

Islamist political movements in Yemen

Abdulmalik Mohammad Abdullah Eissa*

University of Higgah, Higgah, Yemen

This article presents an overview of Yemeni society before proceeding to a detailed account of research undertaken by the author into the factors behind the rise of Islamic extremism in Yemen and its appeal, especially among the young and most deprived sectors of society. The author draws on and relates his findings to a number of theoretical works, including those of authorities such as Max Weber as well as more recent analysts, in a discussion of what drives extremist group formation and what attracts their adherents, in general terms and in Yemen in particular. The findings of a survey of public opinion in Yemen conducted by the author are recounted in some detail.

Keywords: Yemen Islamists; Salfists; Huthis; foreign role; poverty; extremism

Introduction

Political Islam is today the most important subject on the minds of researchers and stakeholders interested in the Arab world and related developments. In the immediate term, it is the issue with the greatest potential to impact the future shape of Arab–Islamic societies, given the important role that religion plays in these societies from the cultural, political and even economic points of view. This being so, the fundamental challenge is how best to understand the way Arab–Islamic societies are evolving today.

The subject of the present research is to identify and track the different political, economic, social, religious, and cultural factors at work and that are constantly in flux, and to do so specifically in the context of Yemen. The intention is to identify what has led to the rise and development of religious extremism in Yemeni society and, to do this, the article focuses on, among other things, the social, political, economic, cultural and intellectual dimensions of the issue. These are the dimensions that nourished the extremist Salafist current and made it the complex social, political and cultural phenomenon that it is in Yemen today.

Without digressing into a discussion of the various theoretical approaches which may apply here, despite their importance, the author has identified the Yemeni public scene as the central object and source of evidence for this research and, to this end, the research takes the form of a field study par excellence.

Methodology

The research is based on a set of hypotheses that six factors, namely: poverty, the closed political environment, regional intervention, social discrimination, an erroneous form of religious mobilization, and the role of the leading figure of the community,

*Email: amalikd@yahoo.com

account, in combination, for the emergence of the phenomenon of religious fanaticism in Yemeni society. In order to test these hypotheses, secondary questions were posed which facilitated the gathering of data. These hypotheses will be explained as the related survey results are reviewed. A combination of theoretical approaches guide the research, as will also be explained below. The research objective overall was to establish the role played by social factors in the emergence of a social environment which leads to the appearance of Islamic, social movements in general and to the phenomenon of religious extremism within the uncompromising Salafist movement in the Yemeni society in particular.

The practical fieldwork undertaken as part of the research employed two main tools. The first was a questionnaire addressed to a purposive sample of 200 units or respondents, selected from the registry of the capital, Sana'a, and the district of Thoummar. The second tool, participatory research action (PAR), was applied to six groups of approximately 54 units each, four of which are in the registry of the capital and two in the district of Thoummar. These procedures were performed in order to investigate the research hypotheses, thus substantiating or negating them. In order to uphold or refute these hypotheses, the appropriate statistical methods were applied, namely: repetitions, percentages and Pearson's coefficient of correlation (r).

The target population of this study were closed religious groups, the main groupings of Yemeni Salafist currents that are mostly centred in several identifiable districts, among these are Sana'a, Ma'reb, Sou'dah, Thoummar and Ibb. These groupings can be considered the main groupings of Salafists in Yemen where the general population count is around 21 million. Accordingly, the choice of this sample was based primarily on the researcher's experience and knowledge of these movements, him being a member of the environment where the study took place.

After studying the circumstances and characteristics of each district, the researcher chose the districts of Sana'a and Thoummar, while excluding Sou'dah and Ma'reb due to the unfavourable security situation which prevented administration of the questionnaire. The district of Ibb was excluded as the movements that exist in it are the same as those existing in the capital, Sana'a. Thus, the districts of Sana'a and Thoummar were considered sufficient for the research, and each district was represented by 100 respondents or units of research.

The research sample

A total of 50% of the main sample was selected from the registry of the capital, Sana'a, to represent the main urban centres. This amounted to 100 people representing three groups: university students and professors, clerics, Salafist students plus ordinary citizens (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the sample in the registry of the capital.

Type of sample	Registry
University students and professors	30
Researchers in Islamist groups plus religious scholars	20
Salafist students and other ordinary people	50
Total	100

The specific choice of this sample was due to the line of enquiry on the phenomenon of Salafism. To this end the author referred to specialists in the Shari'a and in law, in addition to the departments of Islamic studies in Sana'a University and the views of their students. The author also sought the opinion of researchers specialized in the realm of religious groups and that of the religious scholars who do not belong to the same school. This also applies to ordinary citizens and to the knowledge and perspective of the Salafist students in the capital, which has no prominent Salafist scholars. Within the sample, the author tried to maintain a balance as much as possible. Also, a sample that represents secondary cities was drawn from the directorate of Ma'bar in Thoummar District; this comprises 100 units, which is 50% of the main sample. This is distributed over three groups: clerics, Salafist students and ordinary citizens (Table 2).

The reason behind choosing ten clerics is their small number relative to that of the students. Usually, a Salafist school has no more than two or three clerics. This is due to strong competition among them and to the fact that each sheikh founds a school of his own, a fact that is not present among students. As for the reason behind choosing this number of ordinary citizens, it is in order to attempt to find out opinions in the social environment in which the Salafists exist, and the extent of the exchange effect between the two; hence the choice of their equal number, that is, the equal number of students and citizens.

The intention was to gauge Yemeni society's tendency towards religious extremism and to understand how this society views this tendency, and its components, the reasons behind it, and factors that have impacted on it the most.

Whether religious or secular, Islamist or non-Islamist, every movement relies on certain intellectual and social tenets, a fertile and receptive environment, and external factors that allow it to survive. It is therefore important to identify what factors, ranging from poverty and foreign intervention to the local political environment and discrimination, are most instrumental; to identify, in other words, the basic elements that nourish religious extremism in any society. Extremism could take various forms, depending on the nature and constitution of a given society. In the case of Yemen's conservative society, in which the people still hold on to customs and traditions inspired by Islam's teachings, it means that extremism is essentially religious in nature.

The reasons why Yemeni society remains traditional and conservative are historical, social and economic. Because of its closed and isolated nature, Yemeni society has undergone very little structural change, meaning that it remained conservative and its customs and traditions intact throughout the centuries (Burgat 2006, 92). It is a homogenous society with no distinctive ethnic minorities¹ living outside the social norm with their separate customs and habits. All Yemenis share essentially the same ancestry: the Qahtani and Adnani Arabs, and their society remains largely tribal.

Table 2. Sample distribution in Thoummar district and Ma'bar directorate.

Type of sample	Ma'bar, Thoummar
Clerics	10
Ordinary citizens	60
Salafist students	30
Total	100

According to the 2004 census, the population of Yemen then totalled 19,685,161; it is relatively youthful with over 52% falling between the ages of zero to nineteen years (Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation 2008, 72, 77); 71.4% live in rural areas and 28.6% in urban areas. There are 129,610 villages, most of which are difficult to reach, and therefore they remain quite isolated from each other and from the rest of the country (Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation 2008, 72, 75).

The tribal nature of Yemeni society is deeply ingrained in people's consciousness, although the sense of tribal affiliation could be stronger or weaker depending on the particular region concerned; nevertheless, tribal identity remains strong everywhere compared with its strength in other Arab countries. In the tribal mindset, the notion of power is a wide-ranging and all-encompassing phenomenon that is not the exclusive domain of the state; tribal conventions precede and supersede the laws of the land. Yemen is also characterized by the widespread possession of weapons among the tribes, meaning that the latter have managed to maintain their role as independent fighting units that consider themselves above the law. These tribes often go to war against each other in the north and south of the country, primarily due to disagreements over land or water, a situation that often leads to revenge attacks against one other.

The political structure of Yemeni society is made-up of the country's political regime, an array of political parties and some 4723 (Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation 2008, 490) civil society institutions of various tendencies, including charitable organizations, unions, social institutions, professional associations and cultural clubs, most of which are located in the main cities. It is a reflection of Yemen's commitment to a governance system based on democracy and political pluralism, and on the provisions of the Constitution and the Unification Agreement between the country's north and south.

In *A Dictionary of Social Sciences* (1969) the tribe is defined as 'a social division of a people comprising several local groupings like villages, towns and tribes; the tribe shares a common territory, speaks the same language, has a common cultural environment and adopts the same set of primitive emotions' (Gould and Kolb 1969, 729).

Many researchers and historians share the view that the state and society in Yemen are heavily influenced by the country's tribal system and that the majority of Yemeni tribes have so far enjoyed a stable existence, with a wide range of interests and customs in common with city dwellers, including housing, agriculture, trade and taxation. However, despite this consistency, the internal configuration of the Yemeni tribe is permanently changing, though such change nonetheless requires that it will still be organized along socially acceptable lines (Al-Thahiri 2004, 150).

Historically, Yemeni tribes are known as much for their culture as for their complex social, political and economic systems. According to certain researchers, there are around 168 tribes in Yemen living in different parts of the country, and which account for nearly 85% of the total population. However, despite this large number of tribes, Yemeni society is culturally homogenous overall and socially well integrated, its plurality being neither social nor ethnic.²

The recent spiral of events in Yemen and the onset of the revolution on Saturday, 15 January 2011, were an indication of how poor conditions in the country had become. The demonstrations were the result of a spontaneous movement mostly by leftist university students who could no longer accept the poor economic conditions or lack of job opportunities that awaited them; moreover, many had to abandon their studies due to the exponential rise in education and housing fees.³

The demonstrations began as a protest against the poor social and economic conditions in the country, as well as other indicators, such as an illiteracy and partial illiteracy rate of 76%, based on 2004 census figures. This total includes 45% illiterates, and 31.5% having only minimal reading and writing ability. The same census also showed that only 12% of the population had completed their elementary education, 8.2% their secondary education and only 2.3% (Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation 2008, 335) held university degrees. Moreover, 52% lived under the poverty line, a condition exacerbated by the strong tribal influence.

In the course of the demonstrations the Parties that made up what is known as the Common Meeting (including the Muslim Brotherhood and Yemeni Congregation for Reform) soon jumped on the bandwagon and made the youth protest movement their own, using it in their two-year political struggle with the ruling Congress Party. They succeeded in imposing a *fait accompli* in the street by staging sit-ins in the Western Ring Road that stretches north of the capital, Sana'a, starting at the old Sana'a University and ending at the headquarters of the First Armoured Division led by Ali Muhsin Al-Ahmar, the military leader who seceded from the army.⁴

The youth movement put the Islamists to the test in front of a public waiting to see their reaction to the peaceful youth movement. Their response, when it came, was divided according to the interests of different groups in the movement, and their respective links to the regime in power and to various power centres in the country.

The Islamists Movement in Yemen comprises four different groups: the Muslim Brotherhood, represented by the Yemeni Congregation for Reform; Ansar Allah (God's Supporters), or the Houthis; Salafist movements of various leanings; and the Supporters of Sharia, namely Al-Qaeda.

The Ansar Allah Movement – the Houthis – is a relatively new movement compared with other Islamist groups. It was formed in June 2004 essentially as a result of the conflict between government forces and one of the Zaidi Movement's *imams*, Hussein Badreddin Al-Houthi (Al-Daghshi 2009, 148). The latter's anti-American slogan stated: 'God is Great, Death to America, Death to Israel, May God Curse the Jews, and Victory to Islam,' which is an adaptation of Imam Khomeini's slogan during the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Many researchers believe that the tenets of Ansar Allah were born in the mid-1980s when a group of Zaidi youths decided to form an intellectual group to combat the injustices perpetrated against their sect. The sect was marginalized, unable to teach its tenets, and a ban was imposed on printing its books and teaching its tenets (Boucek 2012, 7, Al-Daghshi 2009, 34). The youths' ideas nonetheless grew in prominence and became set after unification in 1990 when the group established what was called at the time the 'Believing Youth Forum' which organized three-month summer camps during the holidays to teach the sect's principles and basic tenets.

The evidence indicates that:

conflict arose from a complex combination of competing sectarian identities, regional underdevelopment, perceived socioeconomic injustices, and historical grievances. It is exacerbated by tensions between the indigenous Zaidi Shia population and Sunni Salafi fundamentalists who have relocated to the area. Tribal rivalries also made things worse, because the regime has recruited tribal fighters to combat the insurrection.

(Boucek 2010, 8)

Soon after the outbreak of the youth revolution, the Houthi Movement occupied Sa'ada Governorate by force, wrenched it away from government control and

elected a new governor there by acclamation (Ayesh 2012). It also helped occupy Al-Jouf Governorate in cooperation with forces loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, also wresting it away from government control, and appointed a candidate acceptable to both parties in the conflict, the Houthis and the Brotherhood (*Al-Watan* May 20, 2012).

The Houthi Movement rejected the initiative formulated by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to end the conflict and depicted it as an American conspiracy to circumvent the Yemeni people's revolution, and prevent it from achieving its full objectives. It called for a boycott of the presidential elections, proposed in the Gulf initiative, but agreed to take part in a national dialogue scheduled to take place soon thereafter.

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood is one of the political movements most involved in Yemeni mainstream political, social and economic life; it has the largest popular following and greatest social impact. This is due to several factors. Chief among them is the fact that the country's most influential tribal, business and senior military leaders are all members of the party. Among the tribal leaders concerned are Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Ahmar, his sons, Sinan and Abu Lahoum, and the latter's sons, who are all considered among Yemen's most important tribal leaders and all are members of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, the arm of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Yemen. Also a member is Muhsin Al-Ahmar, a military leader who owns 50% of the Yemeni Army's assets (A-Qarawi 2011).

The Brotherhood's influence was not confined to the religious, spiritual guidance and education domains, but its presence was also felt in most state institutions including security, military, diplomatic and media institutions. When the youth rebellion began and the movement decided to throw its weight behind it, in the wake of the Al-Karama Friday massacre that took place on 18 March 2011, most of the Brotherhood's prominent members decided to secede from the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Among the latter were ministers and ambassadors in Arab and Western countries, the chief editors of government newspapers and of Yemen's news agency Saba', and leaders of security and military agencies. The group included General Ali Muhsin Al-Ahmar, leader of the North-Western Region and the First Armoured Brigade, whose forces took control of the northern areas of the capital, Sana'a, including the area where the youths were staging their sit-in.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Ahmar's sons, in particular the eldest, Sadeq bin Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Ahmar, the main sheikh of the Hashid Tribe and member of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform, took control of government institutions situated near his home in the Hasaba area.

The Salafist Movement comprises three currents: the first is traditional and closest of the three to the ideas of the Salafist Movement's founder in Yemen, Sheikh Muqbel Al-Wad'i. Al-Wad'i was himself influenced by Salafist sheikhs in Saudi Arabia, including the Al-Jame'i current, whose founder is Sheikh Mohammad bin Aman Al-Jame'i, an Ethiopian cleric who teaches at the Islamic University, and the Saudi cleric Sheikh Rabee' bin Hadi Al-Mudkhali (Al-Daghshi 2012, 107). The second current belongs to the Al-Hikma Society (Wisdom), which is heavily influenced by Egyptian cleric Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Abdel-Khaleq in Kuwait, and by the Kuwaiti Ihya' Al-Turath current (Heritage Revival). There is also the Ihsan Association current, which is influenced by the Syrian cleric Mohammad Srour, known in Yemen as the Syrian current.

However, because the Salafist Movement, especially the traditional and Muqbeli currents (after Muqbel bin Hadi Al-Wa'idi, founder of Salafism in Yemen), adhered to its own teachings and declared principles, in particular obedience to 'the guardian',

it was the only Islamist political movement that continued to back the regime. It issued multiple *fatwas* (religious edicts) against disobeying the guardian, called on the youth to leave the streets ('*Adan al-Ghad* 2010), and continued on that track until the president's resignation, under the leadership of Yahya Al-Hajouri and Abu Al-Hassan Al-Ma'ribi.

The position of the other Salafist movements passed through two different stages. The first was when most of their statements preached against disobeying the unjust ruler except through legal means, and called for avoiding those that lead to sedition and bloodletting, such as demonstrations (al-Tagheer 2011).

The second stage followed the onset of the revolution, when their position towards political activism changed. They established the first Salafist political party despite the fact that they did not believe in political action per se, and used to criticize the Muslim Brotherhood for involving themselves in the political game. The new party, Itihad Al-Rashad Al-Yamani (Yemeni Al-Rashad Union), saw the light on 14 March 2012, and it counted among its members the vast majority of Yemen's Salafist parties hailing from all three Salafist currents. However, a number of traditional tribal Salafist sheikhs stayed away, including Sheikh Yahya Al-Hajouri, Sheikh Mohammad al-Imam and a number of others close to the traditional current (Almasdar Online 2012a).

As for Al-Qaeda in Yemen, the establishment of this new movement was announced in January 2009 under the name Ansar Al-Sharia, or Qaedat al Jihad fi Jazeerat al-Arab (Base of Jihad in the Arabian Peninsula) (Al-Daghshi 2012, 27). However, the movement had actually been in existence since the 1980s when Yemeni youths were being recruited to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan, with the help of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Saudi intelligence service, and the support of local Muslim clerics such as Sheikh Abdul-Majid Al-Zaydani, President of Al-Iman University in Yemen.

For his part, Sheikh Anwar Al-Awlaki, one of the most important Al-Qaeda theoreticians, saw the Arab revolutions as a step in the right direction, and an opportunity for the *mujahideen* to breathe again after being suffocated for three long decades (Al-Qadimi 2012, 32).

For a short time in 2011, Al-Qaeda spread its control over vast territories in the Governorates of Shabwa and Abyan. This was due to the two governorates' geographic location; the fact that they are situated in rugged mountainous terrain in proximity to the sea, in particular the Gulf of Aden where smuggling is rife, made the nearby Yemeni shores accessible to Somali *mujahideen* jihadist youths from Afghanistan and Pakistan via the Indian Ocean (Almasdar Online 2012b). Moreover, the two governorates are sparsely populated: Abyan with its 500,000 inhabitants and 16,943 km² area is one-and-a-half times the size of Lebanon; and Al Shabwa with its 525,000 inhabitants and 42,584 km² area. Over and above that, the local inhabitants sympathize with leaders of Al-Qaeda who hail from their region, such as Mohammad 'Ameer Al-Awlaki and Jalal Bal'eedi, coupled with the fact that tribal influence in those areas was too weak to prevent the movement from imposing its control, unlike in north Yemen where tribal forces are well trained and operate in a densely populated region. There is also the sectarian dimension, whereby the overwhelming majority of the south's inhabitants belong to the Shafei sect (Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation 2010, Yemeni Presidency's National Information Centre 2010).

However, as far as the adoption of religious ideas is concerned, and despite these superficial divisions, there is genuine religious vitality and activism rather than

sectarian entrenchment in Yemen, as is the case in other Arab countries such as Lebanon and Iraq, for example. The individual in Yemen can join the Muslim Brotherhood one day and transfer his allegiance to the Zaidies the next, or vice versa, without difficulty because sectarianism is not the object of intense struggle in Yemen as it is in other countries. There is a wide scope of conviviality, tolerance and homogeneity due in part to the nature of the Zaidi and Shafei sects, to which the majority of the Yemeni population adheres. These are close to the Sunni branch of Islam because Zaidi theology is mostly Hanafi, and the Shafei sect is close to Sufism, which is known for its tolerance and acceptance of the other. Yemeni society is also flexible and beneficially pragmatic in part due to the poor economic capabilities and difficult daily life of its citizens.

It could also be stated that there are many similarities between most contemporary Islamist movements, be they Sunni or Shia. In terms of form, they distinguish themselves from other parities by adopting religious discourses, using religious terminology and purporting to speak in the name of religion. They all advocate a national revival through a return to the early origins of Islam, and call for *jihad* to defend Islam and the Arab nation's holy places; they combine sectarianism, advocacy for it and social and political activism, and declare their willingness to sacrifice in the cause of Islam, and their readiness to defy the political and religious authorities.

However, since the subject here is Islamic political movements, if one does not make sense of their ideological bases, their behaviour or manner of thinking will not be understood. Many researchers are surprised when they see the differences between different Islamist currents that sometimes reach the level of enmity and exaggerated mutual accusations of apostasy and heresy.⁵

There is often confusion between the common constants among the Muslims (the dogma of the faith) and political disagreements caused by a fanaticism that rejects the other. It could be stated in this context that the main differences between the Islamist political movements lie in the political form they take rather than the basic content. Differences emerged historically around a political issue, the imamate, and are still on-going today as a political disagreement around the issue of governance, 'and the first disagreement among the Muslims after their Prophet was the disagreement over the imamate' (Al-Ash'ari 1985, 39). However, this disagreement has taken on an ideological dimension, a fact this article will try to demonstrate by highlighting and analysing the ideological basis underlying political Islam, in general and in Yemen in particular.

It is impossible to talk about Islamist political movements as a single unit; they have different visions, plans, strategies, tactics, organizations and formations, and this plurality has gone beyond a few differences between different organizations to affecting individual organizations (Al Torabi et al. 2003, 235).

In this connection, the following list will serve as a reminder of a number of issues that all Islamist political groups, regardless of their specific beliefs and tendencies, agree on:

- All Islamist political movements see Islam both as a state and a religion, i.e. they do not accept any separation between the two and see it as a deviation from Islam. They see Islam as divine guidance on how to organize people's religious and temporal lives, and this led to the claim that 'Governance is God's alone'. In Islam, a governance system that emanates from the people and is separate from God's governance and tenets of the faith does not exist; Islam is a unifying religion

while democracy is non-religious. Islam does not differentiate between the religious and the temporal, or public and private lives. Government by the people is outside the realm of religion, and is therefore seen as an attempt to share and dilute God's exclusive domain; Islam is not an isolated political practice but a comprehensive life system applicable to the family, to society, and to the economic, social and political spheres. The people inherit the earth on condition that they submit to God and to His governance, obey His laws and commit to this particular system of *khilafa* (selecting the ruler). At the first disagreement, they should return to the holy text and understand it in light of the religious legislative sources to which every individual in the nation should commit, through the intermediary of its *imams* and emirs.

- Islamist political movements consider the Qur'an and the Sunna the source of all legislation, despite certain differences in form between them, since Sunni sources based on Shia tenets are different from Sunni sources based on Sunni tenets.
- All Islamist political movements believe in following the worthy ancestors' example, despite the differences between them on certain issues; the Sunnis consider the Prophet's companions as worthy ancestors, while the Shia consider the *imams* of the Prophet's family as worthy ancestors.
- All Islamist political movements believe in building an ideal society free of moral corruption and spiritual vacuity, and in rearing a conservative Muslim family.
- Islamist political movements believe that their movement is global rather than local and specific to one country; their activism is not confined to a particular country but spreads further afield to the larger Arab and Muslim region, and the world as a whole, because Islam is global by nature.
- Islamist political movements believe that the only legitimate power in the state should rest in the hands of the *imams*; they also believe that the group needs a leader, an emir, though his title might differ from one movement to another. This title ranges from '*wilayat al-faqeeh*' (Guardian of the Jurisprudence) and the '*marje'ya*' (religious reference) in Shia Islam, to the General Guide of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood, and the leaders of respective movements and religious *imams* in Salafist currents.

However, not all religious sects and movements support this last concept; others endorse the human option and believe that the establishment of the imamate is an intellectual process rather than a legal religious duty because they entrust civilian (or intellectual) interests to the group; this view is widespread among the Mu'tazala and Zaidi groups (Al-Mouseli 2003, 45).

Islamist political parties in Yemen were influenced intellectually by the thoughts of Sayed Qutob, a pioneer of the activist line in contemporary political Islam, who died in 1966. He was a 'genuine innovator with an independent mind whose influence is inestimable on the present generation of Islamists' (Barakat n.d., 162).

It could be said that Sayed Qutob's ideas, and those of his predecessors, lie at the foundation of political Islam in Yemen, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the wide array of Salafist groups. The only divergence with Qutob's ideas concerns the manner of presenting the ideology, or the names given to different ideas; local movements usually present them in a modern framework more in line with the particular nature of Yemeni society.

Some of these movements were also affected by the religious ideas Khomeini carried over to the political domain; these ideas became a strong incentive and a catalyst

for Zaidi youths hungry for a religious culture to adopt. The latter badly needed an inspiration to galvanize Zaidi youths left out by the Muslim Brotherhood which failed to embrace them due to ideological differences, and the intellectual repression they suffered at the hands of the North Yemeni regime prior to 1990. Khomeini's movement was the closest example to them, on both the sectarian and emotional levels, especially with its use of names belonging to the Prophet's family. Khomeini's ideas became the material content and his person became the inspiration and the leadership they sought, and the resulting political activism among Zaidi youths led to the establishment of the Al-Haq (Truth) Party and the Believing Youths Movement, soon followed by the Mukabbireen (Callers to prayer) Movement, or Ansar Allah, or the Houthi Movement, after its founder Sayed Hussein Baderaddin Al-Houthi. The latter drew inspiration from Khomeini when warning against the American and Western threat using religious slogans.

Research findings: implications and some background

Looking again at religious extremism, it is clear that because it is a complex and variable phenomenon it cannot be explained by studying a single variable. Several factors and variables interact and overlap with each other and, in doing so, create an environment that fosters religious extremism and allows it to grow.

It could also be said that the above-mentioned variables might not necessarily be reasons that directly lead to religious extremism. Several indirect reasons might well have played a role as well, and one could say that these are the environments that allow religious extremism to grow, although they are not the immediate or latent constructive factors that give rise to the sort of religious extremism of concern here.

The findings of the research that informs this article may be summarized as follows.

The first hypothesis

The first hypothesis is that poverty is a basic factor in creating a social environment conducive to the rise of Salafism. In other words, the more acute the poverty, the more the environment is conducive to the rise and spread of extremist Salafism. What is meant here is the relative poverty that characterizes the living standards of the majority of Yemen's population.⁶ The finding is that there is a direct positive relationship between poverty and religious extremism; the higher the poverty rate, the more acute religious extremism is. The results of testing this hypothesis were as follows:

- As far as religious extremism in general is concerned, it was found that the age groups 18–24 and 15–31 years are the most affected by it. These are also the age groups that poverty has a direct effect on, making them more vulnerable and, thence, it appears, more prone to embrace religious extremist ideologies, as Table 3 on poverty indicates.

The research showed that poverty is a major factor in the creation of a social environment conducive to the spread of extremism; the higher the level of poverty, the more severe extremism becomes. The disinterest shown by mainstream Yemeni groups in the people at large, particularly the poor, has fostered a lack of public trust in these groups' leaders. Added to that the shortage of funds in the Yemeni people's

Table 3. Covariance analysis of the correlation between poverty axis and the other variables.

Variables	Political milieu axis	Foreign intervention axis	Tribal and regional discrimination axis	Religious mobilization axis	Leadership axis	Religious extremism
Poverty axis	0.662	0.534	0.549	0.512	0.193	0.766
Gender						
Male	0.501	0.525	0.503	0.589	0.355	0.720
Female	0.591	0.661	0.547	0.541	0.384	0.782
Age						
24-18	0.615	0.547	0.533	0.527	0.271	0.750
31-25	0.668	0.328	0.492	0.325	-0.195	0.714
38-32	0.099	0.032	-0.021	0.309	0.185	0.339
45-39	0.554	0.342	0.349	0.633	0.021	0.569
52-46	0.298	0.347	0.580	0.587	0.268	0.962
53 or more	0.525	0.573	0.518	0.464	0.259	0.714
Marital status						
Single	0.656	0.462	0.515	0.559	0.200	0.769
Married	0.667	0.338	0.767	0.887	0.791	0.860
Level of education						
Can read and write	0.750	0.595	0.421	0.208	0.408	0.796
Primary	0.866	0.726	0.663	0.590	0.340	0.843
Secondary	0.403	0.412	0.416	0.375	0.213	0.646
University level and higher	0.945	-0.371	0.999	0.978	-0.999	0.949
Vocational education	0.580	0.499	0.321	0.602	0.000	0.671
Religious education	0.586	0.475	0.465	0.443	0.160	0.715
Profession						
Civil servant	0.506	0.233	0.477	0.546	0.117	0.649
Private sector	-0.404	0.305	0.367	-0.248	-0.591	0.191
Labourer	0.804	0.751	0.864	0.889	0.599	0.922
Unemployed	0.507	0.660	0.436	0.458	0.421	0.738
Student	0.690	0.712	0.447	0.512	0.316	0.780
Income (000)						
20 or less	0.320	0.258	0.770	0.729	0.778	0.852
30-21	0.596	0.391	0.582	0.493	0.126	0.707
50-31	0.554	0.468	0.222	0.344	-0.235	0.465
100-51	0.79	0.228	0.457	0.332	-0.082	0.617
Place of residence						
Sana'a	0.558	0.530	0.467	0.483	0.086	0.709
Thoummar	0.683	0.535	0.636	0.628	0.454	0.818

pockets, lack of natural resources, increased population growth rates and the conflicts between different groups have exacerbated the plight of ordinary Yemenis. The conflicts that have afflicted Yemen over the years include the war between the royalists and the republicans (that ended in 1970), the Middle Region War (that ended in 1982), the Summer 1994 War, and the Sa'ada War (2004–2010). These factors have increased the poverty rates and destabilized the social fabric, which in turn has eroded social solidarity and, as argued by Durkheim, has weakened the social consciousness without offering an alternative. Over time this has led to an erosion of social norms, or anomie, which in turn has provoked acts of violence and, as anticipated by Oberschall (1993), a loss of the common interests that once existed between upper- and lower-class groups.

Specifically, as evidenced in the responses of those sampled in the survey undertaken as part of this research, this has led to experimentation with new ideas and the emergence of new groups on the scene thanks to the spread effect from nearby societies. This was substantiated in the answers of those surveyed, as follows:

- A small majority of the research sample either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (58.5%), that poverty is a basic cause of religious extremism.
- A large minority of respondents either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (42%), that poverty helped the creation and rise of the Salafist movement in Yemen.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (77.6%), that giving financial assistance to the poor helped these movements increase their popularity.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (61%), that the Islamist movements are the most attentive to the needs of the poor.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (67.3%), that the lack of state-sponsored projects targeting the poor pushed them towards the Islamist movements.
- A small majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (53%), that the children of wealthy parents are less likely to join Islamist parties.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (73.7%), that the Islamist groups' social solidarity programmes enhanced their presence among the people.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (83.9%), that the mass wedding ceremonies organized by the Islamist movements are important source of their popularity.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (84.4%), that distributing food to the people is a positive move on the Islamist movements' part.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (67.8%), that the Islamist movements are more attentive to the people's financial needs.

This outcome is all the more significant given that 55% of the Yemeni people live below the poverty line.

The political and economic regime's inability to absorb the new immigrants from rural to urban areas, and integrate them in the new society, makes these migrants more prone to embrace religious extremism. Therefore, the weakness or ineffectiveness of state programmes targeting this particular social sector means that there is a higher possibility that the poorest among them will join extremist religious groups, and that they will become the main raw material for recruitment by these groups.

Added to the above is the fact that oil exports, so necessary to the Yemeni government and which account for nearly 75% of its revenue, will soon be depleted. Yemeni

oil exports dropped from 450,000 barrels per day in 2003 to around 280,000 barrels per day in January 2009, and according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), oil production dropped in 2010 to 260,000 barrels per day (Energy Information Administration 2010, 2).

Experts believe that Yemeni oil exports will entirely cease in 2017, and that the Yemeni government will no longer benefit materially from the country's oil exports. This means that the country's economy is headed towards disintegration, given that revenues from oil are the government's main source of funding. This means that it will eventually no longer be able to manage the entire territory, and will become more dependent on foreign assistance (Hedberg 2010, 53).

In light of these circumstances, it is fair to conclude that the growth of extremist Salafism is a natural consequence of Yemeni society's experience, as described above. It has been forced down the path of violence, with the Salafists taking advantage of the poor economic conditions and ever-increasing poverty rates.

The second hypothesis

The second hypothesis was that a closed political environment, i.e. the absence of democracy, creates a social environment favourable to extremist Salafism; the more the democracy, the less the extremism. This suggests there is an inverse relationship between the absence of democracy and extremism; in other words, the less democracy there is, the more religious extremism one has. The findings of the research showed the following:

- As far as religious extremism in general is concerned, the results show that the age group 25–31 years is more amenable to adhering to extremist movements than any other. From this it may be deduced that the political environment affects younger age groups because they are more vulnerable to extremist religious currents, and therefore more likely to associate themselves with them. This is evident in Table 4.

The research project showed that a closed political environment and lack of genuine democracy helped create a social environment amenable to the growth of extremism; and the more advanced democracy is, the lower the level of extremism. The quasi-autocratic policies of certain regimes against the Islamists, their intolerance towards their transgressions, and the limits imposed on the official channels available to them to participate in the political process in a natural and democratic manner has pushed these groups towards extremism. When asked about the subject, the research sample gave the following answers:

- A majority of the research sample either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (62.4%), that the struggle over power is responsible for the rise of Islamist groups.
- A small majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (56%), that the one-party system enhances the Islamist movements' popularity.
- Some respondents either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (38.6%), that free elections help reduce the popularity of Islamist movements.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (70.2%), that putting Islamist leaders in jail makes people sympathetic to their cause.

Table 4. Covariance analysis of the correlation between the political milieu axis and the other variables.

Variables	Poverty axis	Foreign intervention axis	Tribal and regional discrimination axis	Religious mobilization axis	Leadership axis	Religious extremism
Gender						
Male	0.662	0.597	0.485	0.498	0.040	0.706
Female	0.501	0.613	0.720	0.632	0.337	0.806
Age						
24-18	0.591	0.541	0.459	0.468	0.108	0.608
31-25	0.615	0.726	0.690	0.599	0.378	0.852
38-32	0.668	0.543	0.556	0.365	-0.247	0.809
45-39	0.099	0.306	0.172	0.342	-0.007	0.487
52-46	0.554	0.475	0.595	0.750	0.131	0.801
53 or more	0.298	0.862	-0.391	0.340	-0.786	0.189
Marital status						
Single	0.525	0.559	0.521	0.460	0.162	0.658
Married	0.656	0.617	0.556	0.569	0.041	0.784
Level of education						
Can read and write	0.667	0.817	0.672	0.812	0.700	0.878
Primary	0.750	0.413	0.370	0.299	0.366	0.702
Secondary	0.866	0.669	0.549	0.523	0.248	0.762
University level and Higher	0.403	0.551	0.618	0.522	0.106	0.739
occupation						
Vocational education	0.945	-0.655	0.929	0.857	-0.929	0.793
Religious education	0.580	0.510	0.373	0.571	-0.196	0.634
Civil servant	0.586	0.627	0.515	0.467	0.089	0.764
private Sector	0.506	0.554	0.465	0.494	0.135	0.664
Labourer	-0.404	-0.792	-0.960	-0.553	-0.455	-0.792
Unemployed	0.804	0.924	0.869	0.793	0.272	0.902
Student	0.507	0.664	0.706	0.543	0.254	0.750
Income (thousands of riyals)						
20 or less	0.690	0.645	0.526	0.507	0.158	0.723
30-21	0.320	0.649	0.453	0.326	0.417	0.584
50-31	0.596	0.514	0.557	0.458	0.118	0.736
100-51	0.554	0.632	0.600	0.663	-0.138	0.808
101 or more	0.479	0.458	0.792	0.765	0.161	0.895
Place of residence						
Sana'a	0.558	0.676	0.702	0.613	-0.002	0.800
Thoummar	0.683	0.507	0.391	0.419	0.266	0.665

- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (74.2%), that closing newspapers detracts from the regime's credibility.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (69.8%), that it is wrong to have armed clashes with the Islamists.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (75.6%), that division and the tactic of the government to divide the Islamist movements led to the evolution of extremist movements. Having leaders grappling with each other contributes to the emergence of religious extremism, all of which is attributable to or exacerbated by the government. A small majority of respondents either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (53.2%), that genuine freedom will decrease the Islamist movements' popularity.
- A majority agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (58.5%), that longer sentences for individuals mean more popularity for the Islamists.

Yemen's closed political climate is quasi-dictatorial, forbids protests of any significance against the regime and allows the opposition only the slightest of margins to voice its needs. A climate such as this usually reflects a highly centralized system, where decisions are made by a president with no serious challengers to his position. Instead of dealing with it as a political challenge, the regime in Yemen considers the opposition's call for dialogue and reconfiguration of the political system as a threat to national security.

In such a climate, the ruling party's hegemony is clear, as is its use of state institutions to safeguard its monopoly over power; there are no clear lines between the ruling party's operations and different state agencies.

It is important to note, however, that despite the narrow margin allowed officially, Yemen is nonetheless experiencing a stage of rich political pluralism; and most newspapers can raise important issues without being harassed. What this manifests is the extent of the challenge to state power posed by increasing disaffection.

In this Arab-Islamic world, the duality of power and the sword can also be noticed; and when the sacred appears on the political scene, trickery, sedition and mistakes rear their head, whereby cultural absolutes replace the religious creed, and new, hardline and deeply ingrained beliefs surface in the minds of fanatical individuals. The objective becomes the liquidation of those who do not fall in line, as a natural consequence of the accumulated emotional vacuity within man. The machinery of loyalty and obedience to the emir and leader is also still present, even if the latter is the lowest of the low; and the concept of death becomes predominant, *jihad* and *ijtihad* (independent interpretation) become heresy and apostasy, and religiously sanctioned disagreement is deemed taboo and a practice usually deserving death.

The discourse of the sword begins with God and ends with murder; God gets lost in all of this and only the killing remains, predominant on the scene and the favoured method of imposing one's opinion and making the desired change. This sort of discourse, which has been prevalent in man's midst for at least a millennium, is the discourse of power and destruction that turns the individual into the sole proprietor of the truth, meaning that everyone else should be put aside and cut down to size.

It is safe to say that even though groups which are prone to violence often disagree or go to war against each other, and the common denominator among them remains the language of violence, the main responsibility for this falls on the shoulders of the regime that uses religious discourse, the sacred, the claim to guardianship and the duty of obedience, to further its interests.

Ever since the Third World became an entity unto its own, its discourses and practices have been those of power and the sword, and underlying it all is the theme of God, obedience to the guardian and the premise that God takes away through power what He does not through the Qu'ran. Thus it transpires, in the Arab world, that the most ominous manifestation of power is when the sword and the Qu'ran join forces in a single discourse, and end up resting in the hands of a single authority.

The quasi-dictatorial policies of some regimes against the Islamists, never forgiving their mistakes and greatly limiting the official outlets that allow them to take part in the country's political life in a natural and democratic manner, could push these groups towards extremist ideologies.

If one looks at the current situation in Yemen, it is found that the governing institution accepts the presence of Islamist groups in the country as long as their activities are confined to religious proselytizing, and they stay clear of political activism – which is exactly how the regime in Yemen deals with the Salafist movement. Not only has the government attempted to control such movements and closely monitor their activities, but also it has fomented enmity between them and used the divisions politically to deal a blow to the opposition and to cut it down to size.

The Yemeni regime strove to balance various conflicts by pitting one social group against the other, and one political current against the other, without having to intervene directly. This is how it managed to exhaust the energies of various groups and control the strings of the political game (Carroll 1986, 185).

This is what the ruling party did when it used the Yemeni Congregation for Reform to deal a blow to the Yemeni Socialist Party, a move that led to the outbreak of the Summer 1994 War, and ouster of the latter party from the political equation in Yemen. The ruling party then turned its attention to the Yemeni Congregation for Reform and used the Salafist currents and religious youths as a foil, which led to the Congregation Party's departure from government following the 1997 elections. After that, it tried to deal a similar blow to the religious youths by instigating Salafist groups in the areas where the Zaidi religion predominates, thus provoking the Houthi War that began in 2004 and led to six different wars, with still no end in sight.

For a while Yemen turned away from the less despotic regimes in the region and instead moved in a direction that led to the campaign of repression launched in June 2004 against the followers of Hussein Badreddin Al-Houthi. It marked the first significant dismantlement of the old conciliatory formula that had framed relations between the Islamists and the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh, and, perhaps due to American pressure on Yemen – as well as direct Saudi pressure – helped open to question the sensitive equilibriums involved in the reconciliation efforts between the regime, the Houthis and the tribes. For a long time this conciliation process was a key to the country's political stability, and would have allowed it to rid itself of the tensions associated with the repressive measures against the Islamist current, or even its eradication (Burgat 2006, 99).

The regime also tried to monopolize the ideological power of Islam and pull the rug from under the feet of its challengers by integrating and containing extremist Salafist groups in Thamar, Saada and Ma'reb, and use that power against its other enemies, in particular Ansar Allah, one of Badreddin Al-Houthi's supporters, against the Islah Party (The Muslim Brotherhood). It relied on the so-called moderate *ulema* that play, next to the regime, a pivotal role in the country's political life by issuing, among others, *fatwas* in support of the regime at election time or during armed conflicts.

The emergence of ideologically leftist parties and currents, like the Nasserism that informed the mindset of former Yemeni President Ibrahim Al-Hamdi, socialism in South Yemen, and certain elements of the Nationalist and Socialist Baathist ideologies, meant that popular political activism in the early 1970s involved a variety of conflicting political ideologies. However, because the collective consciousness of Yemeni society is essentially Islamic, it made it easier for the Salafist movement and Muslim Brotherhood to influence the public ideologically, and sway them in favour of political Islam.

The assassination of former Yemeni President Ibrahim Al-Hamdi in 1977 and some Nasserite parties' support for the coup d'état in the hope of reaching power, adversely affected the margin of democracy that existed in the country at the time. It made it difficult for other political parties to take part in the political process and in state institutions, and compelled many groups, especially the Islamists, to go underground and work in secret, a phenomenon that increased their tendency towards fanaticism and reinforced their hard-line attitudes.

The third hypothesis

The third hypothesis contends that external interventions played an important role in the rise and tendencies of Salafist parties in the Arab–Islamic world. The less foreign intervention there is, whether material or intellectual, the lower the level of extremism, and the reverse is also true. In other words, the assumption is that if foreign intervention in local societies ceases, Salafist movements will cease being attractive to the public, and more specifically, if Salafist movements in Yemen did not receive material and intellectual support from neighbouring Gulf countries, through the printing of books and other material, the reach of fanaticism and extremism will be more limited. The contention to be tested, therefore, is that there is a direct positive relationship between foreign intervention and religious extremism. The results of the survey indicate the following:

- In the case of religious extremism in general, the view was that the age group 18–24 years was more vulnerable to it than other age groups, meaning that foreign intervention affects younger age groups. It makes them vulnerable to religious extremism and therefore more likely to adopt it, which is what the table relevant to foreign intervention shows (Table 5).

The study revealed that external intervention plays an important role in the rise, tendencies and spread of Salafism, at least in Yemen, and presumably in other Arab–Islamic societies; this means that the less foreign intervention there is, the lower the level of extremism; and the reverse presumably also holds. However, the phenomenon could also spread from one country to another involuntarily through a knock-on effect, without prior planning. Events are contagious and spread from one system to another through the media and personal contacts, among other means, and they affect environments in their proximity where similar circumstances exist. The phenomenon could also spread voluntarily through planned and deliberate action. In this context, respondents in the study sample answered as follows:

- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (65.9%), that the reason behind the rise of Salafism in Yemen is intervention by neighbouring countries.
- A slim majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (51.2%), that the presence of other sects reinforces Salafism in Yemen.

Table 5. Covariance analysis of the correlation between external intervention axis and the other variables.

Variables		Poverty axis	Political milieu axis	Tribal and regional discrimination axis	Religious mobilization axis	Leadership axis	Religious extremism
Gender	Male	0.534	0.597	0.586	0.521	0.097	0.760
	Female	0.525	0.613	0.585	0.525	0.262	0.755
Age	24-18	0.661	0.541	0.678	0.581	0.158	0.803
	31-25	0.547	0.726	0.546	0.564	0.412	0.790
	38-32	0.328	0.543	0.446	0.171	-0.166	0.659
	45-39	0.032	0.306	0.338	-0.065	-0.072	0.610
	52-46	0.342	0.475	0.401	0.447	0.106	0.572
	53 or more	0.347	0.862	-0.211	0.727	-0.790	0.330
Marital status	Single	0.573	0.559	0.665	0.535	0.284	0.813
	Married	0.462	0.617	0.479	0.434	-0.022	0.685
Level of education	Can read and write	0.338	0.817	0.680	0.626	0.652	0.724
	Primary	0.595	0.413	0.126	0.037	0.625	0.779
	Secondary	0.726	0.669	0.789	0.618	0.373	0.881
	University level and higher	0.412	0.551	0.542	0.465	0.010	0.703
Profession	Vocational education	-0.371	-0.655	-0.327	-0.171	0.327	-0.059
	Religious education	0.499	0.510	0.243	0.458	-0.094	0.625
Income (thousands of riyals)	Civil servant	0.475	0.627	0.407	0.382	0.041	0.674
	Private sector	0.233	0.554	0.560	0.359	-0.083	0.710
	Labourer	0.305	-0.792	0.930	0.628	0.505	0.987
	Unemployed	0.751	0.924	0.889	0.840	0.223	0.904
	Student	0.660	0.664	0.646	0.590	0.419	0.834
	20 or less	0.712	0.645	0.630	0.582	0.223	0.851
Place of residence	30-21	0.258	0.649	0.613	0.458	0.508	0.629
	50-31	0.391	0.514	0.634	0.467	0.189	0.760
	100-51	0.468	0.632	0.530	0.323	-0.266	0.632
	101 or more	0.228	0.458	0.328	0.480	-0.122	0.602
Thoummar	Sana'a	0.530	0.676	0.558	0.546	-0.029	0.751
	Thoummar	0.535	0.507	0.649	0.501	0.385	0.788

- Respondents either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (75.6%), that the American War on Terror has enhanced the Islamist movements' popularity.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (73.2%), that some of the Islamist groups' leaders have links with foreign countries.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (62.4%), that Sunnis, Shias or other sects were never heard before in Yemen.
- Just under half the respondents either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (49.3%), that most of the problems plaguing Yemen are due to outside factors.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (58.5%), that charitable organizations belonging to Islamist movements receive foreign funding.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (78.6%), that Yemeni society would be described as homogenous if foreign interventions cease.

The author believes that given the recent technological developments in various fields, especially the satellite media, the internet and mobile telecommunications, borders are no longer an isolating factor among states, a fact that makes countries vulnerable to interference by other countries in their internal affairs, especially by those closest to them. This is especially true if a country is 'beset by racial, ethnic, religious or regional divisions, since local warring factions tend to seek support and assistance from beyond the country's borders' (Hill and Rothchild 1980, 716). Research in other contexts bears out that, whether by deliberate intention or otherwise, a phenomenon can be expected to spread from one country to the other through the spillover effect or other forms of contagion (Kerbo 1978, 365).

In the case of Yemen; the direct effect on the country was the result of Saudi Arabia's proximity, and the indirect effect was a result of the Kingdom's expulsion of 1 million Yemeni workers to their home country during the Second Gulf War (1990–1991), as well as through personal contacts. More broadly, one can date the impact of these foreign influences and interventions in Yemen and the role they played in the rise and spread of religious extremism to the mid-1980s, the period in which the rise of the phenomenon became clearly evident.

In a report to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US Congress, on 21 March 1985, Richard Murphy, Assistance Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs at the time, alluded to the importance of the Yemeni Arab Republic for regional security, and to the fact that the South East Asia region, including the Southern Arabian Gulf region, is one of the most important regions for energy in the world (cited in Al-Tawil 2009, 39). He highlighted the importance of the Soviet threat to the region, and said that North Yemen acts as a buffer zone between the socialist regime in South Yemen and Saudi Arabia, whose regime is loyal to American interests. The report underlined the fact the objective of American policy in the region was to strengthen American national security in order to protect its interests in the Arab Gulf region. This reasoning was behind US policies to assist North Yemen to improve its military capability to act as a deterrent to the Marxist Yemeni forces in the south, supported strategically by the Soviet Union (Al-Tawil 2009).

In this connection, militias were formed under Islamic names in the middle part of the country, whose task was to stop the spread of socialism in the south. This contributed to what became known as the Mid-Section War, which lasted from 1978 to 1982, during which fighters from the Islamic Front waged a vicious campaign against the Democratic National Front. Tribal sheikhs declared their support for the Islamic Front, a name that the citizens and foreign media gave to the Muslim Brotherhood's

fighters and those who fought alongside them against the National Front (Al-Tawil 2009).

Yemen's close proximity to Saudi Arabia was an important factor behind its high ranking on America's national security agenda that aimed at protecting its interests in the oil region by supporting *ihadists* inside Yemen against the socialist regime in the former south, or training young men to fight against the spread of Communism in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia was the primary implementer of this policy and:

for this reason, the United States refused to deal directly with the Yemeni Government in Sana'a at the time and asked Riyadh to manage the relationship with North Yemen on its behalf. The Americans only intervened when there was a serious threat and, even then, their intervention was neither strong enough nor consistent. The weapons that President Carter asked be delivered to Yemen did not arrive in time for the war against the South, but went instead to Saudi Arabia upon its request; and once the threat to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime subsided, Washington insisted on not dealing directly with Sana'a, and again handed the Yemeni file over to Saudi Arabia.

(Al-Tawil 2009, 39)

Following the events of 11 September 2001, Yemen found itself in the eye of the American storm, and the Americans began to apply direct pressure on it (Burgat 2006, 99).

Over and above that, there is the issue of emigration to Saudi Arabia; taking Yemen as example, a country that exports people and has been associated with emigration since olden times, it is claimed that the 'ever increasing flow of the urbanised and politicised proletariat and petite bourgeoisie is responsible for the rise of Islamism' (Fischer 1982, 102).

It is clear that those who migrate from rural to urban areas, mostly peasants and the abject poor, are more attached than others to their cultural heritage, customs and traditions, with the result that their quick migration and urbanization has resulted in the formation of large blocks on the periphery of the main cities – blocks that usually end up marginalized and difficult to integrate in everyday urban life. This causes groups of migrants to congregate at the edge of the capital city, form poverty belts, and live in poor economic and social conditions, all of which makes them more vulnerable to various social ills such as unemployment and deprivation. This, in turn, increases their isolation and sense of injustice, makes them more receptive to extremist ideas, and turns them into ideal candidates and raw material for intervention and mobilization by Islamist groups amply financed from abroad. This leads one back to foreign intervention and the impact it has on the growing support for Salafist movements, and its links to religious extremism in Yemeni society.

This is not all: the ideological factor that begets extremism in Saudi Arabia is the same ideological factor that begets extremism in Yemen, and the best example is so-called Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which is a by-product of two organizations: Al-Qaeda in Yemen and Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi and Yemeni security services have discovered that most of the funds that finance Al-Qaeda's operations in Yemen are donations from religious groups in the Saudi Kingdom (*Sharq al-Awsat* 2010). Needless to say that Saudi Arabia sees Yemen as its own backyard, and people are still heard to say, 'Yemen's security is the Kingdom's security,' a phrase that high officials in both countries often repeat. Moreover, Saudi Arabia pays monthly salaries to major Yemeni tribal chiefs and religious figures who profess loyalty to it, funds Salafist schools, and lends them material and moral support (Yementoday.net 2010).

It could also be said that among the main factors that led to the rise of religious extremism in Yemen is the widespread mobilization of Yemeni youth by Saudi Arabia and the United States. These youths were imbued with the spirit of *jihad* against communist godlessness and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, at a time when the United States, with help from Saudi Arabia, was trying hard to threaten and destabilize the Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

To this end, the Americans supported Islamist political groups, in particular those who upheld extremist views such as the Bin Ladens, and supplied them with weapons, men and money, and young Yemenis making up the bulk of the fighting force. The Cold War therefore allowed Islamist political groups with extremist views to strengthen their activities. In the words of Stephen Pelletiere:

To understand fundamentalism, one must return to the 1970s and the period of the Cold War; the extremist fundamentalist movement sprang from the clash between rightist and leftist forces, and this particular circumstance – being a product of the Cold War – was the main catalyst for its creation and development.

(Pelletiere 1995, 6)

The Cold War between the capitalist and communist blocks, represented by the United States and the Soviet Union, were key factors in propelling Yemeni youths belonging to fundamentalist religious groups towards violence and religious fanaticism. It was a direct result of their sudden abandonment on the battlefield once they had fulfilled what was required of them once the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan.

After being the centre of the world's attention, with weapons and funds flowing in their direction, these youths suddenly found themselves by the wayside with nothing to their name, not even the right to return to their homeland where they were pursued for extremist terrorism activities. In reaction to that, they formed blocs and fighting groups to protect their interests and aspirations, a subject to which this article returns to below.

The fourth hypothesis

The fourth hypothesis was that tribal discrimination in Yemen fostered a climate amenable to the growth of Salafist extremism, and what is meant by discrimination here are the activities that prevent members of a particular group from accessing certain resources, rewards, higher social status and other privileges that others readily enjoy. These are the privileges that earn the individual a structurally inherited social status that rests on the social honour or high status that society confers on a certain group. Members of the elite enjoy positive privileges, while those not so honoured, the outcasts, are either looked down upon with contempt or treated by the majority like members of a lower caste. Discrimination here also means social exclusion involving a series of deprivations that prevent individuals and groups from fully participating in their society's social, economic or political life (Giddens 2005, 738, 744, 763). The more equality and justice there is among members of a certain society, the less its members are inclined to join Islamist political groups, especially Salafist groups. The assumption here is that the social exclusion of a particular group in society is the reason why people join Salafist groups, coupled with the fact that these religious groups treat their members equally. In other words, there is a direct positive relationship between increasing discrimination and religious extremism. The survey results showed the following.

- A tendency toward religious extremism, in general, when measured against relative income levels revealed that those earning between 21,000 and 30,000 Yemeni riyals were more inclined towards religious fundamentalism than higher earning groups. The lower the income, or when there is none, the more discrimination there is against those in the lower income group, usually the poor; and this creates an ideal climate for religious extremism to grow.

The study shows that tribal discrimination has fostered a climate that nourished Salafist extremism and helped it spread. Both decrement deprivation (the relative immobility of value expectations and absence of possibilities, on which more see below) and progressive deprivation born of aspirational deprivation have had a major impact on Yemeni society. Traditional elites in Yemen have failed to fulfil the people's hopes and aspirations, especially those of the lower social, economic and political classes. The latter were denied the opportunity to improve themselves and attain a higher social status despite the social, economic and political improvements in the country as a whole in the wake of the 1962 Revolution. These factors have together led to a decrement deprivation that eventually turned into deprivation born of thwarted ambition, and to the majority's adoption of new ideas that call for social equality and allow the individual the opportunity to attain high leadership positions within the new Islamist movements. When asked about the subject, the research sample answered as follows:

- Over half either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (53%), that the presence of social classes is one of the reasons behind the rise of extremism.
- A majority of the research sample either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (59.6%), that looking down on the lower social classes helps the growth of Islamist movements.
- Around half either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (50.7%), that the Islamist movements deal with different social classes on the basis of equality.
- Slightly more than half either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (52.7%), that the uppity attitude of the upper classes towards the lower classes has pushed people away from them, and towards the Salafist movements.
- Just under half either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (47.8%), that the tribal chiefs who are members of Islamist movements are more religious than their colleagues in other movements.
- A substantial minority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (45.3%), that people join Islamist movements due to tribal discrimination.
- A small majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (57.5%), that leaders of Islamist movements are humble.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (63.9%), that cultural traditions associated with tribal and regional discrimination have been instrumental in laying the ground for the rise of Islamist movements in Yemen.

By recourse to Relative Deprivation Theory, to which reference was made above, it was found that deprivation leads to frustration, frustration to anger, and anger to violent behaviour. Decrement deprivation means the relative immobility of value expectations and absence of possibilities, and deprivation born of aspirational deprivation means the relative immobility of possibilities and steep increase in expectations. Progressive deprivation means the basic increase in expectations in tandem with lower possibilities.

All these types of deprivation are, in the author's opinion and as far as the theory of relative deprivation is concerned, among the main factors that lead to violence and to the rise of hard-line Salafist movements in Yemeni society.

Decrement deprivation and deprivation born of ambition have had a considerable impact on Yemeni society. For example, a deprived individual is unable to improve himself and/or become a religious scholar because he comes from a lower social class, and is therefore the object of inherited structural discrimination. Thus, an individual from Ta'iz, for example, cannot attain high political office because power is concentrated in the hands of powerful tribesmen and tribal chieftains, despite the fact that the population density in the middle section of the country is higher than in the north where power is concentrated; and the same applies to the distribution of wealth. Discrimination is widespread at all levels, structurally inherited, across regions and in tribal traditions.

One of the effects, as mentioned above, has been the adoption of new ideas that call for social equality and allow the individual to attain high leadership positions within the new Islamist movements. The leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist movement are a good example since most of them come from areas of acute social, economic and political deprivation.

This leads one to state that the lack of social justice in the wake of the 1962 Revolution was a determining factor in pushing Islamist political groups towards extremism.

The fifth hypothesis

The fifth hypothesis tested in this study was that pernicious or exclusivist religious mobilization increases the religious extremism in religious group members. The process by which this occurs relies on a socialization method based on reaction and adjustments in behaviour, in response to a number of intermingled factors, and some groups use these factors to adjust the behaviour of individuals in the direction of their choosing.⁷ The finding here is that there is a direct positive relationship between 'wrong' or exploitative religious mobilization and extremism; the more wrong religious mobilization is, the more religious extremism there is. Similarly, the more unified religious and official education among different groups and social sectors, and the more unified the supervision of mosques is, the lower the level of extremism. The results indicated the following:

- In the case of religious extremism in general, in relation to different age groups, the age group 18–24 years was more inclined towards it than others; this means that the 'wrong' type of religious mobilization affects younger people and makes them more vulnerable to different aspects of religious extremism.

The study showed religious mobilization increases extremism among religious group members, and beyond. The pace of religious mobilization is faster than the state's response to it in the social, economic and political fields, coupled with its failure to keep up with the religious groups' response to the needs of the of people due to the low rate of economic growth. This leads to frustration among the public, increases the appeal of religious extremism and raises the number of new extremist recruits. When asked about the subject, the research sample answered as follows:

- A majority of the research sample either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (69.8%), that the religious satellite media encourage people to join Islamist movements.

- A substantial majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (83.4%), that the spread of religious public lectures is an important factor in religious mobilization, and in increasing the number of supporters.
- A majority of respondents either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (74.6%), that religious songs increase sympathy for Islamist groups among the youth.
- A substantial majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (84.9%), that *imams* who deliver the sermons in mosques are essential to influencing people and winning them over to their side.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (73%), that educational institutions provide the right climate for Islamist movements to grow.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (75%), that Qur'anic schools have played an indirect role in children's religious education.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (72.7%), that religious books have helped change the youths' ideas and attract them to extremist religious movements.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (73.2%), that the employment of religious occasions for political purposes had the highest impact on individuals.
- A large minority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (46%), that ideological over-exaggeration by certain sects has enhanced the appeal of Salafist ideology.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (61.5%), that using the concept of *jihād* in the mobilization process is important in winning supporters.

One of the factors behind these findings is that in rural areas that boast large numbers of mosques, religious congregations, summer camps and religious institutions – especially in Tamar Governorate where there are more of these than in the capital – the environment is more amenable to the spread of religious extremism. There is widespread religious mobilization in this particular governorate, and no effort is spared in that regard; this creates a climate amenable to the rise and spread of religious extremism. Looking again for insights into Max Weber's 'collective action theory', and the particular weight he attaches to ideological paradigms and ideas, it was found that Weber believes that the structure of collective action emanates in general from an initial commitment by group members to a particular kind of ideological paradigm. Ideologies have their own sense and power, meaning that collective action is the outcome of a particular ideological commitment. Moreover, social disagreements based on principles and values are stronger than other disagreements, and therefore more difficult to manage, according to Oberschall (1993), because resolving this kind of disagreement cannot but favour one side over the other, and therefore cannot satisfy both sides at the same time.

This makes one aware of the danger involved in interpretations that generate new notions that could go as far as declare war on Muslim society, using the term *jihād* in quotations taken from Ibn Tamima and Sayed Qutob. Extremist Salafist movements reinterpret texts by using different rulings in the Qur'an against apostates in Quraish and applying them to Muslim society; they went so far as say that 'the land that is not subject to God's rule is a land of apostasy and war, regardless of its inhabitants' faith' (Abdel-Ghani 2006, 280).

Because Saudi Arabia is close to Yemen, is the largest Salafist Wahabi country, has the longest border with Yemen and gives it substantial financial aid, it saw fit to consider changing the religious identity of Yemeni society using all available means at its

Table 6. Covariance analysis of the correlation between religious mobilization axis and the other variables.

Variables	Poverty axis	Political milieu axis	Foreign intervention axis	Tribal and regional discrimination axis	Leadership axis	Religious extremism
Gender	Male	0.498	0.521	0.752	0.379	0.807
	Female	0.589	0.632	0.525	0.747	0.804
Age	24-18	0.541	0.468	0.581	0.827	0.867
	31-25	0.527	0.599	0.564	0.713	0.770
	38-32	0.325	0.365	0.171	0.483	0.558
	45-39	0.309	0.342	-0.065	0.594	0.571
	52-46	0.633	0.750	0.447	0.682	0.817
Marital status	53 or more	0.587	0.340	0.727	-0.254	0.637
	Single	0.464	0.460	0.535	0.772	0.807
Level of education	Married	0.559	0.569	0.434	0.699	0.769
	Can read and write	0.887	0.812	0.626	0.916	0.985
	Primary	0.208	0.299	0.037	0.847	0.477
	Secondary	0.590	0.523	0.618	0.808	0.821
	University level or higher	0.375	0.522	0.465	0.629	0.738
Occupation	Vocational education	0.978	0.857	-0.171	0.987	0.994
	Religious education	0.602	0.571	0.458	0.850	0.885
	Civil servant	0.443	0.467	0.382	0.674	0.733
	Private Sector	0.546	0.494	0.359	0.343	0.703
	Labourer	-0.248	-0.553	0.628	0.632	0.719
Income	Unemployed	0.889	0.793	0.840	0.963	0.947
	Student	0.458	0.543	0.590	0.784	0.829
	20 or less	0.512	0.507	0.582	0.819	0.835
	30-21	0.729	0.326	0.458	0.863	0.887
	50-31	0.493	0.458	0.467	0.658	0.706
Place of residence	100-51	0.344	0.663	0.323	0.620	0.729
	101 or more	0.332	0.765	0.480	0.610	0.770
Place of residence	Sana'a	0.483	0.613	0.546	0.725	0.799
	Thoummar	0.628	0.419	0.501	0.787	0.817

disposal; it also tried to export its Salafist ideology to other areas of the world. The Saudis established some 1300 so-called education academies and managed to enrol 400,000 students in 2002, among which were 4600 teacher trainees ready to continue spreading the word (Walsh 2010, 99). These academies, whose expenses are paid by Saudi Arabia, accept live-in students who spend the week at the academy and go home only for weekends and holidays.

Moreover, there are millions of Yemeni migrant workers in Saudi Arabia who receive Salafist indoctrination while in the Kingdom, and once back home spread the dogma through the mass media.

This shows the extent of religious mobilization to which Yemenis are subjected, and explains why it is so easy for many to join Salafist groups. Once his needs are not fulfilled, the individual turns to extremist groups whose beliefs are more in line with what he learned in Saudi Arabia, beliefs that are based on accusing others of sin and apostasy.

Some researchers and Islamists blame extremism and violence on a wrong interpretation of religious texts; in other words, they claim that these groups' leaders interpret the Qur'an incorrectly and, as a result, accuse others of apostasy and declare war on them; this is a view often encountered in the studies and writings of contemporary Muslim scholars.

Understanding the phenomenon of religious extremism begins by understanding, analysing, and critiquing their religious discourses and mobilization methods. Imam Ali Bin Abi Taleb understood the danger of injecting the religious text into the political sphere, and warned against such interpretations; he did that as he was engaged in fighting Mu'awiya in the battle of Siffin (in the seventh century), when he said, 'we fight them based on his interpretation, as we had fought them before because of their the disbelief in Qura'an.'

In the current social climate, we find ourselves wedged between the rock of the religious text and hard place of the interpretation; when Salafist groups use the text as a weapon, conflict ensues around the issue of who has ownership of that text and who has the right to interpret and understand it, even within the same current. The fact that the religious text ends up being used as an ideological tool in the struggle between groups, makes religious interpretation and mobilization an important entryway to the study of religious extremism.

The extremely dangerous synthesis between the concept of governance and the dogma of loyalty, i.e. the marriage between two ideologies Wahabism and Quthbiya, has led to an activist and intellectual dynamic that sharpened attitudes against the other, regardless of whether or not this other is Muslim. This synthesis brought together ideological contexts, political ideologies and attitudes vis-à-vis the Muslim ruler, and turned it into a rigid cultural dogma not subject to review or discussion (Abdel-Ghani 2006, 285).

This wrong interpretation of religion found itself in a bind; it is first of all a historical interpretation of religion that returns to the first three centuries of Islam's history; it is also a selective interpretation of this history. Not only does this mindset choose the right example to follow, but also the selectivity in interpretation is in itself an exclusionary tendency that many intellectuals have adopted throughout Islam's history (Abdel-Ghani 2006, 302).

It is important to note here that the Muslim religious text is easy and clear in itself, and provides each and every social sector with logical answers to its problems; it is a discourse that easily attracts people. The increasing rates of religious mobilization are accelerating faster than the state's response to it socially, economically and politically,

and its failure to keep up with the religious movements' response to the needs of the people, due to the low rate of economic growth, has led to frustration, and increased the appeal of religious extremism.

The sixth hypothesis

The sixth hypothesis was that the emir, or leader of the group, plays a pivotal role in forming the religious group's opinions and ideas by building a halo of sanctity around himself. The individual leads the group and his ideas and beliefs become their ideas and beliefs. These ideas become dogma not subject to discussion, and this leads to extremism or to what is known as 'religious ossification'; in other words, there is a direct positive relationship between the leader and religious extremism. In relation to this contention the survey results were as follows:

- In the case of religious extremism, in general, it was found that the age group 10–31 years was, more than others, linked to religious extremism, in the sense that the emir or leader has more influence on the younger people.

The study shows that the emir, or leader of the group, is an important factor in the formation of violent Islamist political groups in Yemen. The predominance of the military–security dimension of life within these groups, coupled with the leader's charismatic personality, has been instrumental in steering them towards extremism. When asked about the subject, the research sample gave the following answers:

- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (69.7%), that obedience to the guardian is a sacred duty.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (57%), that the interpretation of Qur'anic *ayas* by the *ulema* is perfectly acceptable.
- Half either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (51.2%), that he would willingly sacrifice his life to protect the *ulema*.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (61.9%), that it is not permitted to contradict the *ulema's* views.
- A majority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (65.4%), that the *ulema's* opinion supersedes that of his father and his tribe.
- A significant minority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (38%), that the *ulema's* views are right for all times and places, and that there are no objections to it. This is a high percentage given the ease with which the Yemeni people willingly accept the other.
- A more sizeable minority either agreed, or agreed to a certain extent (45.3%), that they profess loyalty to the *ulema* more than anyone else.

The structure of groups and organizations established expressly for the purpose of collective action is very important, it affects their work, especially the work of groups that have an impenetrable security arm, and operates in secrecy; the latter are also more prone to use violence under the cloak of religion. According to Oberschall's (1993) Mobilization and Organization Theory, the roots of solidarity and violent collective action lie in the group's organization and formation, which clearly underlines the importance of framing and organization to the transfer of a large amount of personal interests to be actualized through the organizations and leaderships.

Charles Tilly (Tilly 2004) believes that interests, organization, mobilization and collective action increase the threat and therefore the potential for collective violent action; organization and framing become stronger as does the ability to attract ambitious new elements to the power structure. A group that faces a military–security threat is better able to mobilize its members because of the mutual interest network and strong internal organization; its use of violence is more structured.

On the basis of Oberschall and Tilly’s theories, extremist Salafist groups are more prone to embrace religious extremism and use violence; Salafist groups were established thanks to foreign funding and enjoy wide international support, thus creating a situation where money has found an ally in power.

At a given time during their process of formation, these nascent organizations were abandoned to their fate, which is when Osama Bin Laden stepped in with his inspiring and charismatic leadership and rallied and galvanized the youths left by the wayside in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Bin Laden rallied and motivated them, united their interests, began to organize and mobilize them, created common cause among them, and found a target for their collective action, which is the protection of their threatened interests against a security and military threat in their own home countries. All this took place in secret.

The nature of the new organization was essentially based on the idea of *jihad* against apostasy, and this was the theme behind the training of the new recruits in Afghanistan, all of whom belonged to the same sectarian affiliation and had the same ideological background. Bin Laden’s charismatic leadership facilitated the creation of a new global organization that found it easy to use violence and murder to announce its arrival, and that of smaller versions of it, on the scene.

Yemen contributed the largest number of young fighters to the organization, mostly youths who returned to Yemen and could not feel at home with all the social, economic and political changes that took place after the Unity Agreement was signed in 1990, especially since power was now in the hands of their former enemy, the Yemeni Socialist Party. The bloc they formed against ‘the newcomers’ accounts for the assassinations that took place before 1994, until war broke out later that same year.

One of the main factors behind the rise of extremist Salafist groups was the move by several influential leaders from Afghanistan back to Yemen; these eventually formed the nucleus of the fighting Salafist force. The group’s leadership was a key factor in the formation of violent Islamist political groups in Yemen, and the military–security character of these groups coupled with the personality of their leaders played a defining role in their march towards extremism. The leader attempts to effect social, political and religious changes through the formation of a fighting force and, to gain legitimacy, he quotes *ayas* from the Qur’an and the Sunna and recounts incidents from Islam’s history.

‘Social movements – including Political Islam – rely heavily on political guidance for their survival and effectiveness’ (Tilly 2004, 32) and Tilly believes that in the Muslim mind this political guide is the leader, the inspiration and the example.

Notes

1. Although both before and after Islam Yemen was settled by a variety of ethnic groups (Ethiopians, Persians, Turks), it managed to integrate them in a unified society (Alwaisi 1962, 158; quoting Al-Shurbaji 1986, 53).
2. For more details, see Al-Thahiri (2004), 198–200.

3. For details on why the demonstrations began, see the *Al-Watan* newspaper website: <http://www.alwatan.net/65153.htm>; for details on the reasons behind the demonstrations, see the Egyptian Yaom al-Sabe' website: <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=341417>.
4. See Al-Wahdawi.net: http://www.alwahdawi.net/news_details.php?lng=arabic&sid=7116, dated 20 February 2011, which is the day on which the all parties of the Joint Meeting Parties joined the popular youth movement nearly a month after it began.
5. There is no need to offer proof for what is known by everyone regarding the differences between Sunni and Shia Islamist movements, or even Sunni–Sunni or Shia–Shia movements, as in Iraq, for example, not to mention the ongoing disagreements between the Salafists and other Islamist movements.
6. Based on Anthony Giddens (2005, 758).
7. A personal definition based on Giddens (2005, 744).

References

- Abdel-Ghani, Imad. 2006. *Al-Harakat Al-Islamiya fi Lubnan – Ishkaliyat al-Deen fi Mujtama' Mutanawe'* [Islamist Movements in Lebanon – The Issue of Religion in a Diverse Society]. Beirut: Dar Al-Tali'a.
- 'Adan al-Ghad. 2010. "Foreign Policy: Failure of Islamist Movements to Integrate the Political Process in Yemen Threatens with a Sectarian War." *Adan al-Ghad*, February 12. <http://adanalghad.net/print/news/7493.htm/>.
- Almasdar Online. 2012a. "The Salafists in Yemen Establish the First Political Party called 'Al-Rashad Al-Yamani.'" Almasdar Online, March 14. http://almasdaronline.com/index.php?page=7&article-section=17&news_id=29742/.
- Almasdar Online. 2012b. "The Ministry of Defence Says that the Navy Sank 10 Al-Qaeda Motorboats: The Army Controls Zanzibar the Capital of Abyan, Launches Operation 'Golden Swords' and Violent Clashes in Shaqra." Almasdar Online. http://almasdaronline.com/index.php?page=news&articles-section=1&newsid=33063&utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=facebook/.
- Alwaisi, Hussein Ali. 1962. *Al Yaman Al-Kubra* [Greater Yemen]. Cairo: Al-Nahda.
- Al-Ash'ari, Abu Al-Hassan. 1985. *Maqalat al-Islamiyeeni* [The Islamists' Articles]. Beirut: Dar al-Hadatha.
- Ayesh, Abdo. 2012. "Itiham Iran bi 'Arqalat Al-Mubadarah Al-Khalijiya bil Yaman'" [Accusing Iran of Obstructing the Gulf Initiative in Yemen]. AlJazeera.net, May 20. <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/e5808e20-00db-4503-b536-c3fa13a56140/>.
- Barakat, Mohammad Tewfic. n.d. *Sayed Qutob, Khulasat Hayatuhu, Manhajuhu fil Haraka, Al-Naqd al-Muwajah Ilayhi* [Sayed Qutob, Summary of His Life, Methodology in the Movement and the Criticisms Levelled at Him]. Beirut: Dar Al-Da'wa Beirut.
- Boucek, Christopher. 2010. *War in Sa'ada, from Local Insurrection to National Challenge* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – Middle East Program, No. 110, April).
- Burgat, François. 2006. "Islamism in the Shadow of Al-Qaeda, Re-Islamisation, Modernisation and Radicalism". Translated by Sahar Said Damascus: Qadmos.
- Carroll, G Terrance. 1986. "Islam and Political Community in the Arab World." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, 185.
- Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. 2008. *Statistical Yearbook 2008*.
- Central Statistics Organisation, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. 2010. *Statistical Yearbook 2010*. <http://www.cso-yemen.org/content.php?lng=arabic&id=574/>.
- Al-Daghshi, Ahmad Mohammad. 2009. *Al-Houthiyoun: Al-Thahira Al-Houthiya, Dirasa Manhajiya Shamila* [The Houthis: The Houthi Phenomenon; A Systematic Comprehensive Study]. Sana'a: Khaled Bin Al-Waleed Bookshop and Dar Al-Kutub in Yemen.
- Al-Daghshi, Ahmad Mohammad. 2012. *Al-Fikr Al-Tarbawi Li Tantheem Al-Qaeda, Al-Intishar Al-Arabi* [The Educational Ideology of Al-Qaeda, the Arab Dimension]. Beirut: Al Intishar Al Arabi Publishers.
- Energy Information Administration. 2010. "Country Analysis Brief: Yemen." March. Accessed January 10, 2013. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Yemen/pdf.pdf/>.
- Fischer, Michael M.J. 1982. "Islam and the Revolt of the Petit Bourgeoisie." *Daedalus* 3 (1), 102.

- Giddens, Anthony. 2005. *Sociology (with Arab inputs)*, translated by Fayez Sayegh. Beirut: Arab Organization for Translation Publications.
- Gould, Julius, and William L. Kolb, edited by 1969. *A Dictionary of Social Sciences*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Hedberg, Nicholas J. 2010. *The Exploitation of a Weak State: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen* (June). Monterey, CA: Naval Post-graduate School.
- Hill, Stuart, and Donald Rothchild. 1980. "The Contagion of Political Conflicts in Africa and the World." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 30 (4), 716.
- Kerbo, Harold R. 1978. "Foreign Involvement in the Pre-Condition of Political Violence: The World System and the Case of Chile." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 22 (3), 365.
- Al-Mouseli, Ahmad. 2003. *Jadaliyat Al-Shura wal Dimocratia, Al-Islamiyoun wal Mas'ala Al-Siyasiya* [The Shura and Democracy Debate: The Islamists and the Political Issue]. Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS).
- Oberschall, Anthony. 1993. *Social Movements: Ideologies, Interests, and Identities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Pelletiere, Stephen. 1995. *A Theory about Fundamentalism: Hizbollah of Lebanon* (September). Carlisle, PA: The Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.
- Al-Qadimi, Nawaf Abdul-Rahman. 2012. *Al-Islamiyoun wa Rabee' Al-Thawrat Al-Mumarasa Al-Muntija lil Afkar* [The Islamists and the Applied Thought Provoking Revolutions]. Doha: Arab Centre for Research and the Study of Politics. <http://www.dohainstitute.org/>.
- A-Qarawi, Hisham. 2011. *Thawrat Al-Yaman: Istibdal Ali Abdullah Saleh Am Istibdal Mu'assassat Mufawata?* [The Yemen Revolution: Replacing Ali Abdullah Saleh or Replacing Defunct Institutions?]. Doha: Arab Centre for Research and the Study of Politics. <http://www.dohainstitute.org/>.
- Sharq al-Awsat. 2010. Leaks from Wikileaks. *Sharq al-Awsat* (London), No. 11689, November 29. <http://aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=597244&issueno=11689> and <http://www.almustaqbal-a.com/NewsDetails.aspx?NewsID=12267&Type=13/>.
- Al-Shurbaji, Qa'ed Nu'man. 1986. *A-Shara'eh Al-Ijtima'iya Al-Taqlidiya fil Mujtama' Al-Yamani* [Traditional Social Sectors in Yemeni Society]. Beirut: Dar Al-Hadatha.
- Al-Tagheer. 2011. Official Spokesman of the Salafist Coalition: 'President Saleh should follow the example of Bin Ali and leave power to prevent the spilling of Muslim blood', in a conversation with Abdel-Razzak al-Jamal. al-Tagheer, May 18. <http://www.al-tagheer.com/news298htm/>.
- Al-Tawil, Mohammad Naser. 2009. *Al-Ilaqa bayna al-Nitham al-Siyasi wal Ikhwan al-Muslmimoun fil Yaman: Dirasah fi al-Muhadidat al-Dakhiliyah wal Kharijiyah* [The Relationship between the Political Regime and the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen: A Study of the Internal and External Limitations] (MA thesis). Cairo: Cairo University, Faculty and Economics and Political Science, Political Science Department.
- Al-Thahiri, Muhsin Mohammad. 2004. *Al-Mujtama' wal Dawla: Dirasa li 'Ilaqat Al-Qabila bil Ta'adudiya Al-Siyasiya wal Hizbiya, (Al-Joumhouriya Al-Yamaniya Ka Namouthaj Tatbiqi)* [Society and the State: A Study of the Relationship between the Tribe and Political and Party Pluralism, (The Republic of Yemen as an Applied Example)]. Cairo: Madbouli Bookshop.
- Al Torabi, Hassan, et al. 2003. *Al-Islamiyoun wa Al-Mas'ala al-Siyasiya, (Hawla al-Tahawol fi Harakat al-Islam al-Siyasi fil Sharq al-Awsat)* [The Islamists and the Political Issue Regarding Transformations Within the Islamist Political Movement in the Middle East]. Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS).
- Tilly, Charles. 2004. *Social Movements: 1976–2004*. London: Paradigm.
- Walsh, Rachel. 2010. "Education Systems and Islamic Radicalism in the Arabian Peninsula." *Madarat* Year 1 (3), 99.
- Al-Watan. 2012. "Nabbihou Al-Liwa' 115 wal Amn Al-Markazi: Al-Jouf Tasqot fi Aydi Al-Houthiyeen" [Alert the 115th Brigade and the Central Security Forces: Al-Jouf is Falling into Al-Houthis' Hands]. *Al-Watan*. Accessed March 23, 2011. <http://www.alwatanye.net/65954.htm/>.
- Yementoday.net. 2010. June 15. http://yementoday.net/-saleh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3157:2010-06-15-06-56-14&catid=61:2009-02-20-16-32/.
- Yemeni Presidency's National Information Centre. 2010. Accessed January 10, 2013. <http://www.yemen.net/gover/apyan/brief>.