. At that point, violent conflict within Hashid could ensue. It is possible that Ali Muhsin, ‘Ammar, or Yahya may attempt to wrest power away from Ahmed, or to at least to guarantee they will rule in partnership with him. If the officer corps fractures, it is almost certain that dissidents in the south will seek separation or at a minimum a greater degree of autonomy. Moreover, disenfranchised tribal areas may also revolt in the hopes of augmenting their bargaining
position vis-à-vis the central government. Conflict within Hashid is not in the best interest of the President’s family, as they have many enemies waiting to extract retribution. Knowing this, the family may relegate the struggle for authority to behind the scenes negotiations. This would make succession less bloody and raise the likelihood of continued Sanhan domination. Whether or not there is an inter-regime battle over authority, whoever gains control of Yemen will face the task of reestablishing allegiances, most likely through a rearrangement of patronage ties. The possibility for some degree of institution building and democratization will depend on a number of factors, to include: the political style of the individual strong-man who gains power; the interests of the clients who support him; and the extent to which contemporary reformers are able to build coalitions and create gradual changes before the critical juncture of succession occurs.

While the President is often hailed for bringing long term stability to Yemen, he has certainly not built a formal institutional legacy capable of encouraging economic development or democratic accountability. Instead, he leaves a legacy of neopatrimonialism which will be difficult to alter even after he leaves office. Old patterns of interaction die hard. Whoever takes the reins of power after Saleh will not inherit a clean slate on which to reconstruct political authority. Vested interests in patronage distribution are strong and will bind any future ruler. Moreover, the social structure in Yemen will also make it difficult for the next ruler to fundamentally alter the nature of power. In particular, many sheikhs have the physical strength to challenge the central government. For this reason, any ruler of Yemen must carefully co-opt and include
powerful tribal interests. In sum, authority in Yemen rests with an individual, not with institutions. While some steps have been taken to strengthen formal democratic institutions, Yemen’s foreseeable future will be dominated by the practice of neopatrimonialism.

Implications of the model beyond Yemen

This project has developed a model for understanding institutional change and maintenance in the context of Yemen’s neopatrimonial autocracy. Yet the analysis should also provide analytical insights and raise questions for scholars studying other regimes that combine the practice of neopatrimonialism with a veneer of democracy. Determining the precise generalizability of the typological theory, and refining its propositions in additional country studies, is a project that must be left to future research. This study is the result of a year and three months of intensive fieldwork in Yemen. Given limited time, financial resources, and the challenge of gathering data in Yemen, the author chose to prioritize fieldwork and thick description over the alternative of a multi-country analysis. Again, clarifying the precise implications of this study for other neopatrimonial systems is an area for further research. Looking ahead, however, the typological theory and the implications of this study will most aptly apply to regimes that meet the following criteria:

1. The regime is neopatrimonial by Bratton and van de Walle’s definition. These authors propose that only a small sub-set of authoritarian regimes should quality as neopatrimonial. They argue that while the practices of neopatrimonialism can
be found in virtually all regimes, it “is the core feature of politics in Africa and a small number of other states.” In these regimes, “the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions.” By this definition, neopatrimonial regimes are profoundly personalized. Power is concentrated in the hands of a single strong-man, not a ruling party, not a group of religious scholars, and not an institutionalized officer corps. This project suggests that Yemen fits Bratton and van de Walle’s definition of neopatrimonialism. As such, the model for understanding elite bargaining in Yemen, and neopatrimonial regimes like it, must be developed in the context of dyadic relationships between a patron and his clients. This highly personalized dyadic bargaining dynamic is absent, or at least less central to the organization of power, in more formalized, bureaucratic forms of autocracy. This model, for example, would not apply to the bureaucratic-authoritarianism that characterized much of Latin American and Southern Europe.

2. The regime should be neopatrimonial as opposed to sultanistic. While Bratton and van de Walle make no distinction between neopatrimonial and sultanistic forms of rule, this project proposes that Yemen is clearly the former and not the latter. Sultanism is an extreme form of neopatrimonialism. In neopatrimonial regimes, networks of patronage are inclusive and the prerogatives of the patron are constrained. In sultanistic regimes, patronage is more narrowly distributed and

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336 Bratton and van de Walle, Democratic Experiments in Africa, 61.
dictators have more discretion to arbitrarily wield power. The model explored in this study applies most accurately to neopatrimonial regimes. The ecumenical distribution of patronage in these regimes makes them more stable and therefore necessitates a more nuanced investigation of patronage arrangements in order to identify processes of change and renewal. Moreover, the rules of elite bargaining in these regimes may be more patterned than those of sultanistic states. As explained in Chapter Two, there is a genuine process of bargaining that occurs between clients and their patron in Yemen. The rules of the game are identifiable and constrain both the patron and clients alike.

3. The regime should combine aspects of democracy with the practice of autocracy. In other words, it should fit Larry Diamond’s definition of a hybrid regime; be it competitive authoritarian or hegemonic authoritarian. The important point here is that formal democratic institutions should be an accepted part of the political game, but not the main locus of political power.

This study’s approach to analyzing regime dynamics should be particularly useful to regimes that meet the criteria above. Given that these regimes are highly personalized dictatorships in which elite behavior is structured by informal patronage institutions, it is critical that scholars first define the informal rules of the game that govern elite behavior. As was done in this study, scholars analyzing these regimes would be well served to

follow Levitsky and Helmke’s framework for identifying informal institutions. The first step should be to identify the relevant population to which the rules of the game apply. Next, scholars must identify the specific rules of the game that frame patronage politics. While some rules may be similar to the Yemeni model, the specific patterns of patronage distribution will vary depending on the context. When outlining the rules of the game, it is critical that scholars address the issue of “acceptable” patronage distribution and “crossing red lines.” An acceptable range of patronage distribution guides an individual elite as he/she makes decision as to the type and degree of patronage to expect from the patron. This range is mutually understood by patron and client alike and is important because it helps to pinpoint potential moments of conflict. Most important, scholars must identify red lines set by the regime for the use of formal institutions. Once the rules of the game are established, and red lines clearly articulated, it is also critical to examine the enforcement mechanisms that reproduce the rules of the game.

After establishing the ground rules organizing the informal system of patronage politics, the typological theory explored in this study can serve as a framework for understanding the conditions under which included elites will defect by strengthening formal political institutions. While the details and discrete categories identified in the typological theory do not travel outside of Yemen, the concept of identifying different degrees and types of dependency on the existing patronage system should apply more broadly. In other words, the causal mechanisms underlying the independent variables are generalizable. For example, the categories of independent variable number three, elite

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338 Helmke and Levitsky, 734.
identity, would certainly vary depending on the country under analysis. When analyzing neopatrimonial regimes in Africa, elite categories may include an ethnic dimension. Whatever the particular categories that define the elite of a political system, the important point is that scholars understand how different types of elites are strategically connected to the existing mode of distribution. The elite identity variable isolates the factors that give an individual “elite” status. Based on these factors, the researcher can then make a prediction as to whether or not this type of elite will benefit or suffer as a result of formalization of the political sphere.

Just as the categories that fill the type of elite variable would certainly change depending on the regime under consideration, so could the categories that define the type of patronage variable. In Yemen, for example, the case studies suggest that a separate category may be needed for the energy sector. Patronage inclusion in this sector produces primarily rent seeking behavior and dependence on the existing patronage hierarchy. This may not be the case in other regimes. In other countries, rent seeking behavior could be more prevalent in a different sector. Again, the important lesson for researchers is that the type of patronage extended to elites may produce different degrees of dependency on existing patterns of distribution, as well as different long term preferences for the formalization of politics. In sum, while the discrete categories that compose the typology do not travel, the concepts undergirding the model should facilitate an analysis of elite bargaining and defection in other neopatrimonial regimes. 

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339 The findings of the case study section do not necessarily travel to other contexts. For example, while a tribal balancing variable may improve the model in the context of Yemen, it would not be applicable in a non-tribal context. This left out variable does however raise questions concerning the collective nature of
In addition to suggesting a framework for analyzing elite defection from networks of patronage, the Yemeni case also provides a cautionary tale for scholars studying the dynamics of institutional adaptation and change in neopatrimonial regimes. In some cases defection may serve to reinvent, rather than attenuate networks of patronage extending from the patron. Powerful players may at times risk defection by making a credible threat to infuse weak formal institutions with rational-legal authority. But they may do so only as a bargaining chip to reposition themselves within networks of patronage. Two of the case studies examined in the Yemeni context provide a cautionary tale for scholars and policymakers who view elite defection as a source of democratic change. These cases address the complex incentives structures of elite actors who are deeply embedded in networks of patronage and privilege. While each of these actors may genuinely desire a degree of formalization, they have a bounded interest in change. Moreover, their defection was at least in part related to a bargaining strategy to force greater patronage inclusion.

While these cases offer a word of caution, the study also provides a ray of hope and points to a fruitful area of future research. In some instances, defection may re-invent rather than alter networks of power. In others, it can bring about a formalization of the political sphere. This project identified one case in which the actions of a parliamentarian curtailed networks of corruption extending from the President and began a process of strengthening the Parliament as an independent institution. It seems that three facilitating factors converged to produce these meager gains: 1) a uniquely dedicated reformer, 2) a patronage in any neopatrimonial context. If patronage distribution has a collective component in a given political context, it should be incorporated into the independent variables.
specific set of domestic coalitional alliances (which combines a small group of dedicated reformers and a fractured ruling coalition), and 3) targeted international support. The confluence of these factors produced tangible gains in the Yemeni Parliament and it seems that the reform dynamic could continue as long as these three factors persist. There are undoubtedly other facilitating conditions. Examining the conditions under which defection alters neopatrimonial autocracies and the conditions under which it perpetuates the existing organization of power is a fruitful area for future research.

In sum, this project has produced three main findings that could inform the study of neopatrimonial regimes beyond the boundaries of Yemen. First, not all types of patronage are created equal. Scholars wishing to understand the micro-politics of elite bargaining in networks of patronage must look beyond a simple inclusion/exclusion dichotomy to include distinctions in both the degree and the type of patronage. Beyond these two factors, this project also suggests several other variables for measuring degrees of dependence on the existing organization of power and, by extension, the likelihood an elite will chose defection. Secondly, the project offers a cautionary tale for policymakers and researchers studying the dynamics of neopatrimonial systems. While elites may sometimes choose to cross red lines for the use of formal institutions, defection does not always crack the neopatrimonial system. In fact, defection may be used as a bargaining tactic for elite actors seeking to repositions themselves in networks of patronage. Lastly, while defection may reinvent rather than attenuate the neopatrimonial system, under certain circumstances, it may produce positive gains for democratization. Identifying the
conditions under which defection sustains the existing mode of autocracy, and under which conditions it promotes democratization, is a critical area for future research.
APPENDIX A

Measurement:
To measure both the dependent and the independent variables, the author uses interview data with the elite under consideration, as well as other elite and non-elite observers. Data was also collected from the Yemeni press, particularly: *The Yemen Times*, *The Yemen Observer*, *NewsYemen online*, *al-wasat*, *al-shaari*, *al-ayyam*, and *al-nass*. In addition to the Yemeni press and formal interviews, a great deal of data was collected in the context of *gat* chews. *Gat* is a mildly narcotic leaf. Yemenis, especially in northern Yemen, chew *gat* with friends and colleagues during the afternoon. In *gat* chewing sessions, Yemenis discuss domestic and international politics, business, poetry, and a variety of other topics. The *gat* chew is an important part of Yemeni politics and social life, and much debate surrounds its socio-economic impact. For more information on the social, political, and economic impact of *gat*, see: Margaret Lock, ed., *The Flower of Paradise: The Institutionalized Use of the Drug Qat in North Yemen*, (Dordrecht/Boston, Lancaster/Tokyo: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1987).

Dependent Variable:
For the Parliament, the author assessed institution building behavior by examining an elite’s support for and participation in executive oversight (particularly though the questioning of ministers), his votes on critical spending bills (especially those known to either support patronage politics or those intended to curtail corruption), his votes on several prominent anti-corruption investigations, his support for internal parliamentary reforms (particularly those that limit the authority of the powerful Parliamentary Presidium), and finally, a general evaluation of any activities aimed at strengthening the position of the Parliament in relation to the President. For political parties, the author collected data on the internal dynamics of Islah and the GPC’s executive committees (the *Shoura* Council and the General Committee respectively) in an effort to assess who has encouraged accountability, transparency, and institutionalization within the party apparatus. Not all of the elites under evaluation are involved in one or both of these institutions. In fact, others may cross red lines in their attempts to institutionalize press freedoms, the electoral system, civil society organizations, etc.

Independent Variables:
**Independent Variable #1: Degree of Inclusion**
In order to receive a value of “deeply included,” the elite under consideration must have both:
1. A direct line of access to the President (The President is ultimately the main source of patronage. Elites who are deeply included should have direct, personal contact with him.), and
2. Top positions of influence and/or financial gain within their type of patronage category. (For example, deeply included elites in the private sector would receive
consistent access to lucrative oil and gas concessions or to the country’s most lucrative land deals or state construction contracts.)

Independent Variable #2: Type of Inclusion

Military/Security Patronage:
1. Leadership positions in the Yemeni Armed Services;
2. Leadership positions in one of Yemen’s two security branches (Political Security and National Security);
3. Leadership positions in the Yemen Economic Corporation (YECO). This organization was established to provide subsidized goods to the Armed Services, but it has since expanded its reach beyond basic goods and services for soldiers. It is a lucrative source of corruption and is directly accountable only to the President.

Public Sector Patronage:
1. Appointments to government ministries;
2. Leadership positions in state-owned enterprises.

Private Sector Patronage:
1. Access to government tenders and/or the tightly controlled energy sector;
2. Informal tax exemptions;
3. Access to monopolistic or semi-monopolistic licenses;

Political Patronage:
1. Positions in the ruling party (The General People’s Congress or GPC);
2. Other political appointments, including: the Shoura Council, the Supreme Court, positions in the Office of the President, and various advisory boards to the President, governorships, etc.

This variable is particularly challenging to measure because many elites receive access to multiple types of patronage. However, there are patterns as to how patronage is distributed within the Yemeni context (these patterns are explored in Chapter Two). Generally elites are primarily dependent on one type of patronage or at least a cluster of certain types of patronage. This project will attempt to identify each elite’s primary source of patronage and will then place an elite in only one category. In several cases an elite’s source of patronage may vary over time. If an elite’s primary source of patronage changes over time, he will constitute two separate cases.

Unfortunately, the typology does not fully account for the effects of collective patronage on the decision making process of individual elites. Yemen is a tribal society where kinship plays an important role in strategic decisions. Many times patronage is distributed among family members in a way that creates competing incentives. For example, if a large tribal family has three sons, one may be an officer in the military, one may be appointed to the General Committee of the ruling party, and still another may be
involved in the private sector. If the brother who receives private sector patronage has an interest in encouraging some type of parliamentary oversight of the executive, for example, this action may have serious negative consequences for this siblings (they may actually lose their positions). While not included in the typological space, the intricacies of family connections will be addressed in the content of individual case studies.

**Independent Variable #3: Elite Identity**

In general, elites self-identify into one of these four main categories: tribal, Islamist, technocrat, or traditional merchant. Yet in recent years, the boundaries between tribal, merchant, and Islamist have become quite porous. As with the type of patronage variable, this project assigns an elite to only one category. When an elite self-identifies into two categories, the author uses outside interviews in combination with analysis from the domestic press to identify a primary identity. If a clear distinction cannot be made between categories, the elite is labeled as both (for example: Islamist/Tribal elite). If an elite’s primary identification has changed over time, he will constitute two separate cases.

**Independent Variable #4: Life-cycle Variable**

Three factors: age, education and exposure to liberal democracy, and children are used to determine whether an elite is a “risk taker” or “risk averse.” Elites who receive a total score of two or higher will be classified as “risk takers.”

1. **Age:** Was the elite under consideration born in or after 1967? YES=1, NO=0
2. **Education and exposure to liberal democracy:** Has the elite under consideration studied, lived, or traveled extensively in countries rated “free” by Freedom House? YES=1, NO=0
3. **Children:** Does the elite under consideration have children who are dependent on domestic networks of patronage for their education or financial status? YES=0, NO=1

**Independent Variable #5: Ease of Defection Index**

Scores are assigned based on a four point scale: 3= most likely to defect and 0=least likely to defect. Numerical scores are assigned based on the following questions:

1. **Does an elite expect others (including both domestic and foreign actors) to join him in a coalition once he defects?** (YES= 1, NO= 0). Although the study is analyzing first movers, elites still make strategic calculations based on how they think other players will act. An elite who believes that others will join him will be more likely to defect. Domestic coalitions may provide greater latitude for defection. However for the sake of parsimony, both foreign (governments and international organizations) and domestic coalitional potential are considered.
2. **Can and elite completely lose his elite status inside of Yemen by defecting?** (YES= 0, NO= 1). This question is designed to identify those individuals whose elite status is entirely or primarily based on existing patronage ties. Some tribal elites, for example, have actually been created by the President to counter the influence of traditional tribal leaders. These new sheikhs are particularly unlikely to defect.
3. Are other sources of patronage available from outside of Yemen (particularly Saudi Arabia) or does the elite have a source of independent, personal wealth that is unaffected by informal patronage ties inside of Yemen? (YES=1, NO=0). Elites with personal wealth or an external source of patronage that is unaffected by domestic politics may have an exit option or less financial cost associated with defection.
APPENDIX B

Independent Variable Coding for Yasser al-Awadi:

Independent Variable 1: Type of Patronage = Political Patronage
Yasser is a member of the GPC’s highest executive body, the General Committee. He is also the Deputy Chairman of the GPC Bloc in Parliament. Yasser does not receive any type of military, public sector, or private sector patronage.

Independent Variable 2: Degree of Patronage Inclusion= Deeply Included
In order to be deeply included, an elite must have both a direct line of access to President Saleh and they must be in the top positions of political influence or financial gain within their type of patronage inclusion. Yasser has both a direct line of access to the President and he is included at the highest level of political patronage.

Independent Variable #3: Elite Identity= Tribal Elite
Yasser self-identifies as a tribal elite. He stated this plainly in interviews with the author.

Independent Variable #4: Life-Cycle Measurement= Risk Taker
Yasser’s Total Score: 3
1. Yes=1. Yasser was born in 1975.
2. Yes=1. He studied for six months in the United States and has traveled extensively in Europe. He also has relatives who live in the United States.
3. No=1. His children are too young to have these dependencies.

Independent Variable #5: Ease of Defection Index= 2
Yasser’s Score:
1. Yes=1. Yasser expects his tribesmen as well as close colleagues in the Parliament to support him in defection. He does not have close ties with the international community, and could not count on international organizations or governments to strongly support him in defection.
2. No=1. Yasser could not lose his position as a tribal sheikh. He comes from a prominent tribal family and is secure in his own popularity within his tribe.
3. No=0. Yasser does not receive the highest value on the ease of defection measurement because he does not have an independent source of personal wealth outside the country nor does he receive patronage from foreign governments, including Saudi Arabia. Financially, he is vulnerable to the President’s retribution.
Independent Variable Coding for Muhammad Abu Luhom:

Independent Variable 1: Type of Patronage = Political Patronage
Muhammad is an appointed member of the GPC’s General Committee. He is also the head of the GPC’s Foreign Relations Committee. Muhammad does not directly receive any type of military, public sector, or private sector patronage.

Independent Variable 2: Degree of Patronage Inclusion= Deeply Included
In order to be deeply included, elites must have both a direct line of access to President Saleh and they must be in the top positions of political influence or financial gain within their type of patronage inclusion. Muhammad has both a direct line of access to the President and he is included in the top level of political patronage.

Independent Variable #3: Elite Identity= Tribal Elite
Muhammad self-identifies as a tribal elite. However, it is worth noting that his education and experience in the Ministry of Planning associate him with the technocratic class in Yemen.

Independent Variable #4: Life-Cycle Measurement= Risk Taker
Muhammad’s Total Score: 2
1. Yes=1. Muhammad was born in 1959.
2. Yes=1. He obtained a MA and BA in the United States and has lived and traveled extensively in both the United States and Europe. He also has family living in the United States.
3. No=1. His children are not dependent on domestic networks of patronage. They are educated outside of Yemen and are capable of surviving independently outside of the Yemeni context.

Independent Variable #5: Ease of Defection Index= 2
Muhammad’s Score:
1. Yes=1. Muhammad expects his tribesmen, as well as close colleagues in the party, to support him in defection. He also has close ties with the international community and could count on support from both foreign governments and NGOs if he were to choose defection.
2. No=1. Muhammad could not lose his position as a tribal sheikh.
3. No=0. Muhammad does not receive the highest value on the ease of defection measurement because he does not have an independent source of personal wealth outside the country, nor does he receive patronage from foreign governments. Financially, he is vulnerable to the President’s retribution.
APPENDIX C

Independent Variable Coding for Sakhir al-Wajih:

Independent Variable 1: Type of Patronage = Political Patronage
Sakhir was a long time member of the GPC before his resignation in 2006. He was a member of the party’s Permanent Committee and in the Parliament he was given a position on the powerful Oil and Development Committee. During the timeframe of the study, he does not receive any type of military, public sector, or private sector patronage.

Independent Variable 2: Degree of Patronage Inclusion= Included
In order to be deeply included, an elite must have both a direct line of access to President Saleh and they must be in the top positions of political influence or financial gain within their type of patronage inclusion. Sakhir has neither a direct line of access to the President nor is he included at the highest level of political patronage. In fact, Sakhir was only loosely included in networks of political patronage. As a member of the party, he had access to services for his constituents more than those who are not included and he was given a prominent committee appointment in Parliament. However, there is no indication that he used positions in the GPC for personal financial gain.

Independent Variable #3: Elite Identity= Tribal Elite
Sakhir self-identifies as a tribesman, but he is not a sheikh nor does he come from a line of tribal leaders.

Independent Variable #4: Life-Cycle Measurement= Risk Averse
Sakhir’s Total Score: 0 or 1= Risk Averse
1. No=0. Sakhir was born in 1962.
2. No=0. His travel and educational experience outside of Yemen is limited and primarily centers on the former Soviet Union.
3. No=?. (1). The answer to this question is unclear based on interview data. Sakhir does have children but their ties to the patronage system are unknown by the author. In an educated guess, the author assumes that given his age and financial status, his children are somewhat dependent on domestic networks of access.

Independent Variable #5: Ease of Defection Index= 0
Sakhir’s Score:
1. No=0. When Sakhir initially defected he could not count on strong support from others in the Parliament (with the exception of Ali Ashal and one other colleague), a tribe, or the international community. As time went on, and particularly after his success in uncovering the corruption behind the sale of government shares in Oil Block 53, he could count on domestic coalitional
support. Today, Sakhir can depend on YemenPAC as well as support from the international community. However, this was not the case before 2003/2004 and therefore cannot explain his initial move to defection.

2. Yes=0. Sakhir is an elite primarily because he is an MP in Parliament. By defecting, he risked losing elite status in both the party and the Parliament. In fact, in the upcoming parliamentary elections, it is very likely that party elites will ensure that Sakhir is defeated. Now that he is a household name in the Yemeni press, however, he may be able to maintain his elite status as an activist in a different capacity. When he initially defected, however, he certainly risked losing his elite status completely.

3. No=0. Sakhir does not have an independent source of personal wealth outside of Yemen, nor does he receive patronage from foreign governments. While YemenPAC received limited international support, Sakhir does not personally benefit from this money. In other words, he is financially vulnerable to regime retribution.
APPENDIX D

Independent Variable Coding for Hamid al-Ahmar:

Independent Variable 1: Type of Patronage = Private Sector Patronage
Hamid receives private sector patronage from the regime. This patronage comes primarily in the form of privileged access to the energy sector as well as the telecommunications sector (although both have gradually been attenuated over time).

Independent Variable 2: Degree of Patronage Inclusion= Included
To receive a value of deeply included, an elite must have both a direct line of access to President Saleh and they must be in the top positions of political influence or financial gain within their type of patronage inclusion. Given his father’s political influence, Hamid has always had a direct line of access to President Saleh. Before 2002, Hamid would have been classified as deeply included because he had preferential access to the Yemeni government’s share of crude and access to oil concessions. He was also allowed entrance into the tightly controlled telecommunications sector in 2001. However around 2002 his inclusion was gradually curtailed. He has recently been excluded from access to lucrative oil concessions (particularly regarding the former Hunt Block as well as Block 53). Equally important, in 2006, the regime rescinded his semi-monopolistic access to the telecommunications sector by allowing competitors to enter the market.

Independent Variable #3: Elite Identity= Tribal Elite
Hamid self-identifies tribesman. He comes from one of the most revered tribal families in Yemen and he is a sheikh. He also self-identifies as a businessman and as a member of Islah. Almost unanimously, Yemeni journalists and politicians classify him as a tribesman first, a businessman second, and a member of Islah third.

Independent Variable #4: Life-Cycle Measurement= Risk Taker
Hamid’s Total Score: 3= Risk Taker
1. No=1. Hamid was born in 1968.
2. No=1. Hamid has traveled extensively in liberal democracies (particularly in Europe and in the United States). He also studied English in the U.S.
3. No=1. While Hamid’s children are involved in the family business, and therefore benefit from domestic networks of patronage, they are not dependent on these networks for their financial stability. The children are well educated and well traveled. They have extensive ties in Saudi Arabia and in Europe. They certainly have an exit option if Hamid were excluded completely from domestic patronage networks.
**Independent Variable #5: Ease of Defection Index = 3**

Hamid’s Score:

1. **No=1.** When Hamid defected in the 2006 elections he knew that he could count on tribal support in Hashid as well as the support from several members of the JMP. (It is important to note that not all members of the JMP leadership supported Hamid’s strong campaign against the President. While some in the JMP and in Islah stand outside of networks of patronage, the majority of the leadership have patronage ties to the President. This is especially true of the leadership in Islah).

2. **Yes=1.** Arguably Hamid is from the most powerful tribal family in Yemen. As the son of the late Sheikh Abdullah, he cannot lose his elite status.

3. **No=1.** The Ahmar family has deep financial and political ties to the Saudi royal family. If networks of patronage were attenuated domestically, he could depend on support from the Saudi government. Over time, he has also begun to diversify his business interests outside of Yemen.


Newspapers:
*Yemen Times*
*The Yemen Observer*
*al-ayyam*
*al-shaari‘*
*al-nass*
*al-wasat*
*NewsYemen on-line in English*