MASTER THESIS

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„ The Internal Social Composition of the Target State as a Driver of Proxy Relationships: The Case of the North Yemen Civil War (1962-1970) "

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To my parents,

for they taught me that everything is possible,

for they gave me wings to fly.

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Abstract

Despite the progress of International Relations literature on proxy warfare of the past 20 years, numerous of its angles remain unexplored. One of the most prominent ones is the relation between the internal social composition of the target state, and the identity of potential proxies this ensues, and the establishment of proxy relationships. Delving into this question, this thesis applies a social constructivist theoretical framework that stresses upon identities' quintessential role, recognises agency to various actors within states conceptualised as non-Weberian, and expands the dynamics of proxy relationships, taking them beyond realism-, state-, and sponsor-biased approaches. By conceptualising the concept of a fragmented, simply or deeply, society along ethnic, tribal, religious, clan, or other lines, this thesis argues that such societies, particularly the deeply fragmented ones, are home to various foci of power and identity. On their part, the latter correspond to a complex web of competing and/or aligning interests, creating fertile ground for internal and external manipulation, with proxy relationships included in the latter case. Adding to this, deeply fragmented societies where fragmentation exists mainly on tribal lines are argued to be even more prone to proxy warfare. More precisely, the social dynamics there, that is, the role of tribes as key socio-political actors, the nature of state-tribe relations, the numerous inter- and intra-tribal cleavages, and all issues stemming from tribal identity, breed demand for proxy relationships. At the same time, they fuel supply on behalf of potential sponsors whose choice of proxies rests upon the exploitation of such fragmented environments, as well as on ensuring effectiveness and, ideally, deniability. This thesis tests its hypothesis via a qualitative case study, namely the North Yemen Civil war of the 1960s, which served as the battleground of the proxy war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the late 1950s up to 1970. The case study examined proves this thesis's hypotheses right, while pointing to particularly interesting directions for further research concerning the social dynamics of the target state of proxy warfare, as well as for ameliorated and more informed proxy warfare-related policymaking.

Abstrakt

Zuerst soll festgehalten werden, dass, obwohl bereits Fortschritte in den letzten 20 Jahren bezüglich der Literatur, die sich mit internationalen Beziehungen und insbesondere Stellvertreterkriegen befasst, verzeichnet werden, so bleiben dennoch einige Aspekte unerforscht. Dies betrifft vor allem die Beziehung zwischen der inneren sozialen Zusammensetzung des Zielstaates und der daraus resultierenden Identität potenzieller Stellvertrerstaaten und die Etablierung von Stellvertreter-Beziehungen. Um diesen Aspekt zu beleuchten wird in dieser Arbeit eine sozialkonstruktivistische Theorie angewandt, welche die wesentliche Rolle von Identitäten hervorhebt, verschiedenen Akteuren im Staat Handlungsfähigkeit zugesteht – jedoch nicht nach Weber konzipiert ist – und es werden die Dynamiken von Stellvertreter-Beziehungen erweitert, dabei wird über Realismus-, Staats-, und sponsorbasierte Ansätze hinausgegangen. Indem das Konzept einer fragmentierten Gesellschaft - wobei sowohl geringe als auch gravierend Zersplitterungen einbezogen werden - entlang einer ethnischen, stammesbezogenen, religiösen, clanbezogener oder anderen Linie, skizziert wird, argumentiert diese Arbeit, dass solche Gesellschaften mehrere Zentren von Macht und Identitäten beherbergen. Insbesondere bei den Identitäten ist ihrerseits ein komplexes Geflecht aus konkurrierenden und/oder gleichgerichteten Interessen zu beobachten, dies schafft einen fruchtbaren Boden für interne und externe Manipulationen, wobei im letzteren Fall auch Stellvertreter-Beziehungen bestehen. Darüber hinaus stellt diese Arbeit fest, dass Gesellschaften, deren Fragmentierung vordergründig auf Stammesgrenzen beruht, tendenziell anfälliger für die Entstehung von Stellvertreterkriegen sind. Genauer gesagt ist es die soziale Dynamik in solchen Gesellschaften, dies inkludiert insbesondere die Rolle der Stämme als sozialpolitische Akteure, die Beziehung zwischen dem Staat und den Stämmen, die tiefen Klüfte zwischen und innerhalb von Stämmen, sowie alle Angelegenheiten, die sich aus der Stammesidentität ergeben. All dies fördert die Nachfrage von Stellvertreter-Beziehungen und heizt gleichzeitig das Angebot an potentiellen Unterstützern an, die primär an der Ausbeutung solcher sozialen Dynamiken interessiert sind, sowie an der Gewährleistung von Effektivität und idealerweise Abstreitbarkeit für sich beanspruchen zu suchen. In dieser Arbeit wird die Hypothese durch eine qualitative Fallstudie getestet, genauer gesagt wird hierbei der Bürgerkrieg in Nordjemen in den 1960er Jahren herangezogen, welcher in den späten 1950er bis 1970 als Schlachtfeld für den Stellvertreterkrieg zwischen Ägypten und Saudi-Arabien benutzt wurde. Durch die hier durchgeführte Fallstudie wurde die der Arbeit zugrundelegte Hypothese

verifiziert, während gleichzeitig auf besonders interessante Richtungen für eingehendere Forschungen über die soziale Dynamik des Zielstaates hinsichtlich Stellvertreterkriege, hingewiesen wird.

Note on Transliteration

For transcribing Arabic, I have used the most simplified system one could for such purposes. All words are mostly typed in italics, for ease of detection, using Latin characters. Common words, such as *shaykh*, Imam, Yemen, *Sana'a*, *Sa'dah*, *Taiz*, *shariah,* Shia, Sunni etc., are used in an Anglicised version most in use by authors. Thus, their plural form, if any, is given as *shaykhs*, Imams, Sunnis, etc. Less common words, such as *sadah* or *qadi*, are transcribed in Latin characters, without, though, the use of special characters (e.g., *ā* or *ī*) for the sake of simplicity. Their plural form is given in its Arabic form, when it is most known this way, as this the case for the plural of *sayyid*, that is, *sadah*. In all other cases, it is given in an Anglicised version, as in *qadis*. The word *bin,* when used in names shall be understood as 'son of'.

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Introduction

   Proxy warfare is by no means a phenomenon of the 21st century, nor a product of the Cold War, as commonly argued. On the contrary it has been waged throughout history from Ancient Greeks and Ancient Romans, to, among others, the Thirty Years' War, the Franco-Prussian War, even the First World War, the Cold War, all the way to today's war in Yemen, Syria, or the Central African Republic. What could be considered a product of the Cold War, though, would be proxy warfare's deliberate use by states as an indirect form of conflict, chosen in lieu of, among others, the development of nuclear weapons or the increasing need to ensure deniability and increased flexibility on the battlefield. More precisely, the level of destruction that a direct conflict between nuclear powers would ensue forged a dynamic of opting for indirect forms of conflict, including proxy warfare, economic, trade, travel, political, or other sanctions, etc. At the same time, the skyrocketing of norms of public international law pertaining to peace and security, that is, norms regarding the use of force, humanitarian law, human rights law, and the increasingly vocal role of the international community when it came to such issues, contributed to a need for deniability of involvement in conflicts, thus further driving up the demand for indirect forms of conflict, including proxy warfare. Lastly, the noticeable rise in non-conventional and/or hybrid threats and warfare forced and is still forcing policymakers to pursue warfare strategies that leave plenty of room for tactical manoeuvre on the battlefield and for pollical manoeuvre in international relations. Of course, several other reasons exist for which proxy warfare has seen a tremendous increase in the last decades; the aforementioned ones constitute only the tip of the iceberg.

   Within this context, then, another product of the Cold War was the emergence of an International Relations interest in the concept. The end of the Cold War, though, was not followed by an end in proxy wars; on the contrary the post-Cold War period and, more specifically, the post-9/11 period saw both the relative obsolescence of interstate wars, an increase in intrastate conflicts, as well as in all kinds of indirect forms of conflict, including interventions by proxy. It further saw major developments within the conduct of proxy wars, as for example the increasingly crucial role of non-state actors. And along came the literature of International Relations. Yet, surprisingly, the field remained understudied for decades, without clearly delineated borders, full of conceptual puzzles, and defined by a lack of consensus even on proxy war's own definition. The past fifteen

years, though, have seen a tremendous increase in relevant literature, with scholarly understanding of proxy wars having progressed substantially. Nevertheless, much remains to be discovered.

Research Question

Proxy warfare is generally characterised by a triangular relationship between a sponsor, a proxy, and a target. The sponsor supports the proxy via several means, and the proxy engages in direct warfare against the target. The sponsor-proxy side of the triangle is the one monopolising the attention of scholars up to today, with the sponsor-target side coming next, but certainly way behind the former. The third side of the triangle, the proxy-target one, and the characteristics of its constitutive elements, are most often left behind and unaccounted for. Furthermore, there is extensive research on shared material and ideational elements between sponsors and proxies, and less so between sponsors and targets, with regards to how they affect the decision to sponsor and to accept sponsorship and the decision to choose the target. Nevertheless, there is a visible lack of insight regarding whether specific societal characteristics of the target state, and, consequently, of potential proxies influence the formation of a proxy relationship, including both via the choosing and the accepting process by the sponsor and proxy respectively. In this respect, the present research aims to delve into the following question: *How does the internal social composition of the target state make the establishment of proxy relationships possible?*

Questioning this angle regarding proxy warfare is important for several reasons. As mentioned, addressing it constitutes an effort to fill existing gaps in scholarly literature on the subject. Furthermore, such an angle allows for the local element to arise in conflict-related studies, something that follows the modern trend for accounting for local/regional and not only for international and systemic dynamics. Moreover, with voices arguing that proxy wars are *"near-endemic"* to certain regions of the world [1], and especially to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), there should be a more thorough examination of the drivers of proxy relationships, particularly those that are connected to the actual territory and societies proxy wars are waged on, and take place in respectively. The current surge of proxy conflicts around the globe serves as an invitation for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, for how and why it arises, and not only

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[1] Marshall (2016), p.183.

for how it is waged, as well as for whether the region it is waged on somehow matters. Such a holistic understanding of proxy warfare will not only serve purely academic purposes. On the contrary, it will most probably have an impact on policymaking, by both state and non-state actors – with policymaking being understood as a more abstract notion in the latter case – as, ultimately, they are the ones who may or may not establish proxy relationships. Lastly, considering that the societal dynamics of the target state have rarely been the focus of policymakers' decisions when it comes to proxy warfare – as of academics themselves – or that such dynamics have most of the times been misunderstood or even dismissed, questioning such an angle becomes even more crucial.

The Argument

In particular, this thesis aims to test the hypothesis that 'deeply fragmented' societies where power and identity are highly fluid and dispersed are more likely to constitute a battleground for proxy wars. In other words, the existence of various socio-politico-economic or religious cleavages forges a complex web of interests, aligning or competing, and further creates fertile ground for manipulation by internal and external forces. A 'deeply fragmented' society particularly along tribal lines is even more likely to experience proxy wars; tribal groups are more likely to be chosen by potential sponsors as proxies, while they themselves are more likely to accept the status of a proxy in exchange for aid by potential sponsors. In this respect, this piece of research aims to examine whether societal characteristics, e.g., 'deep fragmentation', constitute a driver of proxy relationships (causal relation). Consequently, this thesis aims to contribute to the state of the art regarding proxy warfare by introducing the concept of 'deep fragmentation' of the target state's society. In this respect, this thesis brings societal dynamics of target states and the ensuing identities of potential proxies to the fore, thus stressing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, one that sees beyond its strategic and purely military underpinnings and beyond the sponsor's own agenda. Lastly, introducing such a thesis allows for a more accurate understanding of proxy relationships via the recognition of agency by both sponsors and proxies, going beyond principal-agent frameworks.

Research Design

In order to delve into this topic, the International Relations (IR) theory of social constructivism will be applied, considering the analytical priority and substantial role and agency it grants to identities and social forces. At the same time, and based on analytical eclecticism, this thesis recognises the strategic underpinnings behind the choice of a proxy and the acceptance of a sponsor – yet without stressing this too far. Based on such a theoretical framework, the hypothesis formed will be tested via a qualitative analysis, from an IR and historical perspective – and with the added value of an anthropological lens – of a single case study, namely the North Yemen Civil War of the 1960s, which served as a battleground for the regional proxy war between Egypt – then known as the United Arab Republic – and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. More precisely, Egypt intervened militarily with its own forces on the side of the 'republican' camp trying to overthrow the Zaydi Imamate, while Saudi Arabia developed a proxy relationship mainly, but not solely, with Zaydi Shia tribes of Northern Yemen, thus intervening via proxy on the side of the 'royalist' forces supporting the Shia-based Imamate under attack. It is worth noting that the conflict under question was further embroiled in the Cold War, with the US (and the UK) and the USSR fighting by proxy via their support to Saudi Arabia and Egypt respectively. Nevertheless, this thesis argues for a need to see beyond this Cold War lens and will, instead, aim at uncovering the local dynamics of a regional proxy war.

Chapters' Overview

This thesis proceeds as follows:

Chapter 1 consists of a literature review on the concept of proxy warfare and proxy relationships, identifying the state of the art's major strengths and weaknesses, while advancing the present thesis's effort to overcome the latter. Moving on, it includes the development of this thesis's theoretical framework and research design, including the conceptualisation of all crucial to this thesis concepts, while it concludes with the presentation of the methodology used to test this thesis's hypothesis.

Chapter 2 sets the stage for the case study under consideration, via a detailed investigation of North Yemen's geography, topography, environment, society, and politics. Particular analytical

focus is given to tribes and to their socio-political role within North Yemen, as well as to the Imamate's *divide et impera* politics vis-à-vis the tribes and, more generally, to how all these mapped onto North Yemen's fragmented society.

Chapter 3 starts with a brief sketch of the dynamics behind the so-called 'Arab Cold War' or, in other words, the proxy war between Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, all the while stressing the North Yemen Civil War's embeddedness in this conflict. *Chapter 3*, then, delves into the North Yemen Civil War by, firstly, sketching the key Yemeni personalities involved and describing the events of the 26th of September 1962 coup d'état; secondly, by investigating the Egyptian intervention in Yemen and the dynamics within the 'republican' camp; and, lastly, by delving into the reasons behind the Saudi Arabian intervention by proxy in the North Yemeni war, as well as into the dynamics of the proxy relationship between the Saudis and 'royalist' tribal forces.

Lastly, for its part, *Chapter 4* concludes by providing an overview of the findings based on the qualitative analysis of this thesis. Then, based on these findings, it briefly sketches some guidelines for policymakers pertaining to proxy warfare and particularly to its societal underpinnings. Lastly, it stresses avenues for further research on the topic under consideration, introducing the concept of 'deepest' fragmentation, as well as raising the question of the effect of proxy warfare and relationships on target societies and proxies themselves in the short and long term.

Chapter 1: Proxy Warfare in International Relations

1.1. Literature Review

Mumford opens his famous book on proxy wars with the statement that *"[t]hey are historically ubiquitous yet chronically under-analysed"*. [2] Indeed, proxy warfare and interventions have been empirically taking place since time immemorial – despite not being dubbed as such – they experienced a surge during the Cold War, while nowadays they seem to be continuously proliferating, all the while implicating several states and actors, not only Great Powers. The scholarly, and journalistic, research on them has fluctuated almost accordingly. Nevertheless, a lot of progress has been made during the past twenty years, with an emphasis on the last decade, something that renders the latter part of Mumford's statement inaccurate regarding the state of the art today.

As Rauta argues, the under-analysed argument *"contrasts the exceptional growth of the literature"*, both quantitative and qualitative, while it overlooks the established scholarly agreement *"on a set of core features of proxy wars: the role of the proxy as a third party fighting a war using support provided by a state or a non-state actor; the latter's provision of support as an indirect intervention; and an essentially relational interaction between parties"*. [3] Despite agreeing with Rauta's perception of proxy war studies' state of the art, it shall be underlined that the field does not currently have clearly delineated boundaries. Rather, the borders of *"proxy war studies"* are porous. [4] This is in terms of the concept of proxy war increasingly being viewed as having its own nuance and being studied *per se* – a much-welcomed development – but also, and in parallel, in terms of it being examined within or on the sidelines of literature on, among others, foreign intervention in intrastate conflicts, civil wars, terrorism, insurgency/counterinsurgency, or strategic studies. [5] This might also be the reason why proxy war literature may seem lengthier than it actually is. Without prejudice to the benefits of cross-fertilisation among different fields to

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[2] Mumford (2013b), p.1.
[3] Rauta (2020a), p.2.
[4] Mumford (2021b).
[5] Ibid. See also: Byman et al. (2001); Byman (2005); Karlén et al. (2021); de Soysa (2017); Salehyan, Gleditsch, Cunningham (2011); Hauter (2019); Fox (2020).

understand, for instance, the dynamics of civil wars [6], such an endeavour bears the danger of mis-conceptualisation (e.g., considering direct and indirect intervention under the same umbrella, whilst proxy war refers only to indirect intervention), not to mention the way it prevents the proxy war field *per se* from expanding and making scholarly progress. Therefore, the current trend to address proxy warfare *"in analytical isolation"* [7], as a field of studies *per se*, *"as a self-standing form of conflict"* [8], that possesses its own nuance, analytical value for research, and strategic and political importance for policy makers, shall be embraced and appreciated.

As mentioned above, part of the recent progress includes conceptual work on proxy warfare. For example, proxy forces have been successfully distinguished from surrogate, auxiliary, and affiliated forces, as well as from alliances. [9] Rauta developed a relevant framework based on two criteria, namely the *"relational embeddedness and relational morphology"*. [10] The former describes *"the structural relationship between regulars and irregulars",* be it *"by/through"* or *"in cooperation with/alongside"*, while the latter describes the supplementary or delegatory nature of the irregulars' contribution; in this respect, proxies fall under the *"by/through"* and delegatory category. [11] Nevertheless, not all scholars clearly distinguish between these concepts, something that surely fuels frustration. [12]

Moving on, in 1964, Karl Deutsch defined proxy wars as *"an international conflict between two foreign powers, fought out on the soil of a third country; disguised as a conflict over an internal issue of that country; and using some of that country's manpower, resources and territory as a means for achieving preponderantly foreign goals and foreign strategies".* [13] This definition sums up almost all the weaknesses of existing literature. At this point, it shall be mentioned that the *"founders"* of proxy war literature, including Deutsch, emerged during the Cold War and the immediate period after its end. [14] This had three key implications, namely the preponderance of realism-based theoretical approaches, a state-centric bias, and a Great Power bias, all of which

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[6] Karlén et al. (2021).
[7] Mumford (2021a), p.2957.
[8] Rauta, Mumford (2017), p.100.
[9] See, for example: Rauta (2019); Rauta (2011); Krieg, Rickli (2018).
[10] Rauta (2020c).
[11] Ibid.
[12] See, for example: Innes (2012); Waldman (2019); Hughes (2014a). Accounts not distinguishing between direct and indirect (including proxy warfare) forms of conflict do not allow for the field of proxy war studies to develop.
[13] Deutsch (1964). Cited in Mumford (2013a), p.40.
[14] Rauta (2020a).

prevail in the literature even up to today. These three weaknesses are, then, joined by a fourth one, namely the sponsor-centric bias, as well as a fifth one, namely an emphasis on the 'hot' phase of proxy war after the establishment of proxy relationships, both stemming from the most used theory by relevant accounts, namely Principal-Agent Theory (PAT). The following lines will delve into each one of these shortcomings.

Realism came to characterise most approaches to proxy warfare, by means of delineating state interests and interaction, boiling proxy warfare down to basically a Great Power strategy of survival in an anarchic environment. It came along with structure-based approaches attributing the rise of proxy warfare to, among others, the obsolescence of interstate war. [15] Moreover, realism-based accounts focused heavily on the power aspect of a proxy relationship, consequently diminishing, or completely denying proxy agency – viewing the latter as a mere 'tool' in the hands of the sponsoring power – and pursuing sponsor-centric approaches, as it will be examined bellow. [16] Such accounts are, up to today, striving to uncover why do states engage in proxy warfare as sponsors, with the responses to this including, as mentioned, the obsolescence of major interstate war, the embroilment in major strategic rivalries, the rise of hybrid warfare, avoiding material and political costs, ensuring deniability, and others. [17] Lastly, realism-influenced accounts have largely ignored domestic level considerations, be it on the side of the sponsor, proxy, or target. Despite their importance in generally understanding proxy warfare, the breadth of such approaches seems to be quite limited. The 'why' of proxy war is heavily power-biased and sponsor-centric, while the 'how' of a proxy relationship's formation is presented as a simple bending of the proxy to the whims of the Great Power. This takes us to the next shortcoming of the literature.

Cold War-dated research, embedded as it was in bipolarity and the conflict between the USA and the USSR, saw these two as masters moving their 'pawns' around, be it states or non-state actors, starting or fuelling inter- and intra-state conflicts, without ever facing off directly on the battlefield. [18] In a similar vein, today's research remains Great Power biased, something that extensive literature on the US and Iran indicates. [19] Without prejudice to the importance of Great Powers' proxy war strategies, such an approach overlooks several crucial elements. More

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[15] Loveman (2002).
[16] See, for example: Fox (2019).
[17] See, for example: Maoz, San-Akca (2012); Paffenroth (2014); Chatzigeorgiou (2019).
[18] See, for example: Gross Stein (1980).
[19] See, for example, on Iran: Ostovar (2019).

precisely, it unnecessarily, and by definition, internationalises proxy wars, making them global. This way, it fails to account for proxy wars by regional powers, especially those neighbouring the target states, thus failing to account for strictly local/regional proxy wars. [20] In this context, Cold War-dated accounts sometimes mischaracterised a regional proxy war as a USA-USSR proxy conflict, by striving to trace the aid each regional power was receiving from them; the Egyptian-Saudi Arabian proxy war of the 1960s is a case in point. [21] Today regional proxy wars *"via the cross-border percolation of militia groups"* seem to have replaced global ones; thus, there is a need to overcome this short-sighted approach. [22]

The Great Power bias further hinders a holistic understanding of proxy wars' dynamics, as it further obscures the, sometimes, local dimensions of a proxy war between Great Powers. More precisely, Deutsch's definition seems to imply that the internal issue at the core of the conflict is a mere façade to hide the real conflict. Notwithstanding the chances of such a scenario appearing, it is unreasonable to overlook the local dynamics and drivers of a conflict, of whose existence a third power takes advantage by intervening by proxy. In other words, a proxy war does not have to necessarily be all about the sponsor's conflict with the target state (in an non-*"symmetrical"* proxy war [23]) or with the sponsor of the opposing side to the conflict (in a *"symmetrical"* proxy war). Instead, a conflict rooted in local affairs can already exist and be exploited by the sponsor(s) as a battling ground or it can be manufactured by the sponsor(s); both options shall be considered. [24]

Therefore, the Great Power bias obscures the agency of regional powers, as well as the importance and role of local dynamics regarding both who engages in proxy warfare and why a conflict – that happens to also be a proxy war – exists. On the topic of local dynamics, it shall be mentioned that the characteristics of the target state are seldom accounted for in existing literature, while, more precisely, the internal social composition of the target state is nowhere to be mentioned. Generally, there is some research on how proxies' characteristics affect sponsors' decision to choose their proxies. More precisely, there are several accounts (e.g., Sozer, Phillips and Valbjørn, etc.) that investigate *"transnational constituencies"*, *"shared interstate rivalries"*, *"military strength"*, *"personal relationships"*, *"domestic sources of funding"*, and, via the use a

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[20] See: Stark (2021); Aalen (2014); Byman (2005).
[21] See, for example: Ferris (2012).
[22] Mumford (2013a), p.102. See also: Phillips, Valbjørn (2018).
[23] Jenne, Popovic, Siroky (2021).
[24] Loveman (2002); Mumford (2013a). See also: Orhan (2019).

more constructivist lens, ideational elements as *"identities"* and *"ideologies"*. [25] Yet, there is no literature on how the target state comes into this process, despite its key role in the sponsor-proxy-target triangle; most accounts focus on shared identities/ideologies between sponsor and proxy, and not on proxies' identities/ideologies or societal characteristics themselves.

For example, San-Acka presents the sponsor-proxy-target triangular relationship, yet she only accounts for material or ideational connections between sponsors-proxies and sponsors-targets, completely overlooking the third aspect of the triangle. [26] Moreover, she only focuses on shared elements, and not on how, for instance, particular social characteristics of the target or the proxy affect the decision-making process of selecting or accepting sponsorship. [27] There is, thus, a gap in the literature in this respect, something that the current paper will aim to address, by granting local/regional dynamics analytical priority, and by addressing the significance of the internal social composition of the target state as a factor affecting the potential development of a proxy relationship.

The third shortcoming of existing literature refers to its state-centric approach, again stemming from the realism-influenced Cold War environment. Before anything else, state-centrism was expressed in terms of not accounting for *"indirect conflict strategies"* and merely focusing on intrastate war. [28] Thankfully, though, today the indirect nature of proxy war and its inclusion in the spectrum of such strategies is widely recognised, as already mentioned.

Moving on, on the one hand, sponsors are usually presented as states only, while proxies are non-state actors or, very rarely, states themselves, the so-called 'pawn' states or 'stooges'. [29] This bias is still omnipresent, with few voices questioning it loudly. In a pioneering account, Moghadam and Wyss moved away from state-centrism by examining why and how do non-state actors sponsor proxies and by drawing conclusions about how non-state actors use proxies as political tools in their quest for legitimacy. [30] For their part, Mumford does not specifically reserve any position for

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[25] See, for example: Sozer (2006); Salehyan (2010); Yassine (2021); Handberg (2019); Groh (2019); Seliktar (2019); San-Acka (2016); Saideman (2001); Phillips, Valbjørn (2018).
[26] San-Acka (2016).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] See, for example: Ibid; Mumford (2021b); Mumford (2013a).
[30] Moghadam, Wyss (2020); Wyss, Moghadam (2021).

particular actors [31], Hughes [32] and Loveman [33] seem to be reserving the proxy position only for non-state actors, while Stark [34], as do Berman and Lake [35], underlines that states can also serve as proxies. Recognising that both state and non-state actors can take both positions, and the broader conceptualisation of proxy war that such an assumption ensues, is crucial, as it stresses upon the latter's own nuance as a form of conflict, while it fully embraces the increasingly active role of non-state actors in general. [36]

On the other hand, state-centrism is further depicted in the sponsor-centric direction most accounts using PAT pursue when addressing proxy warfare, bringing the fourth shortcoming of the literature to the fore. PAT as a theory presents the delegatory relationship between the principal (or sponsor) and its agent (or proxy) for achieving a certain goal. [37] The theory mainly centres around two issues that may arise, namely adverse selection (i.e., *"choosing an appropriate agent"*) and agency slack (i.e., *"actions taken by the agent after the relationship has been established"* that are contrary to *"the interests of the principal"*). [38] The former is dealt with via better investigations when sponsors choose their proxies, including, as mentioned above, a consideration of shared, and divergent, interests and of identities, as well as via better monitoring mechanisms. [39] The latter is dealt with via investigations on control mechanisms, including, but not limited to leveraging material and organisational aid, ideological indoctrination, and others. [40]

PAT visibly forces the literature to be sponsor- and power-centric and, even, further increases Great Power bias, while not even constructivist understandings of PAT have managed to overcome these shortcomings. [41] In this respect, critical approaches to PAT are trying to offer a better understanding of the *"generative mechanism"* behind sponsor-proxy *"alignment"* and *"patterns of friend-enemy relations"*, drawing on securitisation theory. [42] Furthermore, PAT and, generally, most proxy war-related accounts provide little room for proxy agency, less so for an understanding

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[31] Mumford (2013b)
[32] Hughes (2014b).
[33] Loveman (2002).
[34] Stark (2021).
[35] Berman, Lake (2019).
[36] Rauta (2020a).
[37] Patten (2013).
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid. See also: Brown (2016).
[40] See: Groh (2019); Salehyan (2010); Berman, Lake (2019). See also: Bryjka (2020); Borghard (2014); Groh (2010).
[41] Farasoo (2021).
[42] Ibid.

of proxy relationships as sometimes *"transactional"* [43] or *"collaborative"* [44], while even less so for a full-fledged recognition of proxy relationship dynamics' change over time (e.g., Hezbollah-Iran relationship). [45] A few accounts shift their analytical focus to the proxy, though only to examine the consequences (i.e., for *"insurgent cohesion"* [46], *"terrorist group decision-making"* [47]) of external support for the proxy force – that is once more perceived as being a non-state actor *a priori*. Furthermore, PAT steers the focus of proxy war literature mainly – given that the adverse selection issue is not investigated as often as the agency slack – towards the period after the establishment of a proxy relationship, that is, towards the 'hot' phase of proxy warfare and not towards the process of such establishment.

Non-recognition of proxy agency also constitutes a corollary of part of the literature's *a priori* assumption of proxies being only non-state actors and, thus, certainly having 'less' agency than their all-powerful state, only, sponsor. [48] Connecting this to what was mentioned above, overlooking proxy agency most likely goes hand-in-hand with overlooking or misinterpreting the local aspects of a proxy war. It must also be noted that even strategic bargaining-based accounts recognise proxy agency, as bargaining is always an interaction, a two-way process, something that could even transform the understanding of proxy warfare from hierarchical to collaborative. [49] Another facet of such non-recognition can be detected in the existence of numerous accounts on the process of *"choosing"* a proxy [50], but only few on that of *"selecting"* and 'accepting' a sponsor. [51] Even less insight exists on the role of proxies as *"active pursuers of external support"* and initiators of proxy relationships. [52] Overlooking this *"supply-demand"* side constitutes a vital mistake, again misinterpreting the dynamics and mechanics behind proxy wars and relationships.

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[43] Fox (2019).
[44] Farasoo (2021).
[45] See, for example: Khan, Zhaoying (2020); Akbarzadeh (2019). For the time factor, see also: Fox (2019).
[46] Tamm (2016).
[47] DeVore (2012).
[48] Karlén et al. (2021).
[49] Salehyan (2010). See also: Rauta (2020b).
[50] See, for example: Sozer (2006).
[51] See: San-Acka (2016); San-Acka (2021).
[52] Rauta (2020a).

[53] Thankfully, more and more scholars are coming to grips with proxy agency, both in terms of the 'demand/accepting' side, and of the day-to-day interactions within a proxy relationship. [54]

San-Acka's book is, perhaps, the most detailed account in this respect. She attributes *"an active role to rebel groups as equally autonomous actors that, like states, possess decision-making capacity"* [55], viewing them as *"potential allies or partners"* to potential sponsor states – once again, only states. [56] She, then, sets out a *"selection theory"* focusing on two models, namely a *"States' Selection Model (SSM)"* and a *"Rebels' Selection Model (RSM)"*. [57] San-Acka's theory maintains that states' decision on whether to support rebel groups is based on three factors, stemming from the three main paradigms of IR, namely on *"strategic interest"* (realism), including *"interstate rivalries"*, on *"ideational affinity"* (constructivism), be it between sponsor-rebel or sponsor-target, and on *"domestic incentives"* (liberalism). [58] It further maintains that rebels' decision on whether to accept sponsorship is based on their quest for *"resources and autonomy* […] [as well as] *for their survival"*, while they also take into consideration the *"interstate rivalries"* element – in the way of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' – and shared ideational elements with the potential sponsor. [59]

Without prejudice to the importance of San-Acka's account in attributing agency to the proxy, especially when it comes to the quest for the establishment of a proxy relationship, her account remains more state-centric than she admits. Proxies are assumed to be non-state actors and sponsors to be states *a priori*, while there is an extensive focus on the interstate factor and its footprint on sponsor-target and sponsor-proxy relationships. Moreover, her theory acknowledges the possibility for *"de facto"* support to rebels, by means of *"one-sided selection by rebel groups, which states do not necessarily knowingly abet"*. [60] Without prejudice to the existence of such a phenomenon within the wider theme of armed non-state actors' activities and even terrorism studies, such a concept takes the debate away from proxy warfare and relationships, in which

[53] Salehyan, Gleditsch, Cunningham (2011).
[54] See: Rauta (2020a); Karlén et al. (2021); Salehyan, Gleditsch, Cunningham (2011); Rauta (2011). See also: Rauta (2018).
[55] San-Acka (2016), p.3.
[56] San-Acka (2021), p.2057.
[57] San-Acka (2016).
[58] Ibid, p.14.
[59] Ibid, p.13.
[60] Ibid, p.4.

intentionality seems to be a quintessential element. Last but not least, San-Acka's theory does not fully examine the triangular relationship among sponsor-proxy-target; the proxy-target connection is not accounted for – even the book's triangular graphic fails to provide a connecting line between proxy and target; and ideational elements, e.g., identity, are deemed important only when shared either between sponsor and proxy or between sponsor and target.

Therefore, there remains a gap as to how specific, but not shared with the sponsor, societal characteristics of the proxy or the target state might affect this 'selection' process. In this respect, Farasoo underlines that PAT *"has also underestimated the internal cleavages within the target states that push actors to have external support"*. [61] This element can perhaps serve as an invitation to delve into this unexplored topic. Consequently, this thesis aims to contribute to gap-filling by shedding light on proxy agency, specifically when it comes to the 'demand/accepting' process, as well as when it comes to the internal social elements of target societies, thus steering research to the period prior to the establishment of a proxy relationship.

Overall, proxy war-related scholarship has indeed rendered proxy war something way more than merely 'a dirty word' in foreign affairs and, if seen in its entirety, it has several strengths but also crucial weaknesses. [62] The former include, among others, efforts to address proxy war *per se*, to recognise its own nuance, to conceptually define proxy war and its key characteristics, to go beyond the Cold War-context, as well as to move beyond the shortcomings of Cold War-influenced literature. The latter refer to biases in favour of realism-based and systemic theoretical approaches, Great Powers, the international over the local, state-centrism, state agency, and sponsor-centrism. More importantly, though, a serious gap exists with regards to the drivers of proxy relationships that concern the internal social composition of the target states, and it is in this respect that the present account aims to add to the existing scholarship. In fact, a social constructivist theoretical framework, given its ontological underpinnings pertaining to agency and the importance of identity, poses as a useful tool to overcome realism- and PAT-related shortcomings' imprint on proxy warfare literature. At the same time, given its focus on the domestic and individual levels, social constructivism further poses as a useful tool to look into social webs of identities and power and their imprint on action and interests.

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[61] Farasoo (2021), p.1845.
[62] Rauta (2020a), p.3.

Last not but least, given that proxy war dynamics are complex, rooted in both international and local/regional contexts, while each proxy relationship bears its own nuance, extensive research across case studies is needed to fully uncover them. Within this context, a *"historical basis of proxy war research"* is essential, something that the present paper also adheres to. [63] In fact, historical research is in complete alignment with the purpose of this thesis, that is, the uncovering of drivers of proxy relationships, particularly those rooted in target societies and proxies' social affiliation and identities, while it further poses as the most appropriate tool for identifying the long-term elements of proxy relationships as, for example, their effects upon target societies, proxies, and sponsors' own domestic environment, etc. [64]

1.2.   Theoretical Framework

Building on the strengths of existing scholarship, this thesis pursues a constructivist understanding of the formation process behind proxy relationships. Generally, a constructivist approach entails the following. [65] Firstly, it allows the present thesis to steer away from Great Power bias, systemic level-centrism, and state-centrism, three of the main shortcomings of existing realism-influenced literature. Secondly, it further allows the present thesis to build on the already uncovered supply-demand angle and the internal dynamics of control and cooperation of proxy relationships that mainly PAT has brought forward, yet at the same time it enables a more clear-cut recognition of proxy agency, both when it comes to the establishment and to the continuation of such relationships. Thirdly, it entails the recognition of the importance of ideational elements and, most crucially, of identity with regards to proxy warfare. This thesis, though, does not aim to investigate shared identities between sponsors and proxies, but rather how a proxy's particular identity stemming from the internal social composition of the target state affects the chances of a proxy relationship's formation.

Moreover, a social constructivist framework encompasses the use of the domestic level of analysis as a mode of looking into the social composition of a state, but also of the individual level as a mode of looking into how identity is perceived by people and how it may influence their

[63] Ibid.
[64] Marshall (2016).
[65] Wendt (1999).

behaviour. Adding to this, accounting for identity-related characteristics of potential proxies allows for the local aspects of a potential proxy war to emerge, thus granting them analytical value and not letting them be overshadowed by international forces or Great Powers. Furthermore, by understanding proxy relationships' formation as a twofold process that consists of choosing and accepting, the agency of both potential sponsors and proxies comes to the fore, in clear accordance with constructivism's tenet of agency existing beyond states and of actors constructing the environment within which they exist. In this respect, the proxy's interests and their impact on proxy relationships are examined on an equal basis with the sponsor, in comparison to realism-based approaches. Also, in alignment with this tenet of constructivism is recognising agency and, for that matter, power to more than one actor within a given society. In this respect, this thesis goes beyond a mere Weberian understanding of the state regarding the monopoly of violence and authority, for that matter. [66] Last but not least, this thesis acknowledges the need for an eclectic approach, namely one that recognises the agency of actors and the social dynamics forging what will be described bellow as 'deep fragmentation', in line with social constructivism, but also one that recognises the strategic dynamics behind the supply/demand and choosing/accepting processes pertaining to proxy relationships. Nevertheless, these strategic considerations shall also be viewed as directly emerging from the social environment within which the actors considering them operate, thus not taking analytic eclecticism too far.

Accepting that sponsors choose their proxies strategically and vice versa, this thesis argues that ideational elements also enter this choosing process in two ways. The one, already addressed by scholars, concerns shared identities between sponsors and proxies (e.g., Iran-Hezbollah belief in Shia Islam). The other, that this thesis aims to investigate, is the proxy's own identity and social affiliation. [67] This requires looking into the target state's social composition and its imprint on identities and power.

The Weberian understanding of a state is centred around three elements, namely the monopoly of violence, territoriality, and legitimacy. This thesis, though, maintains that the situation is, generally, more complicated than that. More particularly, within a given society, there

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[66] Anter (2014).

[67] A similar question has, so far, only been addressed by Phillips and Valbjørn, but, still, in a quite superfluous way, mostly accounting for national, sect, or ethnic identity, and without taking into account the accepting side. See: Phillips, Valbjørn (2018).

can be various, more or less autonomous, social actors, having their own agency, own interests, and the ability to pursue them in parallel to, in cooperation with, or even against the other actors, including the 'state apparatus', whatever its format. Therefore, there arises a situation where different foci of power, but also of identity, exist within the same society. Such a state of affairs can be described as 'fragmentation', as a situation where power and identity are highly fluid and diffuse. Exactly because of this, interests are also fluid, something potentially resulting in shifting alignments that would, under other circumstances, seem 'absurd'. This may result from societal cleavages based on a variety of lines, such as, but not limited to, tribal, ethnic, clan, religious, political, or even geographical ones. In this respect, what is at stake is not a mere national *vs.* local or state *vs.* sub-state dichotomy, but something beyond that; fragmentation includes both competing (so, *x vs. y*), and potentially aligned interests of the various actors, as well as cooperative relationships (so, *x + y*) and communication between them. At the same time, though, the number of foci of power and identity, considering that each has own their agency and interests, is translated into a great volume of *x*s and *y*s intermingled in different ways. The complex situation stemming from this element both constitutes the reason it is hard to 'predict' alignments on a given situation and potentially results in 'absurd' or 'incomprehensible' – always at first glance – alignments or enmities.

Going even further, such divides can, sometimes, be overlapping, drawing on one another, and, thus, moving such a society towards 'deep fragmentation'. Overlapping cleavages means that deep cleavages existing within the same society at the same time are either pushing an actor towards the same direction, thus increasing the level of gravity of such 'pushing', or towards different directions, thus creating tensions, dilemmas, and, arguably, further cleavages. In this respect, this thesis proposes the conceptualisation of 'fragmentation' as a spectrum; starting from left to right, and going from less to more complex, on the one extreme end of the spectrum, there is a form of 'simple fragmentation' where stand-alone and not that deep cleavages exist (e.g., only on ethnic lines, as for example in Rwanda), in a way that does not necessarily give birth to strong foci of power and identity within such a society, but to a certain influential social capital and force resulting from them. On the other end of the spectrum, there is the most complicated form of 'deep fragmentation', where more than one cleavage exists. These cleavages go really deep forging strongholds of identity and power, while some or all of them are of cross-cutting nature (e.g., as in North Yemen), as *Figure 1* depicts. At the same time, some cleavages, i.e., the tribal, might be

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more crucial than others, depending on the society examined, thus rendering one focus of power and identity more influential than the others (dominant cleavage). Lastly, such 'deep fragmentation' visibly leaves plenty of room for agency and manipulation by both internal and external forces. Nevertheless, it shall be underlined that fragmentation does not translate only into enmity and separateness among the various foci of power and, thus, a fragmented society is not necessarily a violent one. Instead, within a fragmented society, there is a complex web of intermingled identities and interests, including enmity or friendly relations, communication, cooperation, and power struggles. It is exactly within such an environment where this thesis aims to uncover the generative mechanism leading to the formation of proxy relationships, while adding such an element to this thesis, potentially allows for more generalisation.

'Simple'   *'Deep'*

Fragmentation   *Fragmentation*

→

Stand-alone   *Cross-Cutting and Dominant*

Cleavages   *Cleavages*

Figure 1

The Societal Fragmentation Spectrum

Within such a context, this thesis will focus on 'deep fragmentation', where the tribal cleavage is the most prominent one, notwithstanding the existence of other cross-cutting ones. Could it, thus, be that a tribal society is more likely to be chosen as a target for proxy warfare given its fragmented nature? A society organised along tribal lines, or a society that has a strong tribal element in its internal composition, usually has a weak central governmental structure. This is because tribes serve as socio-political forms of human organisation, providing a frame for expression and behaviour to their members, acting as foci of power and identity. A society that consists of several tribes is usually ruled via a more or less, depending on the circumstances, decentralised system of governance, where tribal identity and membership are in constant interaction with state identity and membership, with each serving different, but also overlapping

purposes. Nevertheless, this does not mean that tribal societies necessarily follow the binary – and based on realist thinking – maxim of *"when the state is strong, tribes are weak, and when the state is weak, tribes are strong"*; decentralisation exists due to tribes' nature as forms of socio-political organisation, while state-tribe relations can vary significantly beyond a simple binary. [68]

Could it further be that tribal groups are more likely to be chosen as proxies? Considering that tribal identity renders members of a tribe more attached to their tribe's resources, territory, culture, members, and depending on the form of tribe-state relations, that could vary from enmity to tolerance to cooperation to others, tribal groups could have more reasons to go against the central state authorities of the target state, thus creating cleavages ready to be exploited. This, in turn, increases *"their ability to pose a viable threat to the target regime"*, an element that research has already uncovered as key in sponsors' 'selecting' process [69], but is here presented as stemming from something beyond tribes' mere military strength. Furthermore, a tribal group's legitimacy among the local population might further serve as a way of 'hiding' external involvement in the conflict. This element might serve both sides' to a proxy relationship strategies, as the sponsor can ensure a certain level of deniability, while the local tribal proxy can strike a balance between external support and not 'losing face' locally by underlining how this support forwards the tribe's goals.

Adding to the above, the tribal context may serve as an element of relative 'control' or, more accurately, *"persuasion"* – to use Caton's concept – by tribal leadership over the tribes' members. [70] Tribal leaders, then, may have the ability to 'persuade', to 'convince' tribal members to pursue a particular course, be it joining one side of a conflict or be it accepting external aid by a sponsor, without this meaning that members do not have the free will to disagree with tribal leaders. [71] Yet, tribal leaders' power may lie with their oral skills of 'persuasion' and 'dialogue', including

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[68] Schmitz (2021), p.497.

[69] Salehyan, Gleditsch, Cunningham (2011), p.715.

[70] After all, *"Groups that are militarily weak, fractured, and disorganized are unlikely to pose a significant challenge to their host state to an extent that justifies supporting them. […] We expect that states will attempt to screen out unviable rebel groups and those that do not have leadership structures that can ensure compliance with given directives.".* Tribal groups, given the fact that they are most often 'ruled' by a system of norms, a particular 'culture', that is also attached to the element of pride, are, thus, more likely to have such 'compliance mechanisms' embedded in their everyday dealings, without this meaning that defections or orders' violations do not ever take place, and without this indicating the existence of necessarily coercive mechanisms. See: Salehyan, Gleditsch, Cunningham (2011).

[71] *"[T]he leader in a tribal society is a man who must know how to persuade an audience by rhetorical means.".* See: Caton (1987).

references to tribal identity and honour. Therefore, what a tribe may possess is not a coherent command and control relationship based on coercive power or force, but 'persuasion' mechanisms resting on both moral- and interest-related arguments, as well as coercive power-based mechanisms that are nonetheless used as an *ultima ratio*. [72] Moreover, tribes are – sometimes – attached to their territory and to their historical roots in such a way that the sacredness of these elements is deeply engraved in tribal identity, i.e., it both forms it and is formed by it, and in such a way that knowledge about them is considered existential by the group and is passed down from generation to generation. In this respect, tribal groups could hold strategically and militarily crucial knowledge *"about local population, terrain, and targets"*, in a greater degree than a non-tribal group, thus increasing their military strength in the eyes of sponsors. [73]

Turning to the accepting side, could tribal groups be more willing to become proxies? Tribes constitute relatively coherent groups that can ensure some 'control' over their members' actions, as described above. Also, they can sometimes prove they hold valuable militarily significant information on a particular battlefield due to their connection with their territory. Furthermore, depending on the status of state-tribal relations, and the level of societal fragmentation, they can promote a more or less strong incentive on their part to go against the central state or against other key foci of power within the former. The will of some tribes to operationalise this enmity, should it exist, against the target state or other actors within it renders all options of aid to their purpose attractive, especially when the actor providing it shares this enmity. Moreover, deeply engrained tribal identity, mixed with feelings of individual and collective honour, is sometimes the source of long-standing intertribal feuds [74], another cleavage of tribal societies, something that can act as a

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[72] This argument is the complete opposite of what 'instrumental' theories are supporting regarding the prevalence of coercive power. See: Caton (2021).

[73] Salehyan (2010), p.509. This element, that of the importance of knowledge on human and physical terrain has been uncovered by research on the use of auxiliary tribal forces by the government within its own state, as well as by foreign powers with direct military presence in a third state. Examples include the *"firqat"* tribal forces in Oman deployed along with British troops during the Dhofar conflict of the 1960s-1970s, the Philippines Scouts consisting mainly of people from the Macabebe tribe deployed along with US troops during the Philippine-American War of the 19th century, as well as the most recent example of the *"al-Anbar Awakening"* of Sunni tribes in Iraq that sided with the US forces in 2006. The foreign states' approach to the tribal forces, though, was, in all these cases, influenced by orientalism, something their treatment indicates, so the cases must be taken with a grain of salt, but they do support this thesis's point when it comes to intelligence. See: Hughes (2016); Long (2008); Taylor (2005); Cigar, (2014). For an example of a visibly orientalist understanding, see: Eisenstadt (2007).

[74] Brandt (2021). Brandt explains how 'blood vengeance' can potentially fuel greater patterns of violence, while she further stresses how an easing of tribal law's application for feud management may lead to even more violence and greater inter- and intra-tribal feuds implicating more than the initial actors, even non-tribal ones.

driver of the search for how to *"gain an upper hand relative to local rivals"* – that is, via external aid. [75] Lastly, in a 'deeply fragmented' society the competition arising from tribal considerations could be more complex, when the tribal cleavage overlaps with other cleavages, be they religious, economic, geographical, ethnic, or other. Overall, then, tribes can promote themselves as great proxy candidates and could demand that relative autonomy is granted to them – for the same reasons – within the proxy relationship by the sponsor, all the while making sure to multiply their resources in exchange for their services.

Taking this theoretical framework into consideration, this thesis considers as its dependent variable (DV) the establishment of a proxy relationship, and as its independent variable (IV) the internal social composition of the target state, expressed as 'deep fragmentation', and, for this thesis, further expressed as tribal identity. Therefore, this thesis maintains that IV → DV or, in other words, that the deeply fragmented nature of a target state results in the existence of various foci of power and identity, which are sometimes overlapping, and with some being more influential than others, as, in this thesis's case, the tribes. This generates a complex web of cleavages and interests, leaving plenty of room for manipulation by domestic or foreign actors. Within this framework, a generating process of proxy relationships emerges via a causal link between deep fragmentation, on the one side, and the proxy selection and sponsor acceptance processes, on the other. In this respect, the hypothesis brought forward by this thesis is the following:

H1: Proxy warfare is more likely to emerge when the target state constitutes a deeply fragmented society.

As mentioned above, deep fragmentation can result from a variety of cleavages, while some of them can be quite dominant within the same society, thus constituting the key dynamic behind the deep fragmentation status. In this respect, H1, this thesis's main hypothesis will, for the purposes of in-depth examination of a deeply fragmented society where the tribal element is the dominant cleavage, be broken into two sub-hypotheses, that read as follows:

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[75] This element has resulted to an understanding of tribes as *"a population segment with particularly strong private incentives"*, while this element helps ease problems attached to delegation and control. This has been observed in counterinsurgency wars, yet the context within which these findings are presented is still a tribal society with many cleavages, while, as mentioned, proxy warfare is also being dealt on the sidelines of counterinsurgency literature too. See: Peic (2021), p.1022.

H1a: Tribal groups within such a deeply fragmented society are more likely to be chosen as proxies by potential sponsors.

H1b: Tribal groups within such a deeply fragmented society are more likely to accept to become proxies of potential sponsors.

To examine such a thesis, all necessary concepts must be identified and properly defined. More precisely, the concepts used here are the following: proxy warfare, proxy relationship (including the proxy-sponsor-target triangle), internal social composition of a state, identity, tribe, tribal identity.

To begin with, Mumford defines proxy warfare *"as the indirect engagement in a conflict by third parties wishing to influence its strategic outcome"*. [76] Its basic tenets, thus, are its indirect nature as a form of conflict, the implication of a third party, external to the conflict, that is 'indirectly intervening' – that is, via intentionally supporting its proxy who is a direct participant to the conflict – in an interstate or intrastate conflict, in order to influence its outcome. [77] The element of intentionality on behalf of the sponsor is a key one, as without it there can be no discussion of a true proxy 'relationship' even less of discussion of proxy warfare. In this respect, proxy warfare can be visualised as a triangular relationship between the external actor or sponsor, the proxy, and the target, as *Figure 2* shows. The proxy-sponsor side to the triangle forms the so-called proxy relationship (delegation of violence [78]), the proxy-target side refers to direct conflict on the ground, while the target-sponsor side refers to indirect conflict (proxy warfare in its literal sense). It must be underlined, at this point, that the terms sponsor and proxy are not being used with reference to PAT, but simply in reference to the essence of proxy warfare, while the conceptualisation of the term here assumes *a priori* that each of the three actors has its own agency. Moreover, sponsors, proxies, and targets can either be state or non-state actors, while all sides of the triangle are of great importance. [79] It shall be clarified, though, that this thesis's research focuses

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[76] Mumford (2013b), p.1.

[77] Sozer (2006); Rauta (2018).

[78] Salehyan was one of the first scholars to really stress upon the importance of conceptual clarity when it comes to proxy relationships' nature as a form of delegation of violence instead of intervention on behalf of the third-party. In this respect, the term 'intervention by proxy' is only used for facilitating the reader and bears the same meaning as proxy warfare the way it is defined in this part of this thesis. See: Salehyan (2010).

[79] An example of a non-state target of proxy warfare would be ISIS, against whom the US, among others, as a sponsor was supporting Kurdish forces as its proxy.

on tribal groups, non-state actors, as proxies, tribal societies, states, as targets, and states as sponsors.

Furthermore, proxy warfare can be *"symmetrical"* or not, in terms of both (or all, if more than two) sides to a conflict being supported by external actors or not respectively. [80] Depending on whether the proxy war is *"symmetrical"* or not, there is a conflict by proxy between the sponsor and the target or between the sponsors supporting different sides to the conflict, or both (i.e., sponsors against other sponsors and against the target) at the same time, in more complex cases. [81] The proxy relationship includes the provision of material, military, organisational, ideological, and/or political aid by the sponsor to the proxy.
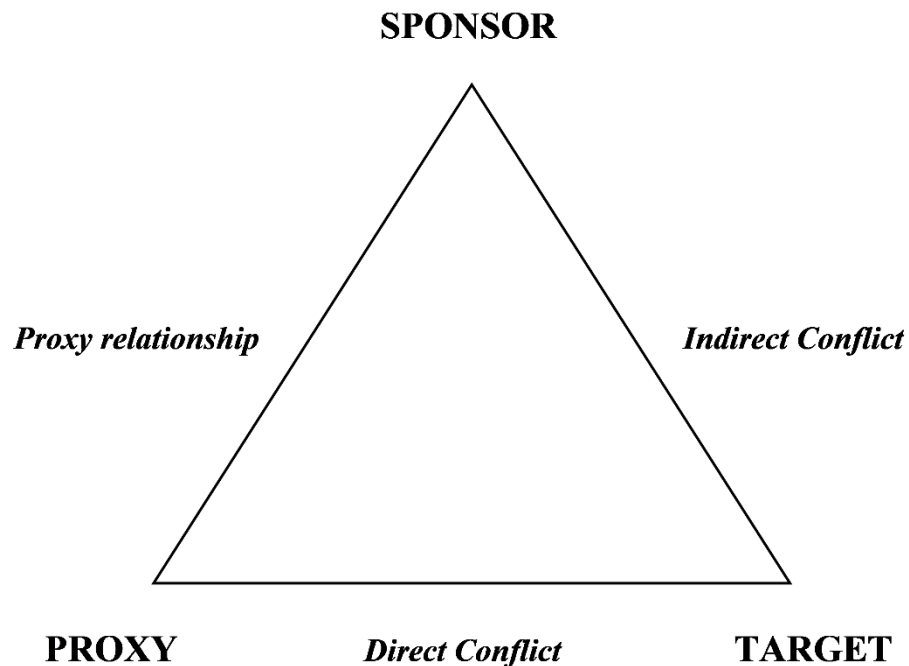
SPONSOR

Proxy relationship   *Indirect Conflict*

PROXY   *Direct Conflict*   **TARGET**

Figure 2

Visualisation of Proxy Warfare

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[80] Jenne, Popovic, Siroky (2021).
[81] Ibid.

Delving into the proxy relationship, it must be made clear that its formation process is twofold; it includes both a process of 'choosing' a proxy and a process of 'accepting' a sponsor. [82] There is, thus, a *"supply"* and a *"demand"* dynamic beneath it, the former referring to when an actor is willing to provide support and the latter to when an actor is willing to accept such support. [83] It shall also be clarified that it is not *a priori* assumed that the potential sponsor holds the initiative for the commencement of the search for a proxy relationship, as potential proxies can also be *"active pursuers"* of external support. [84] Overall, then, *"proxy wars are a set of choices* [by both sides]*: over whom, by whom, against whom, to what end, to what advantage"*. [85] Last but not least, a proxy relationship – and the proxy war it ensues – are usually, but not always, covert, secret.

Moving on, another key concept is the internal social composition of a state. Without referring to sociological theories on social structure, the internal social composition of a state is conceptualised here as referring to the institutionalised or non-institutionalised forms of interaction, to modes of behaviour, to identities of belonging (e.g., class, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.), and to all forms of social relationships, as well as to the different cultures, shared or not, that exist within a given society of people which forms a state. In this respect, there could be, for example, a tribal society, or a matriarchal or patriarchal society, or a caste society, or a multi-ethnic society, or a society with fragmented or rigid political authority, or others. The concept of 'fragmentation', as developed above, then describes a certain type of internal social composition of a state.

Identity refers to the understanding of the Self in relation to Others. Jepperson et al. define it as "*the images of individuality and distinctiveness ("selfhood") held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant "others" "*. [86] Identity is always relational, by means of the development of the Self in relation to the Other, and social, by means of being a social construct and not an inherent biological element, while it is also not carved in stone, as it evolves over time and space and under changing circumstances. There are several kinds of identity, such as individual, collective, state, national, and others. Depending on the theoretical

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[82] San-Acka (2016).
[83] Salehyan, Gleditsch, Cunningham (2011).
[84] Rauta (2020a), p.10.
[85] Ibid, p.13.
[86] Jepperson, Wendt, Katzenstein (1996), p.59.

approach one adopts, identity has or does not have an impact on behaviour and the general understanding of the world by its beholder. Based on this thesis' constructivist approach, there is such an impact; as Saideman put it, *"identity essentially constructs the world so that perceptions of one's state and the others are defined by one's identity"* [87], and, as Jepperson et al. have underlined, *"[i]dentities both generate and shape interests"*. [88]

Proceeding to the concept of the tribe, it shall be underlined that it constitutes a highly disputed term. This thesis does not address tribes neither through the evolutionary theories of anthropology – considered defunct for over a century now – which conceptualised the tribe as a primitive form of human civilisation and as something barbaric *per se*, nor through post-colonial and post-modern theories in anthropology and IR, which support the abolishment of the term altogether given the way it was used under colonialism, nor through the prism of orientalism, as tribes are not conceptualised here as something 'exotic' or 'other' that only exists in the East. [89] Instead, tribes and tribal organisation can easily be found in Europe or in any other place of the globe, notwithstanding the fact that they might not be referred to as tribes in these places, simply because the aforementioned theories have shifted discourse in such a direction, one that has attached a negative and orientalist connotation to the term.

Taking all the above into consideration, this thesis understands a tribe as a socio-political form of sub-state organisation and human relations that exists within or even beyond the borders of an existing state. Tribes exist in all corners of the world, as mentioned, yet their nuance is context- and, in this case, location-dependent, meaning that a more precise universal definition and a concrete list of their core characteristics is not only virtually impossible and ahistorical, but also useless and unwanted. [90] Generally, though, as Dorronsoro has put it, tribes are, at the same time, an identity framework, an ensemble of institutions, an arena of intratribal or other conflict and cooperation, and a collective actor, all under particular circumstances. [91] Also, tribes as socio-political and cultural formations are not carved in stone, they evolve and are reinvented over time, while what constitutes a tribe is also highly flexible, something that renders efforts to detect

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[87] Saideman (2002), p.169.
[88] Jepperson, Wendt, Katzenstein (1996), p.60.
[89] For such theories, see: Ould Cheikh (2018); Sneath (2016); Gingrich (2001).
[90] Khoury, Kostiner (1990); Kaldor (2012).
[91] Dorronsoro (2013).

concrete and stable definitions futile. [92] Importantly, they are *"open entities that maintain lively relations with their (tribal and non-tribal) environments"*. [93] Therefore, tribes are themselves a social construct, as is the identity they ensue. Lastly, tribes, in this respect, are something different from 'ethnic groups' or 'peoples', as the latter do not necessarily constitute political 'organisations', while tribes do, and as tribes usually have some particular 'institutional'-like characteristics, like tribal law, that most ethnic groups do not. [94] All in all, as tribes constitute foci of relative power and identity, a tribal society can, thus, be seen as one where fragmentation of political authority and of identity constitutes a characteristic element.

Within such a context, what is considered key to the conceptualisation of tribes is the subjective element of the self-understanding of belonging to such a group and of being connected to its members and culture (understood here as shared norms, standards of acceptable behaviour, values, etc.) [95], thus forming an *"ideology of common belonging"* of some kind. [96] Such a pragmatic conceptualisation is also in line with the International Labour Organisation's *No.169 Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989)*, where the latter are defined as people *"whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations"*, thus underlining the sub-state organisation that a tribe is, and where it is further highlighted *"self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion"* for determining a group's existence. [97]

1.3. Methodology

In order to provide an answer to this thesis's process-oriented (how) research question – *How does the internal social composition of the target state make the establishment of proxy*

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[92] See: Ben Hounet (2010); Peterson (2020). This inherent flexibility of tribes is also recognised by international law-based definitions of tribal peoples, particularly in the Inter-American human rights system. For this, see: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2009).

[93] Brandt (2017), p.17.

[94] Weir (2007). The political nature of tribes is widely recognised. See, for example: Al-Naqueeb (1996); Cole (1971); Kostiner (1903); Ibrahim (1988); all cited in Alshawi (2020). See also: Tibi (1990).

[95] On the importance of the subjective element see, for example: Biebuyck (1966).

[96] Lacher (2018).

[97] International Labour Organisation (Undated (b)). See also: International Labour Organisation (Undated (a)).

relationships possible? – this thesis's hypotheses will be tested against a single case study. [98] Then, the findings and the ensuing concluding thoughts of this thesis will be presented; thus, a deductive research design will be used. In this respect, this thesis constitutes a qualitative form of research based on an explanatory case study aimed at uncovering a causal relation. [99] Certainly, the findings based on one case study do not allow the researcher to draw extensively generalisable conclusions. Yet, these findings can serve as preliminary evidence for the accuracy or not of the hypotheses concerning the connection between 'deep fragmentation' and proxy warfare, while they can also serve as an invitation for future research analysing a greater number of cases on the same research question and applying the hereby proposed theoretical framework. [100] In all cases, time and space constraints do not allow for this thesis to examine more than one case, as the topic under question requires in-depth historical research.

Moving on, the single case study to be examined is the proxy war aspect of the North Yemen Civil War (1962-1970). There are several reasons for which this case has been chosen. On the one hand, Yemen constitutes one of the quintessential proxy warfare battlegrounds, something that modern history and current events easily prove. On the other hand, Yemen is home to a deeply fragmented and strong traditional tribal society. This was the case more so in the past than today, but the tribal element remains a salient feature of the Yemeni society, mainly in the north. [101] In this respect, the existence of both such a deep fragmentation, particularly based upon a strong tribal element, and an extensive account of proxy wars renders the Yemeni case a representative candidate for potentially uncovering the links between fragmented societies and proxy warfare. [102] Furthermore, the Egypt-Saudi Arabian proxy war of the 1960s, or most known as the *"revolutionaries-reactionaries"* divide, was one of the most crucial events in the Arab world at the time, including because of its connections to ideas and movements such as Arab nationalism, anti-colonialism, and Nasserism [103], and their geopolitical implications for the region and beyond. [104]

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[98] A case study is understood here as *"an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) unites"*. See: Gerring (2004), p.342.
[99] See: Berg (2007); Denzin, Lincoln (2018).
[100] Berg (2007).
[101] Tribalism is less strong in lower and southern Yemen. See: Brandt (2017).
[102] *"Representativeness"* is of the essence when choosing a case study. See: Lacher (2018).
[103] Kerr (1981).
[104] Zarogianni (2021).

The local aspects of the Egypt-Saudi Arabian proxy war, and the North Yemen Civil War as its major battleground with Egypt's direct military intervention and Saudi Arabia's intervention by proxy via tribal groups, have largely been neglected and camouflaged by Cold War-based analyses. [105] In fact, this is connected to the wider misclassification of the Egyptian-Saudi rivalry as an *"Arab Cold War"*, an argument that not only favoured Great Power agency over the regional actors, drawing false parallels to the actual Cold War, but also shed light only on the sponsor side. [106] Nevertheless, several historians, including Orkaby and Ferris, have tried to remove this Cold War lens and to investigate the local dynamics of the war in Yemen, thus constituting important sources for the present thesis. [107] Yet there still is a greater focus on Nasser's military intervention than on Saudi Arabia's intervention by proxy, something the present thesis aims to undo. This preference in focus is partly attributable to the lack of primary sources for the Saudi involvement in the war, in comparison to numerous declassified documents referring to the Egyptians, the US, USSR, and the UK. [108] It shall be clarified, though, that the present thesis by no means constitutes a full historical account of the North Yemen Civil War. It rather constitutes an insight into one of its various angles, that of the proxy war, and particularly into Saudi Arabia's involvement via proxy, while its chronological focus is on the first one or two years of the conflict.

Moreover, the present case is a tough one, especially for constructivism. Despite being a Sunni power, Saudi Arabia supported mainly Zaydi Shia tribes of the 'royalist' camp, in its effort to support a Shia-ruled Imamate, rather than Sunni Yemeni tribes that mainly formed the 'republican' camp. This is not to say that Saudi Arabia did not support other tribes – because it did – or that Zaydi Shia tribes and Sunni Yemeni tribes were only fighting on behalf of the royalists and republicans respectively – because they did not. Also, even though the Yemeni Sunni tribes were mostly following Shafii Islam, and Saudi Arabia was, and is, following Wahhabism, constructivism would still expect Sunnis to be supporting Sunnis, as inter-Sunni differences can be considered as a smaller gap than the Sunni-Shia divide. And, even simpler, constructivism would not expect Saudis pressuring for a Shia-based neighbouring Imamate. Nevertheless, this thesis does not aim to go deeply into the religious differences between Shafii Sunni and Zaydi Shia Islam; it rather aims to investigate their tribal dimension in Yemen and their connection to identities

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[105] See: Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017).
[106] Zarogianni (2021).
[107] See: Ferris (2012); Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017).
[108] Ibid.

within Yemeni society. [109] The terms 'royalist' ("*malakī*") and 'republican' ("*jumhūrī*") are of unknown source when it comes to their first use, but they quickly caught on. It shall be mentioned, though, that 'royalists' mostly referred to themselves as 'loyalists', i.e., loyal to the Imam. This thesis will use the former term as the most known one already. The conflict has also been described mainly in realist terms, with regime survival and 'Arab Cold War' arguments being articulated as 'obvious' explanations of Saudi Arabia's involvement, thus rendering a constructivist society-based approach harder to adopt. Adding to that, considering that the present thesis aims to uncover a link between deeply fragmented, and particularly tribal, societies and proxy warfare, Middle Eastern countries pose as great candidates, given the fragmentation, and visible importance of tribal identity, usually found within their borders, without this meaning that either one can only be found in the MENA. Last but not least, examining the North Yemeni war of the 1960s is of particular importance in order to fully understand the roots of the currently raging civil (and proxy) war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen, namely that between the Houthis and the Saudi/UAE-led Coalition Forces supporting the internationally recognised, albeit faute de mieux, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi-led Yemeni government. [110]

As mentioned, the present thesis is based on a multidisciplinary approach to the topic of proxy warfare, by means of applying both an IR theory and basing it on an in-depth historical analysis of the Yemeni war. In order to achieve this, the thesis's research will be based on a variety of secondary sources (mainly peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books), stemming from both disciplines, as well as from anthropology, on the Yemeni war, tribes, and proxy warfare, and of primary sources concerning the case study under consideration. The latter include, for example, ethnographical material on tribes in Yemen, or state-issued documents on the Yemeni war, if and when accessible. More precisely, this thesis will make use of several declassified diplomatic documents stemming from British and American diplomatic channels. Generally, though, considering that proxy warfare is most frequently waged in secret, while the process leading to the establishment of a proxy relationship can be even more discreet and confidential, there is a lack of primary material. Lack of primary material is particularly the case regarding the proxy side and even more so when the proxy is a non-state actor, as is the case with Yemeni tribes. Last but not

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[109] See: Ferris (2012); Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017).
[110] Brandt (2017).

least, since the author does not speak Arabic, non-translated sources are not accessible. Nevertheless, all relevant sources in English, French, or Greek will be investigated.

Chapter 2: North Yemen: A Deeply Fragmented Kingdom

2.1. Geography

North Yemen or the *Mutawakkilite* Kingdom of Yemen (1918-1962) was a country located in the south-west part of the Arabian Peninsula, as seen in *Figure 3*. [111] It constituted the north-western part of today's Republic of Yemen, which resulted from the 1990 unification of North Yemen, known as the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) post-1962, and South Yemen, known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) post-1967. North Yemen's geographic position at the entrance of the Red Sea – the dividing line between Asia and Africa – via a strategic maritime chokepoint, namely the Bab al-Mandab strait, and its proximity to the route from the Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Aden is to 'blame' for the country's appealing nature to foreign invaders throughout the centuries; the Roman, Persian, and Ottoman Empires, Ethiopia, Egypt. Nevertheless, Yemen's name, *al-Yaman*, hides another appealing element; it stems from the Arab word for 'happiness' or 'prosperity' [112], while it also goes back to the Roman term for the region, namely '*Arabia Felix*'. [113] The reason for this is no other than the fertile climate found in Yemen, something deeply surprising given the harsh environment of mountains and the *Rub al-Khali* desert (the 'Empty Quarter') of the Arabian Peninsula. [114]

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[111] *Imam Yahya bin Husayn bin Muhammad Hamid al-Din* was a Zaydi Imam since 1908 and, after North Yemen's liberation from the Ottoman Empire in 1918, became Imam of North Yemen, entitling himself *al-Mutawakkilbillah*, meaning *"one who puts his trust in Allah"*. Thus, the *Mutawakillite* Kingdom of Yemen was born. The Hamid al-Din family was prominent in Yemen since 1889 and would rule until the 1962 Revolution. See: Rabi (2015).
[112] Wenner (1967).
[113] Scott (1940).
[114] Kling (1969). Kling's thesis is cited for its presentation of North Yemen's geography only, as the rest of its content is deeply orientalism-influenced, presenting Yemeni society and its tribal population as 'primitive', even 'barbaric' at times, and is, thus, not in accordance with this thesis's author's views.
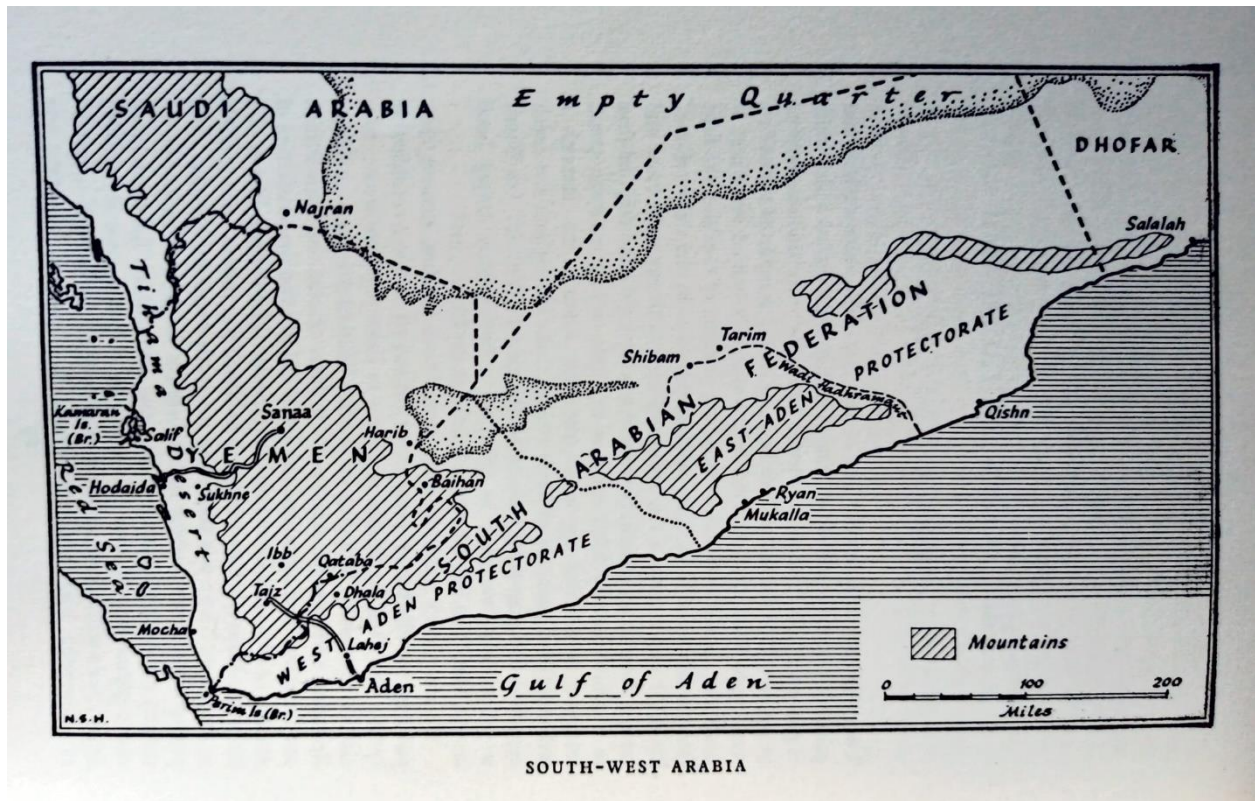
Figure 3

Map of South-West Arabia [115]

North Yemen, in the era dealt with by this thesis, bordered, in the south, the Federation of South Arabia, then under British rule; in the north, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; in the west, the Red Sea; while being surrounded by the *Rub al-Khali* desert in the north and east. Both the southern and northern borders, though, were, at that time, more or less contested by both sides respectively, resulting in the country's ill-demarcated territory and in people of various origins living in the borderlands, especially those shared with Saudi Arabia. This latter element did complicate things as to where these peoples' loyalties lied, further complicating statecraft in North Yemen. Nevertheless, a relative understanding of North Yemen's territory reveals an interesting topographical situation, which had, throughout the centuries, a crucial imprint on Yemeni society, as will be shown in the following sub-chapter. More precisely, North Yemen can be roughly 'divided' into several geographical zones, namely the lowlands, referring to the coastal strip along

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[115] Holden (1966).

the Red Sea called *Tihamah*, the mountainous highlands and narrow pathways of the north, referring roughly to the area between the towns of *Sana'a* and *Sa'dah,* and the arid eastern hills that slowly descend into the next zone, the *Rub al-Khali* desert. A further division has resulted from these zones, namely that of Upper (*al-Yaman al-a'la*) and Lower Yemen (*al-Yaman al-asfal*) [116], with the former consisting of the northern highlands, and the latter mostly referring to the areas south of Sana'a, namely *Taizz* and *Ibb*. [117]

Furthermore, there are important ecological differences between each zone, mostly regarding the climate, soil fertility, landscape, and terrain, and it is through these elements that geography's impact on Yemeni society can be detected. More precisely, the mountainous northern highlands, with their steep slopes, numerous caves, and winding passings create a harsh landscape that serves as *"a natural fortress"* against foreign invaders [118], rendering conventional military tactics based on large regular forces rather useless. [119] In fact, most accounts cite this element as one of the primary reasons for which foreign armies had failed, in the past, to subjugate the tribesmen of the North, but also as an obstacle to the establishment of stable lines of communication and transportation as a means of ensuring that Yemeni Imams' authority reached each mountain's peak. [120] This situation is said to have cultivated a relative feeling of autonomy among people of the North [121], while these territories – which also constitute hardcore tribal areas – were basically rendered the 'stronghold of Yemen' that, if not controlled, be it by an Imam or a foreign army, the aspiring ruler did not really 'rule' Yemen. [122] In this respect, the geographical elements merged with a psychology of autonomy and forged a strong local identity, which was, on its part, further strengthened by tribal identity, in a way that a 'stronghold' or a crucial focus of power, other than the central state apparatus or the capital, was brought to the fore.

On the contrary, North Yemen's lowlands and coastal plain provided little room for such natural defensive barriers, something that has resulted in the Yemenis of these areas experiencing numerous occupations by foreign armies, as well as in a general domination by people from Upper

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[116] Dresch (1989).
[117] Rabi (2015).
[118] Kling (1969).
[119] Witty (2001).
[120] Mumford (2013a); Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017); Kling (1969).
[121] Stookey (1972). The parts of Stookey's thesis presenting tribes as being *"warlike"* for the sake of simply being so are not in accordance with this thesis's author's views and, thus, shall be taken with a grain of salt.
[122] Ingrams (1963).

Yemen. [123] Thus, contrary to Upper Yemen, Lower Yemen inhabitants were more accustomed to a rather strong structure of authority over them – albeit understood in relative terms. [124] Nevertheless, all Yemenis shared a historical disdain for foreign, that is, non-Yemeni, occupants who not only subjugated them, but also tried to alter their society *per se*. This historical hatred against foreign forces would prove to be of monumental importance during the civil war, as it would quickly alter some tribes initial support for Egyptian forces. Moreover, among others, the climate and fertile soil of the *Tihamah* plains favours agriculture, in comparison to the arid eastlands and mountainous northern highlands; here geography leaves its imprint on economy. [125] In fact, the soil fertility, and the consequent high agricultural production levels of Lower Yemen, as well as the trade routes connected to the Red Sea ports, increased the economic output of its residents (mostly Shafii Muslims). Yet, at the same time, this rendered them victims of both extensive taxes on behalf of the Imamate, but also of raids on behalf of the Yemenis of the North, where the environment was much less hospitable to crops and to agricultural production and was, understandably, poorer. [126] Therefore, the Upper and Lower Yemen divide also corresponded to an economic divide. [127]

2.2. Society

The Upper and Lower Yemen multifaceted divide, though, goes hand-in-hand with societal divisions, namely the various foci of power and identity stemming from the social strata, the religious Zaydi-Shafii divide, the historical genealogical divide, as well as the social organisational tribe-village one, into which the following lines delve. Taken all together, then, considering the various cleavages, sometimes overlapping, North Yemen is presented as a geographically, ecologically, topographically, economically, and socially divided and deeply fragmented society. Authority and power are highly fluid and dispersed, with agency belonging to and exercised by various more or less autonomous social groups, the most prominent being the tribes. These groups

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[123] Dresch (1989).
[124] Weir (2007).
[125] Brandt (2017); Wenner (1967).
[126] Madkhli (2003).
[127] Dresch (1989).

bore their own interests and were pursuing them in parallel to, in cooperation with, or even against the Zaydi state apparatus, as well as vis-à-vis each other.

This situation further resulted in various foci of identity being forged, each of different gravity, thus expanding fragmentation to an even deeper level. At the same time, the Zaydi Imamate attempted to develop its own strategies of manipulation of existing divides, it an effort to bring some kind of 'order' in this socio-politically fragmented environment, an order that would allow the regime to stay in power and pursue its own interests itself. [128] Thus, all these cleavages left plenty of room for manipulation and instrumentalisation by both internal and external actors, with their overlapping nature resulting sometimes in seemingly 'absurd' patterns of behaviour, like the ones detected during the years of the civil (and proxy) war. [129]

Nevertheless, an important note shall be made as to the rough and relative nature of these divides or, the lack of clear borders of each 'category'; in other words, there was not always a line on the ground. Yet, at the same time, this stemmed from the overlapping nature of these divides, which drew on one another. Even with this note in mind, though, deep fragmentation did constitute a quintessential characteristic of North Yemen, which, at the time, was home to approximately 6 million people [130], despite the relevant ethnical homogeneity within its borders. In this respect, it is worth noting that the terms 'fragmented', 'fragmentation', and 'divisions', constitute the most used terms within historical and anthropological accounts on North Yemen.

Moving on, a rather simplified depiction of North Yemen's social strata would be as follows: the Imam and the royal family; the *sadah*; the *shaykhs*; the *qadis*; tribesmen (*qaba'il*); peasants, merchants, artisans; slaves/servants. [131] It should be underlined that this order of the social strata or the distinction between them is rather of analytical value and not completely descriptive of reality; for example, s*haykhs* and *qadis* were also of tribal stock, while the Imam was also from a *sadah* family. Therefore, the following presentation of the social strata serves the purpose of

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[128] Stookey (1972).
[129] Gause (1987).
[130] The number is contested, given that there was no census data back then, and usually ranges from 4 to 7 million people.
[131] Halliday (1974). *Sadah* is given in its plural form in Arabic (s*ayyid* is the singular form), *shaykhs* and *qadis* are in an Anglicised plural form, while *qaba'il* is the Arabic plural form of *qabili*.

analysing the different actors present within Yemeni society, tracing their origins, and socio-political role.

Islam has been the predominant religion in the area of Yemen since the 6th century, while the Zaydi branch of Shia Islam and its politico-religious establishment, the Zaydi Imamate, ruled northernmost Yemeni lands from the 9th century all the way until the 1962 Revolution. [132] Nevertheless, Zaydis were not the only Muslims in Yemen, as the Shafii sect of Sunni Islam counted an important number of adherents. It is estimated that about four fifths of North Yemen's tribes were Zaydi and the rest Shafii. [133] Zaydi Islam constitutes a rather moderate form of Shia Islam, to the point that its differences from Sunni Islam are minimal. In general, the Zaydi regime did not attempt to suppress Shafii practices. [134] Yet Zaydi Shia and Shafii Sunni Islam still constituted two different sub-cultures, thus bringing a sectarian divide to the fore.

More precisely, the Zaydi Imamate's highest religious, political, legal authority was the Imam, whose position was selective rather than inherited. [135] Nevertheless, this authority was recognised only by Zaydis themselves, while the Shafii population viewed the Imam as merely *"a temporal ruler of the state"*. [136] It is in this respect that the sectarian divide in North Yemen complicated statecraft, as a large part of the population did not recognise the ruler's authority to rule and, on his part, the ruler tried to strengthen his grip over them in various ways. In fact, the Zaydi regime visibly favoured Zaydis, as co-religionists of the Imam, to such an extent that one could talk about the *"institutionalisation of the supremacy of"* Zaydis over the Shafiis. [137] The latter had to pay heavier taxes and live under tight state surveillance, while the former enjoyed relative autonomy, as well as privileges when it came to, among others, taxes, positions in the state apparatus and the 'irregular' tribal army forces (the *al-jaysh al-barrani*). [138]

Nevertheless, this did not mean that certain Zaydi tribesmen did not suffer under the Imamate or were wronged by it and vice-versa for Shafii tribesmen – all these elements shall not be

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[132] The first Imamate was established in 897. See: Wenner (1967).
[133] See: Ibid; Witty (2001); Madkhli (2003). Madkhli argues that 40 out of 74 major tribes in Yemen were Zaydi, while the rest Shafii.
[134] Dresch (1989).
[135] Rabi (2015).
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid. See also: Madkhli (2003).

considered absolute. [139] All in all, though, despite the religious divide not being that great *per se*, its socio-politico-economic footprint was looming large over North Yemen. This footprint was further amplified by the nearly even geographical distribution of Zaydi tribes in the northern mountains/highlands and eastern desert regions, and Shafii ones along the Red Sea coast and Lower Yemen, notwithstanding the geographical implications mentioned above. [140] Within this context, social and political fragmentation fuelled disdain and dissent by the more 'oppressed' population or those 'wronged' by a basically autocratic regime, pushing existing divides towards the extreme.

Moving on, Zaydi Imams had to necessarily be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, particularly via his daughter Fatima, his son-in-law and cousin Ali, and his grandsons, Husayn and Hasan. [141] Imams were, thus, selected from among the *sadah*, a non-tribal elite class of descendants of the Prophet, thus a certain kind of urban *"religious aristocracy"* [142], estimated as ranging from 5.000 to 50.000 people. [143] The *sadah* under the Imamate enjoyed extensive economic and political privileges, basically constituting the beating heart of the state apparatus, serving as the intermediary between the population and the Imam, and controlling parts of the best land – no wonder their elite status angered the average Yemeni. [144] Their privileged position was, in fact, rooted in the Zaydi doctrine, while their interaction with the tribes revolved around the former's duty of protection over the *sadah*. [145]

At this point, it is imperative to delve into yet another divide; the one regarding the historical genealogical descent of the Arabian Peninsula's Arab population. The putative descent of all Arabs goes back to a common ancestor *Sam ibn Nuh*, but then split into two different lines: the *Qahtani* or *"the 'pure' or Southern Arab"*, descendant of *Qahtan ibn Abir*, and the *Adnani* or *"the 'derived' or Northern Arab"*, descendant of *Ismail* through *Adnan*. [146] All South Arabian tribes claim to be

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[139] In 1952, when a Shafii *qadi* proceeded with a statement extoling the first four Caliphs of Islam and Zaydis anathematised the fourth one (based on their doctrine) and then attacked the *qadi*, the Imam ordered the arrest and imprisonment of his coreligionists, stressing that eradicating religious cleavages was his policy's number one goal. See: Clark (1952) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State declassified documents compilation].
[140] Badeeb (1986). Badeeb's book – an extended version of his 1985 thesis – provides a heavily Saudi-biased account of events in Yemen post-1962, so its contents shall be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, its presentation of Yemen's social strata is quite informative. See also: Halliday (1974).
[141] Douglas (1987).
[142] Brandt (2017).
[143] Najwa (1982).
[144] Wenner (1967); Witty (2001); Halliday (1974); Douglas (1987).
[145] Brandt (2017).
[146] Wenner (1967).

of *Qahtani* descent, while the *sadah* are of *Adnani* descent. Therefore, the *sadah* are considered immigrants, even *"unwelcome aliens"* to Yemen, something that renders their elite status even more 'troubling' to local eyes. [147] Moreover, at least some modern feuds are considered to date back to this split between the 'pure' and the 'derived' Arabs. [148]

Bellow the *sadah,* there was another crucial focus of power, that of the *shaykhs*, meaning the tribal leaders. As the tribal aspect of North Yemen is at the core of this thesis, it will be developed in a sub-chapter of its own. The next social class, that of tribal stock, were the *qadis*, which basically translates into 'judges', as they specialised in the study of *sharia* law [149], serving as the middle-class civil servants of the Imamate, positioned under the *sadah* elite. [150] *Qadis'* title was initially awarded to certain individuals by the Imam – once more, Zaydis were favoured – but became hereditary from then on. [151] Generally, *qadis* are considered to be under the protection of tribesmen, through the concept of *hijrah* (lit. sanctuary), while their role ranged from administrative issues – also given the population's illiteracy levels – to legal acts, such as marriage, and even to dispute resolution. [152]

At this point, the formation of a new military officers' class should be mentioned. Apart from the 'irregular' army already mentioned, the 'regular' army was weak and lacked training. For this reason, already from the late 1930s, the Imams had agreed upon bilateral training missions initially with Iraq and then with Egypt. The 1950s, in fact, saw the apogee of Egyptian training forces within Egypt, as well as of Yemeni officers, originally of humble backgrounds, moving to Egypt for training. [153] This not only broadened their military capabilities, but also brought them into direct contact with Egypt's revolutionary ideology and fuelled their will to have a greater say in politics

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[147] *"Public emphasis upon Qahtani origins is strictly taboo in contemporary Yemen.* […] *an omnipresent, albeit subsurface, cleavage which permeates the whole of Yemeni society. Unlike elsewhere in the Arab world, the Qahtani-Adnani schism is no mere classicism in Yemen.* […] *Translated into political terms, it represents increasing dissatisfaction on the part of the general population, consisting primarily of south Arabian (Qahtani) stock, against the alleged iniquities of sada* […] [who] *have come to be regarded* […] *as unwelcome aliens* […].*".* See: Eilts (1953) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State Declassified Documents].
[148] Brandt (2017).
[149] Ibid.
[150] See: Badeeb (1985); Rabi (2015).
[151] Douglas (1987).
[152] Dresch (1989).
[153] Stookey (1972).

in Yemen, just as the military did in Egypt. [154] There arose, then, a 'class' of military officers who would, in fact, constitute the basis of the 1962 coup and of the consequent YAR governments.

The majority of the rest of the population was simple tribesmen (*qaba'il*), followed by peasants (usually merchants and artisans). The latter were called by tribesmen *ahl al-thulth*, meaning *"the people of the third'* (i.e., estate of society) or *du'afa*, meaning, *"the weak people"*, something that signifies the urban/peasant-tribal divide within North Yemen and the diminishing view of the former by the latter. [155] Nevertheless, the *du'afa* themselves were also positioned under the protection of tribesmen, despite being 'bellow' the tribesmen in class terms. [156] Lastly, servants constituted the lowest class of North Yemen's society. [157] It is, thus, visible that social mobility was almost completely out of the question, as *sadah* were born s*adah*, the Imam was chosen from among them, the *qadis* constituted a smaller semi-hereditary elite of Imam's preferred people, while 'weak people' status was hereditary, and neither tribesmen nor *sadah* would consider intermarrying with them. [158] As Stookey puts it: *"A Yemeni was born a sayyed, a Shafe'i, a peasant, a blacksmith, an Arhabi, etc., and that was his life-long identity"*. [159]

2.3. A State and its Tribes

As mentioned above, being tribal means different things to different people in different parts of the globe. It is, thus, imperative to examine tribes' particular conceptualisation within Yemeni society. Overall, the *"tribe (qabilah) is a historically rooted, emic concept of social representation"*, social organisation, and self-perception in Yemen, that can be traced back centuries to Yemen's pre-Islamic era. [160] 'Tribalness' (*qabyalah*), then, constitutes an identity framework that further is *"a matter of local agency, local authority, and a source of individual and collective honour"* (*sharaf*) and action, as well as of customary law ('*urf*) and ethics. [161] All

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[154] Ferris (2018).
[155] Brandt (2017). *Du'afa* is the Arabic plural form of *da'if*.
[156] Brandt (2014).
[157] Halliday (1974).
[158] Brandt (2017).
[159] Stookey (1972).
[160] Brandt (2021).
[161] Brandt (2018).

in all, the tribal context is said to constitute *"a moral, social, political, legal, and aesthetic system"* [162], thus forming the most crucial focus of power and identity in North Yemen.
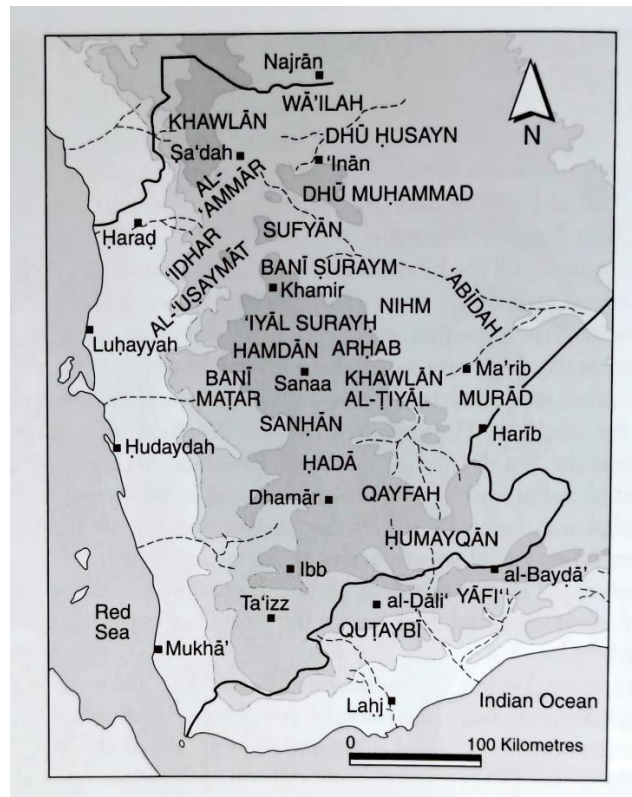
Figure 4

North Yemen: A State and its Tribes [163]

To begin with, tribes were more prevalent in the northern and eastern part of Yemen, as *Figure 4* indicates, while in the southern and western part, the village was the main form of social organisation and allegiance. There are no concrete data on the overall number of tribes, but they are estimated to be several hundred. Despite numerous shared characteristics, allowing for some level of generalisation, Yemeni tribes did differ regionally in terms of *"size, forms of identity, and modes of organisation"*. [164] Furthemore, tribes in Yemen are generally sedentary, historically

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[162] Najwa (2021).
[163] Dresch (2000).
[164] Weir (2007).

focusing on agricultural production, given the country's fertile soil and slow development of industrial production. [165] Their religious belief in Zaydi or Shafii Islam is also of importance – always within the sectarian context explained in the previous sub-chapter – while they were detected in the North and South respectively. Tribesmen self-identified as *"the elite of Yemen"* because of their *Qahtani* origin, while viewing non-tribal people as 'weak', as described above. [166] Tribes are divided into sections and sub-sections, with terminology referring to either one varying greatly, an issue being beyond the scope of this analysis. Moreover, individual tribes tended to form large tribal confederations (*ahlaf*), without this indicating, though, the formation of a concrete, strictly structured, and hierarchical bloc sharing the same interests to the last detail. The Hashid and Bakil confederations (forming the Hamdan confederation) of northern and central Yemen are the most known and influential, while it should be noted that there was a rivalry between the two on who had the most power. [167]

Qabyalah sits at the centre of the Yemeni tribal concept. It refers to an ethical system, a system of norms and behaviour connected to *"honour, courage, pride, and protection of the weak"* [168], as well as to tribal origin (*asl*) and to character integrity of the tribesman. [169] It is also connected to aesthetics, depicted in tribal dances and poetry. [170] Maintaining and defending s*haraf* is a quintessential 'obligation' of tribesmen, while individual and collective *sharaf* are inseparable, both when infringed and when defended. This collective response and mobilisation is called *assabiyya* and is basically understood as *"tribal solidarity"* or *"esprit de corps"*. [171] Nevertheless, Yemeni tribes shall still be conceptualised as cooperative units and not as 'mobilised on command' structures based on *assabiya*. This is also connected to the role of the *shaykh*, as examined bellow.

Furthermore, Yemeni tribes generally constitute territorial entities to a larger degree than centring around the concept of genealogical descent, which, nevertheless, remains important. [172] Thus, tribesmen *"identify with a putative ancestor as well as territorial boundaries"*. [173] In this

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[165] Varisco (2021). See also: Womach (1950) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State declassified documents compilation].
[166] Wenner (1967).
[167] Halliday (1974). *Ahlaf* is the Arabic plural of *hilf*.
[168] Brandt (2017).
[169] Najwa (2021).
[170] Ibid.
[171] Dresch (1986).
[172] Dresch (1990).
[173] Najwa (2021).

respect, s*haraf* is inextricably connected to, among others, territory (*ard*), rendering the latter a quintessential element of being tribal. [174] Therefore, any 'attack' against such territory is also one against the tribe's honour, thus the latter's response would be passionate and probably result in a feud or a heated military confrontation. *"The borders of tribes are therefore portrayed as sacrosanct"*; a tribesman's connection to his territory, then, is both physical, symbolic, and psychological. [175] This might also result in crucial information (e.g., on soil fertility, on natural fortresses against an invader, on caves and narrow alleys, on viewpoints, etc.) about this territory being passed down from generation to generation within a tribe, propagating knowledge of and attachment to it. Lastly, when viewed in the light of geography, as already mentioned, the mountainous territory of the North resulted in narrow tribal allegiances, strengthening local identity, and fostering a culture of autonomy.

Qabyalah further refers to tribal customary law (*'urf*), namely a rather flexible, yet persistent over time, set of principles and rules regulating intra- and inter-tribal relations, basically concerning conflict resolution via mediation and other peaceful processes. [176] The conflicts that required such resolution through *'urf* ranged from disputes over land or cattle, transactions, or territorial violations, to full-on inter- and intra-tribal feuds. [177] A particular type of feud, wholly governed by *'urf,* is blood revenge (*tha'r*), an extremely violent yet still legitimate activity under certain conditions pertaining to violations of *sharaf*. [178] It is evident that, within such conflicts, the individual and the collective claim are intermingled and, sometimes, inseparable – as are individual and collective honour of tribesman and tribe respectively. Despite not being a chaotic situation, given its *'urf* base and the tribes' efforts to tame the level of violence used, such feuds can potentially lead to further violence, creating a vicious circle of never-ending hatred, which, in turn, leads to more societal divisions ready to erupt. [179] Such a scenario looms larger when the central state apparatus aims to interfere with the intricate balance that tribal law and custom have forged in this respect.

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[174] Brandt (2017).
[175] Brandt (2013).
[176] Dresch (2021).
[177] Najwa (1982).
[178] Brandt (2021). Contrary to this thesis's analysis, an orientalist understanding of tribal affairs as inimically violent can be found in Halliday, where he argues: *"Because of the prevalence of feuding, every tribesman, whether nomad or peasant, was also a warrior."*. See: Halliday (1974).
[179] Brandt (2021).

Last but not least, each tribe has a leader and representative, called a *shaykh*. A *shaykh* gains his status via a mixed system of an election (between the male members of an establish family of *shaykhs*) and a hereditary process (within the family, *shaykhdom* is hereditary). [180] The responsibilities of a *shaykh* mainly included the tribe's representation in its dealings with other tribes or the state or third actors, arbitration within or between tribes based on the implementation of *'urf,* as well as the general administration of tribal affairs. Many *shaykhs* in Yemen also served as *"local administrators or tax collectors"* for the Imamate; some of them were, thus, in a way, embedded in the Imamic regime, while most were part of the Imam's patronage and *divide et impera* strategies, as explained bellow. [181] In fact, for Zaydi tribes, the *shaykh* was the leader of the tribe, but he himself owned his loyalty to the highest political and religious ruler, the Imam, according to Zaydi doctrine. [182]

The *shaykh*'s position shall be understood as *"primus inter pares"* and in terms of soft power of 'persuasion', instead of coercive power. [183] In other words, *shaykhs* could not force tribesmen to follow their decisions – be it to go to war or anything else – but could try to 'convince' them that this would be in their favour and in alignment with tribal honour and responsibilities. Respect towards the *shaykhs* as 'elders' was also crucial and a *shaykh*'s personality, rhetorical abilities, popularity, and available economic means were all 'tools' to be used in his effort to 'persuade' and to, perhaps, mobilise tribesmen for a particular affair. [184] Nevertheless, tribesmen could disagree, choose a different path, or even split away from a particular tribe. Overall, *shaykhs* did represent an important social stratum, and, given their potential mobilisation power over tribesmen, a crucial focus of 'power', understood here in relevant terms. *Shaykhs*, as the next chapter will indicate, played a crucial role during the civil war, acting practically as intermediaries between foreign sponsors and tribesmen, all the while making sure to gain as much personal wealth as possible.

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[180] Brandt (2017).
[181] Halliday (1974).
[182] Wenner (1967).
[183] Caton (1987); Caton (2021); Najwa (1982); Najwa (2021). Caton's concept of 'persuasion', mentioned in the theoretical framework pertaining to tribes' internal mode of operation, also applies to the case of Yemeni tribes.
[184] Caton (2021).

2.4. Tribes as Foci of Power and *'Divide et Impera'* Politics

"They [tribes] *were in Yemen, not of Yemen."*

Gregory Johnsen [185]

Overall, tribal identity in North Yemen poses as a strong socio-political and psychological element. It entails a system of norms, ethics, culture, and socio-political expression. When placed within the fragmented Yemeni society, then, tribes are understood as crucial foci of power, something that the Imamate acknowledged and was desperately trying to make do with – not dispense with. It is crucial to note, though, that this does not assume that a mere tribe *vs.* state or tribal *vs.* national identity-related dichotomy existed in North Yemen, while the Imamate's strategy was not about destroying the tribes, but about ensuring their loyalty. An exception to this, though, could be the Imam's effort to replace *'urf* with *sharia* law that was, nevertheless, non-successful. [186] This rather indicates that there existed more than one interrelated and influential socio-political actor within a fragmented society, while tribes and Imamate did cooperate and align their interests on many occasions – and did not, on several others. [187] Yemeni tribes, thus, can be perceived as having a significant level of agency and autonomy, as well as their own interests, to the point where they could be viewed – without taking the terms too literally – as *"tiny sovereign domains"* [188] or *"small nations"* [189] or *"little independent states"* [190] , rendering Yemen a deeply fractured state. A characteristic quote, in this spirit, would be: *"(The Imam) rules only a small part of Yemen. We Yemenis submit to no-one permanently. We love freedom and will fight for it.".* [191] As mentioned above, though, fragmentation refers to various actors with various interests and identity frameworks, without this necessarily meaning that only enmity relations existed between them;

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[185] Johnsen (2017). This quote used here in order to signify the tribes' autonomy and power, not to indicate they were not of Yemeni ethnic origins.
[186] Stookey (1972).
[187] Brandt (2017). A tribe *vs.* state understanding is basically stemming from the segmentary model and Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory, which Brandt here correctly criticises generally and with a focus on Yemen.
[188] Johnsen (2017).
[189] Wenner (1967).
[190] Bidwell (1983).
[191] Stookey (1972).

cooperation and communication did exist too. So, calling tribes 'small nations' is a term indicating their influential socio-political role and not their independence *stricto sensu*.

Within this context, the Zaydi Imams had, over the centuries, developed a complex strategy of *divide et impera* politics, entangled with a patronage system vis-à-vis the tribes. This came on top of the general lack of 'central government structures' – the way a Weberian understanding of the state would perceive them – and on top of a basically personalised regime centred around the Imam. [192] More precisely, on the one hand, Imams took advantage of existing inter- and intra-tribal feuds and antagonisms, all the while exploiting the general societal divides within North Yemen, effectively turning tribes against one another and, thus, keeping them occupied, in a way. [193] Moreover, they developed the infamous 'hostage system'. Namely, they captured, imprisoned, and even tortured and executed, male members of tribes, usually the offspring of *shaykhs* or important tribal families, whose fate post-capture depended on whether their tribe's behaviour was in alignment with Imamic interests. [194] A relevant tactic included calling dissatisfied *shaykhs* to *Sana'a* so as they could express their complaints (e.g., on taxes, on food shortages, etc.) formally to the Imam, then arresting and imprisoning them the moment they arrived, so as to ensure the 'compliance' of their respective tribes. [195] *Shaykhs* were also imprisoned when they seemed to not share the current Imam's views on the succession to the throne. [196] Understandably, this fuelled animosity and resentment against the Imam, yet it has been evaluated as a rather successful measure for the regime and its *"balancing"* effort. [197] The Imam at some intervals would free such political prisoners, in line with his 'carrot and stick' approach, and would do so via public ceremonies, stressing the Imamate's forgiveness capabilities and the people's so-called unity under the Imam.

On the other hand, the Imams generously bribed *shaykhs*, who accepted bribes for various reasons, basically buying their and, supposedly, their tribe's loyalty. This measure was not as successful, given the non-coercive nature of *shaykhs*' authority, mentioned above. [198] Yet,

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[192] Childs (1950) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State Declassified Documents].
[193] See: Kling (1969); Baddeb (1986); Halliday (1974).
[194] See: Weir (2007); Halliday (1974).
[195] Eilts (1952) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State Declassified Documents].
[196] Eilts (1953) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State Declassified Documents]
[197] See: Johnsen (2017); Childs (1950) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State Declassified Documents].
[198] Bidwell (1983).

depending on the amount of money, *shaykhs* could further 'buy' tribesmen's loyalties themselves. [199] Imams also nominated 'puppet' *shaykhs*, further interfering with tribal affairs. [200] Furthermore, Zaydi tribes were typically favoured over Shafii ones via, for instance, subsidies or taxes, while the Imam was often stressing upon Zaydi tribes' obligation to be loyal to him as the highest religious and political authority according to Zaydi doctrine. [201]

At the same time, though, the Imamate depended upon tribes for its safety and security. More precisely, the Hashid and Bakil confederations have historically been known as *"the wings of the Imamate".* [202] This is so because the Imams had managed to secure their regime's security only with the military (and political) help of these two confederations, both during the Hamid al-Din and previous periods. Historically, then, the Imam whose authority was challenged would run off to the northern mountains, gather tribal support, and march with them against the 'rebels'. This was the method for overcoming, for example, the coup d'état of 1948 against Imam Yahya, the coup d'état of 1955 against Imam Ahmad, and a smaller tribal revolt of 1960. [203] Moreover, mainly Zaydi tribesmen of the North formed part of the 'irregular' army, a 'royal' force used for 'sensitive' affairs, and an important pool of royalists in the future war. [204]

Taking all these factors into consideration, a key paradox arises; despite the Imamate's *divide et impera* politics aimed at limiting tribes' influence, it was still the tribes that constituted the Imam's legitimacy basis, and *"by repeatedly calling on the tribes, they reinforced tribal patterns and, in effect, strengthened the tribal system".* [205] In this respect, the patronage system gave birth to a vicious circle. More precisely, the Imam wanted to limit challenges to his authority stemming from the tribes via a 'carrot and stick' approach of patronage politics. From their part, the tribes recognising that more socio-political problems would lead to more patronage – with a focus on the carrots part, namely preferential treatment, money and other subsidies – deliberately created such issues on many occasions, while also deliberately painting a picture of them as essential to deal with such problems. And, in response to this, the Imam did strengthen his patronage system and,

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[199] Halliday (1974).
[200] Ibid.
[201] Rabi (2015).
[202] Ibid. See also: Ingrams (1963); Springs (1952) in al-Rashid (1985) [US Department of State Declassified Documents].
[203] Wenner (1967). Wenner provides an excellent account of these three events.
[204] Halliday (1974).
[205] Meissner (1987), p.358.

in effect, tribes' power and standing. As it turned out, a situation of turmoil was, this way, of benefit to the tribes' survival and own agendas, something that potentially explains seemingly 'absurd' patterns of behaviour, as for example one tribe's shifting position from fuelling the turmoil to accepting Imamic patronage to counter such turmoil and vice versa. These twists and turns between camps would constitute a quintessential element of the civil war too.

Chapter 3: The North Yemen Civil War

SAUDI ARABIA

EGYPT

Indirect Conflict

Proxy relationship

Indirect Conflict

Military Alliance

Direct Conflict

ROYALISTS

YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC
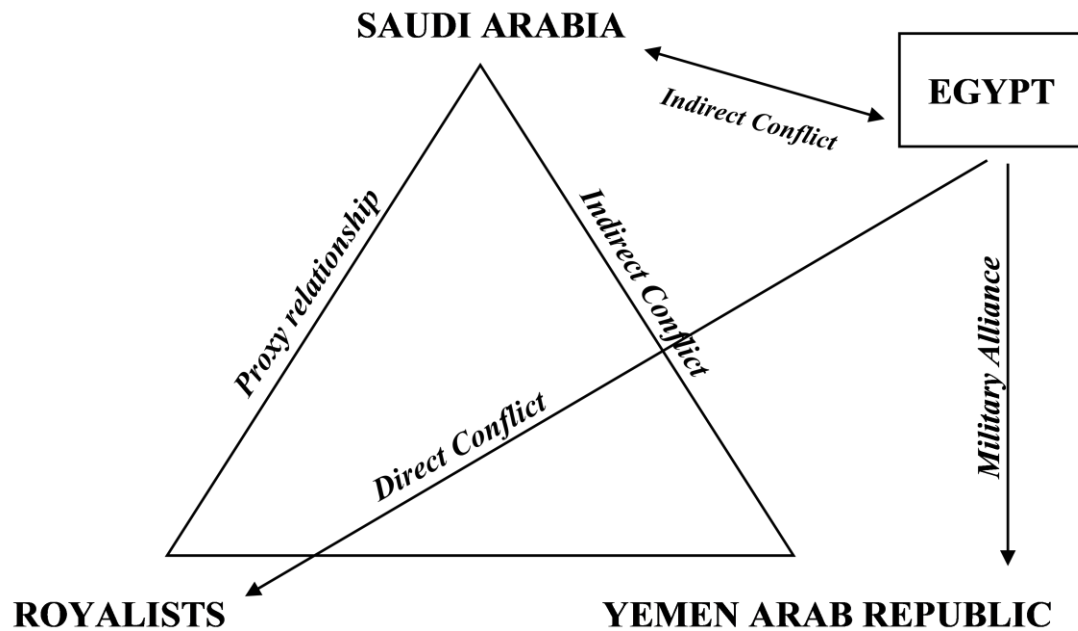
Figure 5

The Proxy War Dimension of the North Yemen Civil War

The North Yemen Civil War was the immediate outcome of the coup d'état of September 1962. It presents as a highly complicated civil war, with a blatant proxy aspect, as *Figure 5* indicates. More precisely, it consisted of a pure civil war between warring Yemeni factions supporting the regime change and the establishment of a Republic and those who did not; the direct conflict between the Egyptian forces intervening in favour of the Republic and those in favour of the Imamate; the indirect/proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia, via its support to pro-Imamate Yemenis, and Egypt, who had its own boots on the ground; the indirect/proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia, via its support to pro-Imamate forces, and pro-Republic forces; and, eventually, as the conflict drew on, the direct conflict between Yemenis against a foreign occupant, Egypt. The following sub-chapters will, then, briefly set the stage with regards to the 'Arab Cold War', then present the events of the day of the Yemeni coup, and will then delve into the two 'camps', namely

the royalists and republicans, and their direct and indirect supporters, namely Egypt and Saudi Arabia respectively.

3.1. Egypt-Saudi Arabia: A Proxy War or *"The Arab Cold War"* (1958-1970)

The term *"Arab Cold War"* – coined by Malcom Kerr – refers to the ideological and geopolitical inter-Arab rivalries between 1958 and 1970, particularly to the divide between so-called *"revolutionaries"* and *"reactionaries"*, as well as to the 'intra-revolutionary' divide. [206] Before proceeding, it shall be underlined that this thesis considers Kerr's term a misnomer, mainly because of the parallels it draws with the US-USSR Cold War of the time, and its Middle Eastern aspect, because of the possible underestimation of Arab agency this implies, and because of its lack of insight as to the geopolitical aspect of the rivalries, existing on top of ideological considerations. [207] Nevertheless, the term is useful by means of drawing parallels with the relative lack of direct fighting between the main proponents of each camp. On the contrary, these rivalries were mostly manifested via proxy wars, including the one in North Yemen, as well as heated verbal exchanges.

On the one hand, the *"revolutionaries"* camp, spearheaded by the United Arab Republic/UAR (created in 1958 with Egypt's union with Syria, with the latter seceding in 1961, but the name surviving until 1971), encompassed the secular Arab Republics founded in the late 1950s onwards, including via coups d'état resulting in military regimes. The term indicated the Republics' adherence to, among others, anti-imperialism, socialism, nationalism, and pan-Arabism, as well to a strong stance favouring hard-line military solutions to the Palestinian question, and ideas and movements that embraced radical reforms, on a national and regional level. [208] On its part, the 'intra-revolutionary' divide concerned the Egypt-Syria rivalry within the UAR until its dissolution, as well as the Egypt-Syria-Iraq struggle and failed effort to form a tripartite

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[206] Kerr (1981).
[207] Zarrogiani (2021). On the need for prioritising Arab agency when it comes to analysis of Arab affairs, see also: Halliday (2005).
[208] Khoury (1982).

union, but also the Egypt-Iraq rivalry over Syria pre-1952. [209] On the other hand, the *"reactionaries"* camp, spearheaded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, consisted of the traditionally religious and hereditary monarchical Arab regimes. The monarchies – that is, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq until the coup d'état that overthrew the monarchy in 1958 – basically constituted *status quo* conservative powers, stressing Islam's role for politics, traditionally refraining from wide societal reforms and from opening up the political sphere, while also generally welcoming cooperation with capitalist Western countries. [210] Therefore, the name of this camp indicated their 'reaction' to the 'revolutionary' calls of the former camp, given their potentially destabilising nature for the monarchies' internal politics, and for the region as a whole.

Of course, as always with such analytical narratives, the divisions were, once more, non-absolute, while throughout the period under question shifting loyalties and alignments were a given, indicating how much room the opposing ideologies were leaving for manipulation and pragmatic manoeuvres, particularly by Nasser, but also by Saudi King Faisal. The twists and turns detected throughout these rivalries included, among others, cooperation with imperialist forces by 'revolutionaries' against 'reactionaries', a flexible interpretation of pan-Arabism and socialism, while, on the side of the 'reactionaries', they included flexible interpretations of monarchical rule whose legitimacy was based on Islam, and shifting foreign policy based on fears for domestic uprisings. [211] Moving on, the underlying reasons for these inter-Arab struggles are complex and go beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is easily understandable that what was at stake was regional hegemony and the leadership of the Arab world, based on either one of the opposing ideological and, thus, political systems, as well as the 'restoration' of Egypt to its historical glory. [212] Nasser was competing with King Saud and, then, with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia for exactly this reason, while issues of personal prestige were of course in play for both sides, thus forging an interesting mix of personal and national goals and demands. This fight for supremacy would only end after the devastating for the Arabs – and, more importantly, for Nasser – defeat in the 1967 war against Israel. [213] In fact, the post-1967 period would see Egypt and Saudi Arabia cooperating

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[209] Zarogianni (2021).
[210] Khoury (1982).
[211] See: Kerr (1968); Ajami (1974); Sela (2004).
[212] See: Hasou (1985), explaining the struggle as expressed via the Arab League; Rubin (1991). Generally, there is a debate on geopolitics *vs.* ideology as driving forces of the inter-Arab struggles. See: Zarogianni (2021).
[213] Mann (2012).

in their effort to recover politically, economically, and militarily, with Ajami smartly coining this development *"the end of Pan-Arabism"*. [214]

Within this context, the North Yemen civil war constituted the quintessential battleground of the 'Arab Cold War', with republican ideals fighting a monarchical regime, and with 'saving face' – and ideology, for that matter – and ensuring internal regime security, safety, and legitimacy being at stake for Egypt and Saudi Arabia respectively. Given the aforementioned context, the 'Arab Cold War' was a fight for supremacy and, basically, survival, something that renders the Yemeni case even more crucial for both actors. The specific reasons for Egyptian and Saudi involvement in the Yemeni conflict certainly fall beyond the scope of this thesis; they will only be briefly addressed in the following chapter, for the purposes of setting the stage.

3.2. *al-thawra*: A Coup d'État and, then, a Civil War

"[T]he Yemenis will write the pages of their history in their own blood, the history of the people of the Yemen whose appointment with fate has arrived."

Voice of the Arabs Radio [215]

On the 19th of September 1962, Imam Ahmad died of natural causes and Crown Prince al-Badr proclaimed himself Imam. He would only rule for a week, until the 26th of September, the day of the *al-thawra* (lit. revolution).

Before proceeding, though, it is vital to briefly sketch the Yemeni personalities at the heart of this war, namely Imam Ahmad, his brother Prince Hassan, his son Crown Prince Muhammad al-Badr, and the future President of the YAR, Abdullah al-Sallal. Imam Ahmad rose to the throne in 1948, after the coup d'état against and the assassination of his father, Imam Yahya. His rule differed only marginally from that of his predecessors; he developed the Yemeni *divide et impera* politics even further, but also took Imamic authority down a more autocratic and personalised rule

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[214] Ajami (1978).
[215] Bidwell (1983), p.196. This announcement was broadcasted on the 25th of December, basically calling for the latter's overthrow, two days after Nasser had officially expressed his condolences and congratulated the new Imam.

path. Ahmad initiated minimal political reform other than 'opening up' North Yemen to foreigners – in stark comparison to his father's isolationism – agreeing that Yemen be part of the United Arab Republic from 1958 to 1961, and signing a military pact with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, known as the Jeddah Agreement of 1955. [216] Nevertheless, his ruthless rule resulted in the Imamate's waning power by the 1960s, while 'opening up' to foreigners also meant 'opening up' to foreign ideologies, including Arab nationalism and socialism, something that contributed to slowly forging a liberal opposition against the Imamate. [217]

His son, Prince Muhammad al-Badr, became the Governor of *Hodeidah* Province in 1949, and was on relatively good terms with his father, up to the point where al-Badr started embracing revolutionary ideas. [218] He was a vivid supporter of Nasser's Arab nationalism and initiated a rapprochement with Egypt mainly in light of the continuing presence of the British in Aden and, particularly, with a view to countering British aspirations at the Southern border. al-Badr also talked openly in favour of widespread reforms in North Yemen's politics, economy, military, and society – yet he was no 'republican', while some of his reform proposals were simply a reaction to his father's policies and their uneasy relationship. In fact, he initiated several of those, including strengthening Yemeni-Egyptian relations, and raising the subsidies paid to the tribal confederations, particularly, of the North, with the latter issued in 1959 while his father was abroad trying to cure a supposedly raging morphine addiction and wounds suffered during pre-1962 coups. Upon his return, though, Ahmad demanded the increased subsidies be returned and when the Hashid confederation's *shaykh*, al-Ahmar, refused instigating a minor tribal revolt, Imam Ahmad executed al-Ahmar and his son – a grave mistake that would later determine Hashid's mainly anti-Imamic stance during the civil war. [219]

Ahmad's brother, Prince Hassan, was a key figure in Yemeni politics when his brother assumed the throne, having also played a crucial role in leading tribal militias and eventually putting down the 1948 coup d'état. [220] For several years, the two brothers were on good terms, with Hassan serving as Prime Minister and Mayor of *Sana'a.* But, when the infamous 'succession' issue concerning Ahmad's successor arose, and particularly after the 1955 attempted coup d'état, Ahmad

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[216] See: Douglas (1987); Johnsen (2017); Bidwell (1983).
[217] Zabarah (1982).
[218] Douglas (1987).
[219] Stookey (1972). British declassified diplomatic correspondence sketches these events; see: Pirie-Gordon (1959d).
[220] Johnsen (2017).

increasingly perceived his brother as a threat, including because of his extensive tribal support. [221] As a result, Ahmad dispatched Hassan to represent Yemen in the United Nations headquarters in New York, ensuring he was as far as possible from Yemeni territory. [222] Despite being beyond the focus of this paper, there certainly were numerous cleavages within the Hamid al-Din family, as in every royal family, particularly concerning succession and political positions within a personalised regime.

Lastly, Abdullah al-Sallal was a Yemeni military officer of modest descent, trained in 1936 in Iraq along with other Yemeni officers. [223] He had played a key role in the 1948 coup d'état and had escaped execution, and was imprisoned instead, by Ahmad, after al-Badr vouched for him. [224] In 1961, after yet another assassination attempt against Imam Ahmad, al-Sallal was again accused, and was once more saved by al-Badr. [225] Eventually, al-Sallal would become al-Badr's confidant and Chief of Staff, all the while having more and more interactions with Egyptians and being dissatisfied with the Imams' political views and royal status, something that would lead to his key role in the 1962 revolution.

Moving on, during his one-week reign, al-Badr announced several 'liberal' reforms, including, but not limited to, the pardoning of political prisoners, increasing the military's salary, temporarily 'abolishing' taxes, creating an 'Advisory Council' to the Imam, promising to abolish the infamous hostage system, and others. [226] He further announced his friendliness to all foreign powers, while at the same time being unwilling to enter formal alliances and announcing he would rule like his father did; thus, he was balancing between moderate reform and traditionalism, an action angering both modernists – who wanted more – and conservatives – who considered him weak and would have mostly wanted Prince Hassan to have become Imam. Also, al-Badr appointed al-Sallal as Commander of the Royal Guard and Chief of Staff.

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[221] Douglas (1987). A lot of US Department of State declassified documents concerning the succession question can be found here: al-Rashid (1985). The succession question was of increased importance for the Imamate. It was connected to the political question of which member of the royal family would be the most powerful, but also to the religious question of altering the Zaydi doctrine of Imam's 'election' among the *sadah* – with the elected person being the 'best' Muslim – towards a hereditary system of succession that Imam Yahya had already used, so as for Ahmad to take to the throne after him.

[222] Bidwell (1983).

[223] Madkhli (2003).

[224] Stookey (1972).

[225] Madkhli (2003).

[226] Bidwell (1983).

It has been argued that there were several plots to overthrow al-Badr, as well as that the coup that eventually took place was manufactured by Egypt. [227] With the former issue being beyond this thesis's scope, and the latter argument having been disproven by later unclassified documents which suggest Egypt was merely aware of the coup's preparation [228], it is important to sketch out the events of the coup. The latter was mostly organised and executed by military officers, particularly those who had studied or were trained in Egypt or Iraq, with little to no public awareness or support beforehand. [229] More precisely, on the 26th of September, al-Badr, al-Sallal and other officials and military officers had a cabinet meeting at the royal palace in *Sana'a*, the *Dar al-Basha'ir* (lit., 'House of Good Tidings'). [230] After the meeting ended, at around 11pm, and after al-Sallal had conveniently excused himself from the scene, armoured tanks surrounded the palace and started firing at it. At the same time, other forces were marching towards Yemen's radio station, the airport, the armoury, and the electricity supply. [231] al-Badr, astonished, started running for his life, while a military officer tried to assassinate him, but missed. He then managed to escape to the city, along with some trusted royal guards, where he hid in a military officer's woman's house, before setting course for the Yemeni-Saudi border in the north.

Early in the morning of the 27th, the *Sana'a* radio station announced the 'revolution' and that al-Badr was dead – even if no body had been found in the palace's ruins. [232] Announcing so quickly the death of the Imam was a strategic and symbolic move, indicating that the old regime was, then, literally history. al-Sallal quickly named himself President and the YAR was born, marking a pivot point for Yemen. The new regime immediately announced its adherence to Arab Nationalism, anti-imperialism, and socialism, while at the same time numerous executions of dissidents were being authorised. [233] Not surprisingly, YAR was promptly recognised by the USSR and Egypt and, in mid-December, by the US. All Arab monarchies refused to do so, understandably. Tribesmen and

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[227] Schmidt (1968). Schmidt was a journalist who experienced events first hand and provides an excellent account of them, including via interactions with al-Badr, Hassan, and King Saud and Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Here, she mentions four different plots existing. For an Egypt-manufactured coup, see: Badeed (1986).
Generally, though, rumours of plots, even one with al-Badr as the instigator against his own father, existed since early 1959, according to declassified British documents. See: Pirie-Gordon (1959b).
[228] For example, and among others, Ferris successfully takes down this argument, based on declassified documents, arguing that Egypt was probably aware of the coup's preparation but did not instigate it. See: Ferris (2012).
[229] See: Badeed (1986). Badeeb provides excerpts from an interview with al-Badr (held in 1983) on his recollection of the events of that night.
[230] See: Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017).
[231] Johnsen (2017).
[232] Bidwell (1983).
[233] Ingrams (1963).

peasants were swarming into the capital in support of the regime, slowly forming the 'republican' front. Prince Hassan was already on his way to Jeddah, and Imam al-Badr was secretly en route to the north, while skirmishes were already taking place; the counter-revolution had begun.

3.3. 'Republicans' and the Egyptian Intervention

> *"Royalists:*
>
> *By God Jamal, we'll not go republican.*
>
> *The people have risen and want to fight,*
>
> *Even if the sun rose in the west*
>
> *And the heavens fell to earth.*
>
> *Republicans:*
>
> *You've had your say, now listen.*
>
> *With Jamal it will be over in an hour.*
>
> *He'll give us machine guns and artillery*
>
> *And the rebels will be forced to obey."*
>
> *Tribal ditty* [234]

Within the first week of the coup, the YAR was claiming to have the support of the general population, particularly of the urban centres, and more particularly of the Shafii areas south of *Sana'a* and along the coast. There is no doubt that many, apart from the plotters, and including some tribes, welcomed the coup. The Hamid al-Din Imams' policies had created many enemies, like the Hashid confederation given the execution of *shaykh* al-Ahmar and his son. Many others were simply dissatisfied with the Imamate's socio-political mode of operation and wanted things to change – despite not necessarily understanding what a 'republic' would entail. [235] Others were

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[234] Dresch (1989), p.142. Of course, Jamal is Jamal Abdel Nasser, and is here directly referred to as the 'god' of republicans, backing their fight against the royalists.

[235] British diplomats, already from 1959, had identified that: *"[…] while most Shafiis and a substantial number of the Zeidis are in varying degrees opposed to the regime and would like to see the end of it, they are hopelessly divided among themselves, and few have any clear idea of what they want to put in its place"*. See: Pirie-Gordon (1959a).

won over by YAR's promises for development [236], others sided with the 'republicans' for mere strategic purposes, while others were simply 'bought', setting the stage for a patronage system, one quite similar to the Imamic. Yet a significant number of Yemenis remained undecided too, while others sided with Egyptians out of fear of reprisals. [237] Still, no single reason accounted for these alignments.

Nevertheless, it was common knowledge that, within North Yemen, without control over the tribes' loyalties, there was no actual rule over the country. For this reason, international support was the only option for the YAR; the plea to Egypt came, in fact, one week before the coup via al-Wahid, an Egyptian diplomat in Yemen. [238] This explains Egypt's swift response that led many to believe it was behind the coup. In all cases, material, Yemeni exiles, and Egyptian paratroopers were arriving in Yemen within the first days of the coup, while within the next weeks the troops' numbers increased exponentially to several thousands. [239] Even though the exact date is contested, the commencement of the intervention seems to have taken place before the news about al-Badr's escape and surely before Saudi Arabia's involvement via proxy begun – that is, contrary to Egyptian arguments. Lastly, by November 10, Egypt and the YAR had signed a new military pact, formalising the former's full-blown military intervention. [240]

Before delving into its dynamics on the ground, a brief inquiry into the strategic underpinnings of the Egyptian intervention would be on point. Yemen constituted a *"golden opportunity"* for Nasser; [241] by 1962, he was relatively marginalised in the Arab world, post Syria's and Yemen's secession from the UAR; a fellow 'revolutionary' state, particularly one bordering the 'reactionary' giant of Saudi Arabia, would help 'save face' and 'export the revolution'; Yemen was also seen as a strategic stepping stone for a potential – albeit rather ambitious – Egyptian move against the Saudis or against the British in Aden, as well as for ease of access to the Red Sea and

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[236] British intelligence characteristically put it: *"After the oppressive rule of the late Imam, there is no doubt that the majority of the south and, in particular, the Shafa'i tribes and townspeople were delighted at the prospect of a new and liberal regime."*. See: Aden Intelligence Summary (September 1962).

[237] *"Leading shaikh of Abida […] claims that tribes surrendered to Egyptians out of fear of reprisals and it is temporary measure only."*, reported a British diplomat in 1963. See: High Commissioner of Aden (March 1963).

[238] Madkhli (2003).

[239] The date of first arrival is contested; some accounts mention the first 24 hours of the coup, others the 3rd of October – when Nasser also officially announced the intervention – and others mention the 5th of October. See, for example: Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017); Ferris (2018).

[240] Wenner (1967)

[241] Ibid.

the oil reserves of the Gulf. [242] All in all, Egypt's intervention cannot be seen without the 'Arab Cold War' lens, as described above, while Nasser's ultimate vision for the YAR was, evidently, that of a 'puppet' state. This latter element is what would inevitably drive a wedge between Egyptians and the YAR, highlighting their different goals. In this respect, the Egyptian forces in Yemen would slowly move away from military allies intervening in favour of the government towards foreign occupiers, not only bringing in their military, but also administrator and cadres, completely taking over the state apparatus; a grave mistake. [243] The xenophobia or disdain towards foreign invaders deeply engrained in Yemeni society would be triggered, resulting in several tribes switching sides over to the royalists, and in the creation of a 'Third Force' – neither republican, nor royalist, but supposedly nationalist Yemeni – later in the war. In fact, tribes were dissatisfied with the increasing Egyptian presence in Yemen and influence over governmental affairs already since 1959. [244] The Saudis, as examined in the next sub-chapter, would recognise this opportunity, and would make sure this wedge was expanded and exploited.

Moving on, the Egyptians were basically fighting a 'blind war' in North Yemen, both in terms of the latter's geographical and societal dynamics. More precisely, it has been argued that Egyptian forces did not even have maps of Yemen when sent to fight, while they also lacked training for guerrilla warfare in mountainous settings. Instead, Egyptians tried to apply conventional war tactics to an *a priori* non-conventional conflict. [245] On the contrary, royalist tribesmen could navigate the mountainous landscape with great ease, were aware of hiding spots, strongholds, and viewpoints, as well as more accustomed to the climate of the region. [246] Moreover, they dissipated and regrouped in a way that prevented Egyptians from practically 'controlling' certain territory, as *"the royalists simply fled away"*. [247] This *"fluidity and flexibility"* resulted in

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[242] For Egypt's motivations, see: Ferris (2012); Ferris (2018); Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017); Dawisha (1975, 1977). James (2006) provides some insightful quotations of Nasser and his chef de cabinet on the intervention in Yemen, indicating the strategic and political reasons behind it – rather than an ideological basis.
[243] Ferris (2018).
[244] Wenner (1967); Johnsen (2017). For tribal dissatisfaction against the Egyptian presence since 1959, see: Pirie-Gordon (1959c). Moreover, British intelligence detected *"an un-ease at the presence of Egyptians in Egypt"* and that *"those known to have anti-Egypt leaning were given posts outside Yemen in Cairo, the United Nations, or elsewhere"* already from November 1962. See: Aden Intelligence Summary (November 1962).
[245] Witty (2001). Witty provides an excellent account of Egyptians as *"a regular army in counterinsurgency operations"* and their mistakes.
[246] Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017).
[247] Johnsen (2017).

several tactical failures of Egyptian offensives, including the famous Ramadhan Offensive, successfully dismissing Egypt's numerical and material military advantage. [248]

The Egyptians were also in the dark regarding Yemen's societal fragmentation, particularly the role of tribes. Seeing Yemenis as primitive and even barbaric, they expected two things; that, on the one hand, by simply paying or providing arms to s*haykhs*, their tribes' loyalty and Egyptian control over them would be ensured – completely unaware of *shaykhs*' real authority or tribes' own agendas; on the other, that there was no need to integrate the tribal factor into the newly formed political system. Thus, Egyptian tribal outreach efforts were rather unsuccessful [249], while on numerous occasions they violated Yemeni norms and traditions, attacking, for example, holy places, proceeding with collective reprisals against whole villages [250], or treating neutral tribes as enemies. [251]

Taken all together, then, Egyptians had themselves fuelled xenophobia, bitterness due to brutality, and disdain against political exclusion, due to their social unawareness, and had created their own 'Vietnam' over geographical miscalculations. At the same time, some Yemeni tribes over the course of the war would switch sides as a result of 'help-turned-occupation', of political exclusion, disrespect towards their culture, as well as of an opportunity for personal profit via the bidding war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia over tribal loyalties.

3.4. 'Royalists' and Saudi Arabia's War by Proxy

"Royalists:

The high cliffs called and every notable in Yemen answered;

We'll never go republican, not if we are wiped off the earth,

Not if yesterday returns today and the sun rises in Aden,

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[248] Ibid.
[249] Ferris (2012).
[250] Johnsen (2017).
[251] Zabarah (1982).

*Not if the earth catches fire and the sky
rains lead.*

Republicans:

*The Egyptian leader rules Yemen with his
forces.*

*Migs and Ilyushins seek out your
foxholes.*

*Bullets from M.IS and Lee-Enfields won't
stop mortars.*

*Naji, tell Hasan and al-Badr that maybe
their silver is only brass."*

Tribal ditty [252]

Reasons Behind Saudi Arabia's Involvement

Immediately after the coup and learning of al-Badr's supposed death, Prince Hassan proclaimed himself Imam, and went to *Jedda*, to which several other royal family members had also fled. They all then went to *Riyadh*, where a formal plea for Saudi help was made to King Saud and Crown Prince Faisal – but no concrete aid was given by the latter at this point, other than political and moral support, including because of internal disagreements of the Saudi royal family. [253] They all then moved to *Najran*, a borderland city, where the counter-revolution was proclaimed; as so many times in the past, the Imam was gathering tribal support in the North to take down a coup. al-Badr eventually would reappear on October 3rd, Hassan would denounce the title of the Imam he had taken after the coup, recognising al-Badr as the legitimate Imam, and the counter-revolution would take a more concrete form. [254] At some point – pinpointing it exactly is rather difficult [255] – Saudi financial, material, military, political help would substantiate, rendering Saudis

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[252] Dresch (1989), p.142. The *'silver'* mentioned here is an indirect reference to Saudi Arabian support of royalists, Egyptians are also mentioned practically as the *'rulers'* of Yemen at this point, while *'Migs and Ilyushins'* point towards USSR fighter jet supplies to Egypt and YAR.

[253] Schmidt (1968).

[254] Madkhli (2003).

[255] Badeeb in his heavily Saudi-biased account mentions that Saudi help was not forthcoming until April 1963, but there are evidence proving it existed well before that. The Egyptian argument that their intervention was a response to Saudi help to the royalists is equally not valid, as explained above. The most probable estimation seems to be Madkhli's argument for aid to not have started prior to al-Badr's reappearance, with Bidwell noting October 8th as the first day of aid provision. See: Madkhli (2003); Badeeb (1986); Bidwell (1983). British intelligence clearly mentions Saudi an

sponsors of tribal groups fighting on the side of the royalists. Saudi support for northern Yemeni tribes estimated to be around 60-80 million dollars per year. [256]

Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly inquire into the reasons behind Saudi Arabia's intervention by proxy in Yemen. [257] Bordering a revolutionary state, particularly one that had several domestic social similarities with Saudi Arabia, was a ticking bomb. Yemen has historically been foremost among Saudi Arabia's security concerns, something that had led a Sunni state such as itself to support a Shia-based Imamate several times in the past despite internal criticism. Apart from the spill-over effect, though, what was most critical for the Saudis was the Egyptian presence in Yemen that, should the revolution succeed, could become permanent – a real thorn in the Arabian Peninsula via a puppet regime. [258] When Egyptian bombings of Saudi borderland cities commenced, the Saudis could not have stayed inactive; yet, at the same time, they were aware of their military weakness against the Egyptian army. Therefore, avoiding direct conflict with Nasser was their first and foremost priority; proxy war was the next best option. Indeed, the Saudis would never have their own boots on the ground in Yemen but would have officers providing training and logistical support to Yemenis in border towns *Asir, Najran* and *Jizan*, while a royalist radio station would operate from Saudi territory too. [259] Nevertheless, the amount of Saudi support was enough to keep Egyptians occupied and the YAR worried, but not enough to instigate a full-blown Egyptian-Saudi conflict – a classic sponsor tactic. [260] This hierarchy of goals, namely firstly ousting Nasser, and then caring about the Yemeni regime, would drive a wedge between some royalist Yemenis and Saudis later during the war, resulting in Saudi Arabia's exit from the conflict in 1970, without regard for the royalists' future. Nevertheless, this falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

Jordanian support to Royalists already in early October 1962, upon al-Badr's reappearance. See: Aden Intelligence Summary (October 1963).

[256] Gause (1987).

[257] For an overview, see: Tynan (2021). For a Saudi-biased view, see: Badeeb (1986).

[258] Crown Prince Faisal stated on September 5th, 1963: *"Egypt's rulers declared they had sent their expedition to fight in Yemen to destroy our country and to capture it. We were, therefore, driven into a position where we had no alternative but to defend ourselves."*. See: Badeeb (1986).

[259] See: Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017); Halliday (1974); Bidwell (1983); Schmidt (1968). British intelligence mentions: *"Training and supply camps were sere set up in Saudi Arabian territory at Najran and Jaizan, and 'heavy' weapons, including mortars, rocket-launchers, and recoilless rifles, are believed to have arrived there"*. See: Aden Intelligence Summary (November 1962).

[260] See: Gause (1987); Badeeb (1986).

Royalist Tribes as Proxies of Saudi Arabia

"We will die for the Imam…we will cut off the Egyptians' noses…Sallal has betrayed us…the Sahar are powerful…they will fight for Badr […] A bird flies around the throne."

Tribal traditional war dances' lyrics [261]

Generally, there was no single motive explaining the tribes' alignments nor their continuous shifts during the civil war. Instead, a conglomerate of motivations was in place, including, but not limited to, historical rivalries, *"religious convictions, economic interests, strategic alliances, kinship ties, ancient contractual obligations, tribal and personal rivalries, enmities and feuds, and the struggles for prestige, power and influence arising from them"*. [262] Deep down then, a struggle for survival and for the implementation of tribes' own agendas was at stake, rendering the financial aspect crucial, leading to a situation that has been described as basically a *"rent-a-tribe"* or 'selling-to-the-highest-bidder' phenomenon or *"a complicated patchwork of ever-shifting alliances"*. [263] In fact, these shifting loyalties and tribes' pursuit of their own goals constitutes the reason why the royalist and republican blocs are somewhat vague and abstract terms, not translating into concrete and monolithic camps. [264] In fact, the terms themselves, after an investigation of the situation on the ground, do not even seem to be representing a real internalisation of either republican or royalist ideals. Even tribes themselves were not monolithic blocs, as there were instances where one *shaykh* was republican and another royalist, both belonging to the same tribe, a phenomenon that was intermingled with intra-tribal power rivalries. [265] Interestingly, a pattern has been noted by Brandt for tribes of the Khawlan bin Amir

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[261] Schmidt (1968), p.117. Within these lyrics, one can see both that some Yemenis supported the Imam out of 'tradition', others because of disappointment towards al-Sallal who submitted the YAR to the Egyptians, and others simply because of hatred towards a foreign invader – here, Egypt.

[262] Brandt (2019).

[263] Johnsen (2017).

[264] British intelligence documents stated: *"Reports suggest, however, that such transfers of allegiance were a temporary expedient only and that, given the opportunity, the tribes will have no hesitation in letting down their now-found friends."*. See: Aden Intelligence Summary (February 1963).

[265] Brandt (2017).

confederation; senior *shaykhs* usually supported the Imam – perhaps because of their own position within his regime – while lower ranking *shaykhs* sided with the republicans. [266]

Overall, this fluidity of the tribal environment allowed tribes to be *"republican by day, royalist by night"*, as a famous Yemeni proverb goes [267], to be agreeing *"that one would take the royalist coin, the other the republican, and then split the money down the middle"* [268], as well as to be brokering inter-tribal truces despite supporting opposing camps, and to be continuing everyday activities like trade and other transactions with their 'adversaries', or to simply be hoarding weapons they gathered as payment by either Egyptians or Saudis without fighting at all for neither of them. [269] Within this setting then, on the one hand, tribes themselves were pursuing external support, even conflating the need for it, in order to gain for themselves, in an ever-ending battle for survival and marginal win over local adversaries. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was more than willing to offer it – the supply and demand dynamics were, therefore, omnipresent.

Nevertheless, speaking generally, with the reasons for republican support having been identified above, the royalist camp must now be examined. [270] Within it, there were those, particularly Zaydi northern tribes, supporting the Imamate *"by conviction and contractual allegiance"*, still viewing the Imam as the legitimate political and religious authority. In fact, the Hamid al-Din princes were trying to press upon the religious dimension in order to garner support and to instigate further hatred against a secular republic and a secular foreign occupier. [271] There were also those supporting the Imamate by *"muscle memory and habit"*, as, for example, most of

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[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid. Also, Halliday (1974), p.118, mentions this: *"This practice of switching sides was even reflected in the emergence of two Arabic words for 'to go republican' and 'to go royalist' – tajamhara and tamallaka".*
[268] Gause (1987).
[269] See: Orkaby (2014); Orkaby (2017); Dresch (1989). See also: Aden Weekly Intelligence Summary (February 1963).
[270] The number of the royalist forces is unknown. Schmidt, in her book, quotes King Saud estimating them around 30.000 men, King Hussein around 15.000 men, while she mentions that Prince Hassan *"was able, most of the time up to 1967, to draw about 6000 men for his front line, with about 2000 more on call within 24 hours and 7000 within 5 days."*. She also mentions that *"seventy five tribal shaykhs, including, including all the tribes around Sana, had written declaring their loyalty and willingness to fight";* see: Schmidt (1968). Bidwell also mentions 30.000 royalist men; see: Bidwell (1983).
[271] See: Weir (2007). Moreover, Schmidt (1968) got the following response from Prince Hassan: *"They* [tribal *shaykhs*] *gathered around eagerly and all replied that they would fight to the last days of their lives to destroy the enemies of their religion. For, as you know, the system of government we have here is based on religion.".*
Brandt (2017), p.44, quotes Abdullah al-Ahmar – quoted in Bonte, Conte (1991) – the senior *shaykh* of the mostly republican Hashid confederation: *"[I]t was a fight about faith, belief, and conviction, and the rest of the princes of the house of Hamid al-Din sent us letters which intimidated us to support the 'pharaonic colonists and their slaves', as they said, and which pointed out the royalist role in the resistance against the infidels, and called us to support them and to fight for the sake of Allah.".*

the tribes belonging to the Bakil confederation. [272] There were also those doing so because of their own role within the Imamic regime, e.g., the *sadah*, or because they had been extremely favoured by the patronage system, as for example some senior *shaykhs*. [273] Others supported this side due to personal reasons, or based on blood or kinship ties, or feuds resulting from them. Of course, there were also those who simply saw an opportunity for economic profit – and, thus, for the survival and prosperity for their tribe – especially since the royalist side, with Saudi backing, was able to pay more than Egypt. [274] Importantly, among the royalist ranks there were also those who would eventually feel betrayed by al-Sallal's and YAR's policies, particularly because of their 'selling out' to a foreigner and of political exclusion, as well as those who would feel more hatred against a foreign invader, Egypt, than against the Imamic regime, which, at least, was Yemeni. [275] Lastly, there were also those who were simply won over by *"the magnetic leadership of the young princes"*. [276] Overall, even when it came to the traditionally pro-Imam northern Zaydi tribes, there was almost no *a priori* indication as to the alignment of tribes, due to the multiplicity of interests and struggles for influence in place. [277]

Turning to the Saudi approach towards royalist tribes, there were several elements contributing to its successful nature. Before anything else, the most crucial of them was that the Saudis – contrary to the Egyptians – were deeply knowledgeable of North Yemen's society, its different strata, their agendas, and patterns of behaviour, particularly when it came to the tribes, as well as of Yemeni culture. This allowed them to move around the tribes with ease. This would not be effective, though, should they have tried to strictly impose their own agenda on the tribes, or to try to 'control' them. [278] Instead, they developed a smart, slow, and cautious strategy of soft control

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[272] Johnsen (2017). British intelligence was noticing that *"[w]hatever the faults of the Hamid al Din family may be, there is still strong tribal feeling against the overthrown […] Imam."*. See: Aden Intelligence Summary (October 1962).

[273] See: Brandt (2017); Johnsen (2017).

[274] Bidwell (1983).

[275] Schmidt (1968), p.153, quotes the *qadi* of Harib: *"It would be unseemly for us to follow such a man as Sallal, who is not of the religious element and who has neither influence, nor background, nor following, nor respect. […] After all, we would rather have bad Yemeni rule than any kind of foreign rule. The Yemeni people are very much attached to the imamate, for it represents the religious law to which they are accustomed."*.

[276] Schmidt (1968). The 'particular devotion' to the Princes is also quoted in British intelligence. See: Aden Intelligence Summary (December 1962).

[277] Dresch (2000). Dresch even even argues that *"[m]any alignments as royalist or republican resulted almost from accident […]"* and provides examples of tribes which, for example, while suffering under the Imam, followed the royalists.

[278] Gause (1987).

via, for example, controlling the amount of aid sent so that it did not contribute to the development of an existential threat for either Egypt or the YAR. [279] They further respected the existing chains of command and communication of the tribal setting, something that also potentially allowed them to maintain a shadow of deniability of involvement on their part. [280] Money, arms, and material followed the 'princes-*shaykhs*-local commanders-tribesmen' chain of authority, but the Saudis sometimes smartly bypassed the princes altogether, dealing with influential *shaykhs* directly. They also embraced the fluidity of tribal military mobilisation for a particular operation, followed by demobilisation, as well as the nature of *shaykhs*' non-coercive authority; thus, they did not have to 'force' tribal militias into anything they would not agree to. Instead, this way, they were able to be aware of tribes' goals, and then, to adjust their aid accordingly. Nevertheless, retrospectively, this would have the long-term outcome of increasing *shaykhs*' general power within the Yemeni society, as well as their wealth.

Furthermore, the Saudis also carefully incorporated into their strategy and patronage system the borderland tribes, whose Yemeni or Saudi roots were blurred, in order to create *"buffer zones"* between Saudi Arabia and the YAR. [281] Moreover, in contrast to Egypt, the Saudis thanks to sufficient oil income could cover extensive expenses; thus, in simple terms, royalists paid more, thus attracting a greater number of fighters. This led to the royalist forces being of a rather fluid nature, consisting of tribesmen gathering on command – and on payroll – for a fight, then disbanding, and so on so forth. As mentioned above, this fluidity, basically stemming from the tribes' interests, as well as tribes' knowledge over their territory, gave the royalists a tactical advantage over conventional Egyptian forces.

Last but not least, Saudi proxy strategy was smart in another respect, as it took advantage of tribal disdain against al-Sallal's rule, and against the foreign occupier, both of which increased over the course of the war for reasons mentioned above. Here, financial, and political support was given to those dissatisfied with the YAR and the Egyptians without pressuring them to necessarily side with royalists. This would eventually lead to the creation of a 'Third Force', neither royalist nor republican, complicating the situation even more, but this falls beyond the scope of this paper. Apart from this, the Saudis, through their proxies, further appealed to the undecided population,

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[279] Zabarah (1982).
[280] Johnsen (2017).
[281] Brandt (2017).

particularly when said population had experienced a temporary occupation by republican/Egyptian forces and was later on 'liberated' by royalists. The Saudis were once again reading the fragmented situation on the ground successfully, exploiting all existing cleavages in favour of their main goal, that is, ousting Egyptians from Yemen.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

4.1. Findings: 'Deep' Fragmentation and Proxy Warfare

Proxy warfare is a phenomenon that, today, is something far beyond a 'dirty word' in international affairs, a phenomenon that is here to stay, while its increasing use and changing with the times format calls for extensive theoretical attention paid to it. The International Relations state of the art concerning proxy warfare, as described in this thesis's literature review, has left many areas regarding its dynamics untouched, particularly when it comes to the local/regional level, the proxy-target relations, and the target society. Furthermore, existing literature is in dire need of overcoming crucial theoretical shortcomings, including, but not limited to, realism and structure-based analysis, the Cold War lens, state-centrism, sponsor-centrism, and the international level of analysis. It was the aim of this thesis to delve into these gaps and unexplored avenues, investigating whether the social fragmentation of a target sate, particularly over tribal lines, constitutes a driver of proxy relationships. In order to do so, a social constructivist theoretical framework granting analytical priority to identities, and recognising the existence of various foci of power, identity, and agency within the same society, and embracing the special socio-political elements of a tribal society was adopted. For doing so, the concept of fragmentation, ranging from simple to deep, and the concept of tribe and tribal identity were elaborated on. Consequently, the hypothesis stemming from this framework was tested via a qualitative case study of the North Yemen Civil War of the 1960s, which served as the battleground of the Egypt-Saudi Arabia proxy war of the late 1950s all the way to 1970, whose underlying dynamics were briefly analysed.

Delving into the case study, the information provided above for North Yemen painted the picture of a deeply fragmented society, with geographical, topographical, environmental, economic, political, and social divides, including a religious one, one referring to historical genealogy, one to the tribal *vs.* urban element, as well as intra- and inter-tribal cleavages. Within this context, there appeared various foci of agency, power, and identity, each carrying own interests and needs, as well as the will to see them being satisfied. Moving on, North Yemen as a society bore a particularity, that of the relatively dominant position of the tribes as foci of power, within this multi-actor setting. Examining North Yemen's social stratification and, beyond that, the socio-political dynamics within and between tribes, showcased their role when it comes to power within

the state and to their members' identity and, consequently, behaviour. Moreover, looking into the Imamate's *divide et impera* politics not only proved the tribes' influence and power over Yemeni politics, but also shed light on how the tribes themselves basically manipulated a system set in place with the aim of suppressing them, resulting in a full-blown paradox. Within such an environment, what also made sense was the constant shifts in alignments and loyalties, that would otherwise seem 'absurd'; various foci of identity resulted in various interests, present at the same time, guiding behaviour towards different directions. This further proved that within such a society, there is ample room for manipulation by both internal and external forces, while even the actors within it might seek or encourage such manipulation, if and when it suits their interests.

North Yemen's social fragmentation played out extensively during the civil war; it not only had to do with the causes of the 1962 revolution, but also created the opening for the republicans' call for an Egyptian intervention and forged a 'way in' for the Saudis on the side of the royalists. On the one hand, the Egyptians failed to acknowledge the importance of tribes as foci of power and as an identity framework turned-mobilisation-tool, as well as to fully comprehend North Yemen's society's priorities and values. These grave mistakes would result in Yemeni disdain against Egyptians as foreign invaders, rather than as allies, and against the YAR as a pawn of Egyptians, and in an alignment shift of many over to the royalist side. This shift cannot be understood without comprehending the historical societal developments within North Yemen, that somehow made xenophobia loom larger than other divides, even political ones at this point in time. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, deeply understood the Yemeni society and successfully managed to align its dynamics with Saudi interests vis-à-vis the YAR and the Egyptians.

More generally, there is strong empirical evidence for how the formation of the proxy relationship between royalist tribal forces and Saudi Arabia fits into the 'supply-demand' framework of this thesis. The Saudis had every interest to intervene, albeit indirectly, were aware of ways to manage their aid according to their interests, knew how to take advantage of cleavages within Yemen, even overcoming their own religious beliefs, as well as how to respect the tribal setting and submerge themselves in the required delicate deal-making with them, while they also had the financial ability to support such an endeavour. The Yemeni royalist tribes were in dire need of external financial, political, and military support, saw – at least on the surface – an alignment of interest with the Saudis, while also making use of their influential role within Yemen for posing as

great proxy candidates and worthy of extensive autonomy, and, at the same time, making sure to satisfy their personal needs and increase their wealth.

Last but not least, fragmentation might have been paving the way for a foreign sponsor to 'come in', but it did not stop at that. It further constituted the reason why constant twists and turns in alignments took place, something that increased the need for the aforementioned delicate deal-making with tribes, showcasing how interests were also fragmented, stemming from various sources, sometimes overlapping, sometimes colliding. It is in this respect that Saudi Arabia was successful once more, approaching tribes dissatisfied with the YAR or with the Egyptians, or having experienced the brutality of either one of them, or tribes who would simply sell themselves to the highest bidder, and winning them over, without pressuring them to make amends with the royalist side, that is, in political terms. Of course, such flexibility on behalf of the Saudis basically stemmed from their own main goal, that is, to oust Nasser's troops rather than being a feverish supporter of the survival of the Imamate. This latter element would eventually drive a wedge between royalists and Saudis; yet, seen holistically, the flexibility resulting from Yemen's social fragmentation combined with the flexible Saudi strategy of approaching the tribes stemming from their hierarchised interests made shifting alliances a logical rather than 'absurd' result.

Overall, on the one hand, a deeply fragmented society seems to be home to an adequate level of 'demand' for internal/external manipulation, while potential proxies can themselves be active pursuers of foreign aid. On the other hand, a potential sponsor, if knowledgeable about the fragmentation and if clever in their tactics, can actively seek to embroil themselves in such a proxy relationship, recognising its advantages. And, more particularly, a tribal society offers a pool of potential proxies bearing several tactical, strategic, and political advantages of great value to the sponsor. It is in this respect that H1, this thesis's hypothesis, including its two sub-hypotheses, is proven right via the case study.

4.2. Implications for Policymaking

Proxy warfare is ultimately a decision that policymakers – of states and non-state actors alike – make; thus, the findings of academic analyses on this topic constitute crucial food for thought on

a policy level. In this respect, this thesis illuminates several key guidelines for proxy warfare-related policymaking.

More precisely, it is of utmost important to dispense with a monolithic view of proxy relationships as formed only due to the will of the sponsor or as relationships of complete control of proxy over sponsor. Proxy agency is equally important, while proxy interests and own agendas cannot and should not be overlooked neither before nor after the establishment of such a relationship. Weighing proxy interests and aligning or, at least, attaching them to sponsor interests and goals demands an increased level of flexibility, both on the strategic and the tactical level. The example of Saudi strategy vis-à-vis its tribal proxies in Yemen is indicative of this.

In order to achieve all this, a more sophisticated proxy warfare policy, namely one focusing on the following elements, is needed. Firstly, research, including field research, on the social dynamics within the target state, as well as on their historical roots, shall be a priority. This will not only allow for detecting potential proxies, but also, and more generally, for understanding where power and identity lie within multi-actor socio-political environments, that are perhaps different from a 'mainstream' understanding of a state environment. Such an approach will further allow policymakers to go beyond simplistic state *vs.* actor *x* understanding and, thus, identify potential proxies more successfully. Such research, though, shall ideally be interdisciplinary and academic – not tactical – conducting by political scientists, social anthropologists, historians, as well as military experts. Secondly, putting this research into use means not only using it to identify the best proxy (or the best sponsor), but also to shape a flexible strategy of proxy-sponsor interaction, including a relative agreement on, among others, the means used, end goals, and red lines. Lastly, as this thesis's findings have shown, a failed proxy strategy is inextricably connected to misunderstanding the local context and, consequently, making the wrong tactical decisions, particularly due to orientalist approaches towards target societies or due to mere ignorance. The Saudis managed to read the situation on the ground by constantly thinking spherically on many directions, even going beyond simple 'textbook' dichotomies of Shia-Sunni Muslims, and by successfully identifying the foci of power and identity, as well as their personal interests, and incorporating them within their sponsor strategy – or, at least, tolerating them to that end. If knowledge is the key to everything, it is even more so when it comes to 'reading the ground' of

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target states of proxy warfare and where and how potential proxies are socio-politically situated within them.

4.3. Further Research: Towards 'Deepest' Fragmentation

This thesis has dealt with a so far completely unexplored aspect of proxy warfare, namely the internal social composition of the target state and its implications for proxy relationships. Taking this into consideration and given that this thesis's findings are based on the qualitative analysis of one case study, this thesis cannot yet claim extensively generalisable findings. Instead, it aims to pose as a stepping-stone for future research on the topic under consideration and on the theoretical framework put forward here. More precisely, in order to strengthen this framework by means of allowing for greater generalisation and of identifying a general pattern between social fragmentation and proxy warfare, more case studies need to be explored in qualitative and historical depth and, then, all available data could be used for ameliorating the theoretical framework.

Furthermore, further research delving deeper into this topic should be stronger when it comes to primary sources and, ideally, should also include field research data, especially given the difficulty of uncovering proxy relationships that are usually of covert nature or of mapping societal relations of fragmented nature. Nevertheless, already from the present thesis's analysis a potential avenue for further research appears, that is, one focusing on an ameliorated conceptualisation of societal fragmentation. The theoretical framework developed by this thesis recognised the existence of 'simple' fragmentation, e.g., only and on the surface along ethnic lines, and 'deep' fragmentation, when more than one cleavage exists and when some or all are overlapping, creating a complex web of interests, identities, and foci of authority. North Yemen mapped well onto the 'deep' fragmentation model, at first glance, yet the key, even dominant, role of the tribal cleavage within this particular society raises the question of whether there might be a kind of 'deepest' fragmentation. In other words, it might be the case that 'deepest' fragmentation refers to a society where amongst several overlapping cleavages, there appears a dominant one, on which all other cleavages draw, resulting in a situation where societal affairs cannot be understood without an insight into this cleavage and its special role – as was the case of tribes within Yemen. Taking this

further, proxy relationships might or might not be more likely to appear in 'deepest' fragmentation cases, depending on whether this cleavage is more or less forging a certain 'demand' or opening the way for external manipulation, given its interests and goals within its fragmented society.

In this respect, societal fragmentation could perhaps be conceptualised as a more complicated matrix combining quantitative elements, namely how many cleavages exist within the target society, and qualitative elements, namely how deep these cleavages are, what kind of foci of power and identity and what kind of interests emerge from them, as well as how do these cleavages interact with each other. Such a matrix could then result to a more advanced fragmentation matrix, including the 'simple', 'deep', 'deepest' fragmentation ideal types and the 'no fragmentation' type, as well as their subtypes, namely 'single' or 'multiple', resulting from the numerical factor of cleavages. On their part, a single cleavage can be superficial ('simple' fragmentation) or deep ('deep' fragmentation), while the multiple cleavages case can include superficial ones ('deep' fragmentation), or deep ones ('deepest' fragmentation). Most certainly, though, a thorough theoretical analysis and more concrete empirical evidence are required, so as for such a matrix to be properly developed.

Last but not least, future research can take the above idea even further and also delve into how proxy warfare affects target societies in the short and the long term, and particularly into whether fragmentation becomes deeper due to proxy warfare or remains unaffected. And, along with this issue, future research can also look into how proxies' identity and social embeddedness itself is or is not affected after the end of a proxy war. The dynamics, therefore, behind such a scenario would constitute an excellent starting point for future research, particularly research aiming to look into whether proxy warfare is or is not endemic to certain regions of the world, where, for example, a Weberian understanding of statehood is not the case.

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