Diplomatic Agency and Contested Loyalties:

The Yemeni Foreign Service after 2011

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Preface

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

This thesis examines how political conflict in Yemen has played out within the country's diplomatic corps since 2011. Drawing on nine months of fieldwork, it analyses the complex interplay of socio-political, personal, and material forces that informed the maintenance and partial reworking of Yemeni foreign policy institutions at a time of crisis. It argues that the coexistence of institutional endurance and change constitutes a paradox that can only be grasped by conceptualizing the Yemeni foreign service as a dynamic, fragmented and internally uneven socio-material institution.

It finds that institutional boundaries are highly permeable, allowing broader socio-political changes to impact internal institutional developments. In the Yemeni diplomatic service, regime change and war translated into a particular professional challenge, marked by shifting and diversified diplomatic practices, attitudes, forms, and functions. Notwithstanding such change, strands of continuity prevailed, rooted in material institutional structures, as well as staffing policies, professional norms, and personal thoughts and emotions. In the process of examining internal change and continuity, this thesis sheds light on the controversial yet central notions of diplomatic loyalty and professionalism, while further fleshing out the concept of diplomatic agency, which is shown to underlie both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes.

This study challenges the Western-centric bias in contemporary diplomacy research and constitutes an important step toward a radically heterogeneous imagination of diplomats and diplomatic practice. Its empirical insights unsettle widespread perceptions of global diplomacy as a homogeneous professional field marked by bounded state interests, material luxury, and shared professional conduct. This thesis also adds to the multidisciplinary field of state theory, using the case of the Yemeni foreign service to explain the historical entanglement of diplomacy, international recognition, sovereignty, and a government's successful claim to "statehood". Treating state sovereignty as a political practice embedded in unequal global power relations, it illuminates the micro-processes of its diplomatic safeguarding and promotion at a time of crisis.

Acknowledgments

List of Abbreviations

APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
CBY	Central Bank of Yemen
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GPY	General People's Congress
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
JMP	Joint Meeting Parties
NA	National Archives
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
NF	National Front
NLF	National Liberation Front
PAAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (German Foreign Ministry Archives)
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PRSY	People's Republic of South Yemen
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
UGTT	Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (The Tunisian General Labour Union)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic

List of Figures

All images used in the PhD are used for illustrative purposes and are either the author's own or are freely available in the public domain.

Table of Contents

Figure 1: A Map of Yemen

OMAN

SAUDI ARABIA

Arabian Sea

Historical North-South Divide (approx.)

Border between the YAR and the PRSY (later PDRY) in 1962

Mukalla

Marib

Sanaa

Aden

Taiz

Saada

Gulf of Aden

Hodeida

Red Sea

N

75

km

0

1

Figure 2: Yemeni Embassies Worldwide
Yemen has embassies in 49 countries, including Algeria, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Cuba, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauretania, Morocco, Netherlands, Oman, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sudan, Somalia, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA, and South Africa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yemen, 2020).[1]

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[1] Maps showing Yemeni embassy locations marked by the author using Google MyMaps (n.d.) and Mapchart.net (n.d.). Retrieved 02 February 2020 from https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/ and https://mapchart.net/world.html. Since the 2011 uprising, no new embassies have been established.

1 Introduction

Faced with the choice of having his assets frozen or securing immunity in return for stepping down, Yemen's president Ali Abdullah Saleh chose to resign from his 33-year-long presidency on 23 November 2011. Sitting in the midst of an ornate room in Saudi Arabia, flanked by Yemeni opposition politicians, members of the Saudi royal family, and international diplomats, he signed an agreement that was brokered by representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the UN (Fahim & Kasinof, 2011). Ali Abdullah Saleh's resignation followed nine months of widespread public protests in Yemen and is widely considered a watershed moment in Yemeni state history. Opening a unique window of opportunity, it allowed a diverse range of stakeholders to rethink Yemen's political future. In fact, the "GCC deal" signed by Saleh foresaw the establishment of a transition government, led by interim-president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, and the convention of a National Dialogue Conference (NDC) tasked to develop more democratic political structures in Yemen (Durac, 2012).[2] Divided into several specialized working groups, the NDC was mandated to include all Yemeni "forces and political actors". Thus, it included a diverse group of young protesters and activists, commonly referred to as "the youth",[3] and members of the "Southern Movement", which was established in 2007 and had fought toward greater regional autonomy ever since. Added was a group of Zaidi (Shia) revivalists known as "the Houthis", who enacted de-facto control over Yemen's northern province Saada, as well as other political parties, civil society representatives and – in line with specific GCC stipulations – women (Lackner, 2012).

At the core of debates and negotiations that followed Saleh's resignation stood the notion of statehood. What state design could protect and incorporate Yemen's fragmented interests and perspectives? Should a federal system of governance be set up? And how could religion be incorporated into formal state structures? Capturing

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[2] Democratization measures included, among other things, a review of Yemen's Constitution and electoral system (Durac, 2012).

[3] For more information about the concept of "youth", specifically in the context of the 2011 uprisings, read Bonnefoy (2014).

these questions, the concept of "civil state" (*dawla madaniyya*) emerged as a particularly relevant concept in 2011, especially among young protesters (Bonnefoy & Poirier, 2013).[4] Some perceived "the civil" as compatible with Islamic tenets, while others viewed it as an inherently secular concept which borrowed much from liberal-democratic state ideas. As Hill (2010) commented at the time, "the fault lines between different meanings [of 'civil'] indicate ruptures between competing visions of the state" (n.p.). Within the framework of the NDC, it was particularly members of the "state-building" group that specified and negotiated meanings of statehood. Key points involved Yemen's "state identity", in particular the role of religion in its new Constitution, and Yemen's "state form", specifically federalist reforms and related questions of regional autonomy and intra-state borders.

Debate about the state also spread to Yemeni diplomatic establishments abroad, triggering what one diplomat referred to as "an institutional revolution". With the outbreak of the 2011 uprising, diplomatic state representatives found themselves in a sudden and unprecedented moment of uncertainty. Glued to their TV and mobile screens, they closely followed events in their home country on mainstream and social media. The heightened emotions and politicization that marked street protests in Yemen were shared by diplomats abroad, who in some cases had represented Ali Abdullah Saleh for decades. Radical socio-political change and conflict in Yemen disrupted normalized professional routines, loyalties, and diplomatic self-understandings in Yemeni embassies around the world. In the process of exchanging political opinions, personal sentiments, and work-related concerns, diplomats positioned themselves along (conflicting) political, professional, family, and regional lines. Through the formation of labour unions, resignations, and public forms of protest, diplomats carried the 2011 uprising into Yemen's foreign policy institutions. Their behaviour was met with considerable criticism by colleagues who emphasized professional duties of loyalty and political neutrality.

Diplomats' divergent reaction to regime change in Yemen raises important analytical questions about their role and practice, specifically with regards to the international

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[4] The concept of "civil state" encompassed "notions of citizenship, social order, gender as well as state-society relations" (Heinze, 2014, p.70).

representation and (re-)production of "the state". Likewise, the multitude of diplomatic behaviour in 2011 puts the spotlight on the mechanisms and limitations of institutional resilience in moments of "revolutionary change". While it appears that no diplomats were fired in 2011, diplomatic posts were assigned to powerful family members of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2013. His son Ahmad Saleh, for instance, became ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, while two of his nephews were appointed military attachés to Germany and Ethiopia (Gordon, 2013). These staffing policies direct attention to the function of Yemen's diplomatic service, suggesting that its liminal institutional space was used as a tool in broader politics of regime change.

This project aims to explore the socio-material expression of both change and continuity within Yemen's foreign policy institutions in the aftermath of 2011. Building on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork, archival studies, and desk-based research, it zooms in on the developments that have unfolded inside Yemen's diplomatic corps between 2011 and late 2017. Moments of drastic rupture and conflict crack open the otherwise unified and steady façade of the diplomatic service, offering a unique glance into its inherent incoherence, fragmentation, and fluidity. While "in prosperous times […], social systems appear stable", in difficult times "this comfortable illusion disintegrates" (Gourevitch, 1986, p.17). More than simply highlighting political anomalies, existing historical analysis suggests that insight into the micro-level developments of state institutions can illuminate broader issues relating to the future trajectories of states (Grindle, 2012). "How public servants are recruited, how their careers unfold, and how they think about their jobs are central to the historical evolution of countries around the globe and to the conflicts that punctuate and shape that evolution" (Grindle, 2012, ix).

This study sets out to gain an in-depth and situated understanding of diplomats' practices and related meaning-making in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising. Its insight into the Yemeni diplomatic service adds an ethnographically grounded post-colonial perspective to the multi-disciplinary literature on diplomats and diplomacy. In particular, it advances current scholarly understandings of the socio-material makeup of diplomatic institutions in a non-Western setting. This thesis also produces findings relevant to contemporary research on "the state" and "state resilience". The latter

became a topic of political concern and academic debate in Yemen with the outbreak of war in early 2015, which put a sudden end to the country's political transition.

Whilst NDC debates kept progressing slowly, sealed behind the closed doors of a five-star Sanaani hotel, alternative state visions found a quicker – albeit more forceful – expression outside Yemen's capital. Notably, the Houthi movement began expanding its territorial control in the north through military might. Their violent advancement soon caused a *de facto* shift in power that superseded negotiations at the NDC. Following a series of territorial power grabs, Houthis took over Yemen's capital on 21 September 2014 and moved further south. A few months later, Hadi's transition cabinet resigned in protest of the Houthis' ongoing expansion, and on 4 February 2015 Houthis replaced the parliament with a 501-member governing body, while also establishing a presidential council. Subsequently, most members of the Yemeni cabinet fled to Aden and moved on to Riyadh, where they set-up improvised governmental offices that were promoted as Yemen's "legitimate government" (*al-hakuma al-sharaiyyah*).

Soon after, on 25 March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition initiated a military intervention with the official goal of restoring Hadi's rule over Yemen. What started with air strikes and a naval blockade quickly culminated in a violent war, involving a large number of foreign ground troops as well as local military factions and armed militia groups. Ongoing conflict and the incessant Saudi-run naval blockade aggravated a quickly forming humanitarian crisis in Yemen, marked by severe malnutrition, disease, and the death of thousands of innocent civilians (Bonnefoy, 2018). Horror and destruction inside Yemen have been accompanied by the ongoing negotiation of competing state claims, orchestrated by both the "legitimate government" in Riyadh and the "Houthi government" in Sanaa. In light of Yemen's ongoing war, disintegration, and contested sovereignty, commentators jacked up previous characterizations of the country's "weakness" and "fragility" to announce ultimate "state failure" (see Clausen, 2019).

Notwithstanding its de facto collapse and surrounding negative commentary, "the Yemeni state" as an idea and legal status lived on. As international law scholar Crawford (2007) remarked, "the State continues to exist, with its rights and obligations, despite revolutionary changes in government or despite a period in which there is no,

or no effective, government" (p.34).) Legally speaking, states "once created […], even failed States, rarely disappear" (Novogrodsky, 2018, p.42).

While state resilience is widely acknowledged among social scientists, the processes underlying such durability remain ill-understood. [5] In recent years, an increasing number of scholars in political geography and international relations have offered a potential avenue of exploring the matter further by emphasizing the involvement of diplomats in the maintenance of state permanence and solidity (Jones & Clark, 2015). Sending, Pouliot, and Neumann (2015) view diplomats as crucial to the reproduction of the state "as the naturalized political arena for the generation of meaning and belonging" (p.7). Yet, much of the existing research fails to explain how statehood is diplomatically maintained in moments of upheaval and conflict. By zooming into an allegedly "failing" state institution and conducting an ethnographic study of diplomats' embodied socio-material practices, this project offers a new perspective to current debates on "the state". Its findings foreground the experience of diplomats as "failing state"-actors, shedding light on the socio-material mechanisms underlying state resilience at a time of rupture.

I The situated study of Yemen's diplomatic service

Addressing the partial and situated nature of current conceptualisations of both state resilience and diplomatic institutions, this study examines the micro-level developments of the Yemeni diplomatic service in the aftermath of 2011. Specifically, it *aims to understand how the Yemeni diplomatic service has reflected recent socio-political conflict in Yemen.* Insight into the socio-material expression of both change and continuity within Yemen's foreign policy institutions constitutes a useful empirical starting point for the further study of state resilience, while also contributing to the understanding of diplomats and diplomatic services, specifically in a non-Western context.

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[5] Existing research mostly focuses on explanatory factors that fall outside the failing state. Novogrodsky (2018), for instance, mentions the general bias among state actors to "save" failing state entities to thereby maintain the international status-quo.

This project views social and political structures as re-produced through practice, which renders them temporal and contingent by default (Bueger & Gadinger, 2018). Accordingly, its exploration of change and continuity is inspired by practice theory, which was initially developed "to gain a better understanding of the dynamic interplay between order and change" (Bueger & Gadinger, 2018, p. 100). Acknowledging that social practices are shaped by a range of contextual factors, often inherited from the past, this project adopts a historical approach in its analysis of 2011 events. As Rouse (2007) put it, the "emphasis upon the dynamics of social structures and their governance or constraint of individual actions gives a strongly historical dimension to any practice-theoretical approach" (p.646). Practices in relation to the state are not developed on a blank surface but draw on a historical legacy, notably involving a set of institutions and conventions. These historical trajectories provide "the resources with which actors pursue strategies for the future" (Painter & Jeffrey, 2009, p.26), while also limiting the range of options (perceived to be) available. Reviewing the emergence of Yemen's diplomatic service over time allows this project to trace its historical legacies into the present, outlining the resources and limitations that shaped diplomatic practices in the aftermath of 2011. The meaning of contemporary diplomatic practice, its vocabularies and material form, can only be grasped against the backdrop of wider historical-institutional developments. "To gain any true understanding of what something means, it is necessary to unravel how it came into existence in the first place" (Danesi, 2002, p.viii).

Since social interaction is situated not only in time but also in space (Giddens, 1984), the final part of this study zooms out of Yemen to regionally contextualize and qualify its case study. Extending its analytical gaze to Egypt and Tunisia – arguably the two most prominent and promising cases of regime change in 2011 – it highlights similarities and differences that help assess the uniqueness of the Yemeni experience. While this study does not claim to be comparative *per se*, its outline of Egyptian and Tunisian developments provides empirical snapshots which can be productively juxtaposed with the Yemeni case study.

This project's analysis of socio-material change and continuity within the Yemeni diplomatic service is guided by the following three research questions:

1) What are the historical narratives that frame the emergence of the Yemeni diplomatic service?

2) What was diplomats' experience of the crisis and how did it impact diplomatic practice?

3) How can we trace the implications of the Yemeni crisis through focus on institutional forms and functions?

In answering these questions this project explores how the in-depth and ethnographic study of the Yemeni diplomatic service helps theorize the relationship between the state and diplomacy. In particular, it seeks to uncover diplomats' role in the maintenance of state sovereignty. Neither sovereignty nor the concept of state are considered empirical facts in this study, but instead are treated as ideas and practices – with real material effects. This approach builds on a trend in state theory that is widely traced back to Abrams (1988), who was among the first to suggest studying "the *idea* of the state" (p.75), rather than "the state as a material object". As a socio-political concept, he argued, "the state" is closely intertwined with social and material power relations, acting as a "triumph of concealment" that disguises the disunity of political authority and clouds "relations of subjection" (Abrams, 1988, p.77). People's belief in the state's existence, no matter how misguided, can have "a significant political reality" (Abrams, 1988, p.68).

Abrams' constructivist argument was taken up and developed further by Mitchell (1991), who proposed to examine the state "not as an actual structure, but as the powerful, metaphysical effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist" (p.94). A number of scholars (Jeffrey, 2006, 2013; McConnell, Moreau, & Dittmer, 2012; Painter, 2006; Marston, 2004; Ferguson & Gupta, 2002; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001; Trouillot, 2001; O Tuathail & Dalby, 1998; Gupta, 1995; Corrigan & Sayer, 1985) followed and built upon the work of Abrams and Mitchell, examining the socio-material construction of the state. Moving within the broader framework of postcolonial theory, as well as structuralist and poststructuralist thought (Bratsis, 2006), they frequently applied concepts such as practice, performance, improvisation, or discourse. Building on their work, this thesis sheds light on the set of micro-level diplomatic practices that help produce macro-level effects of sovereign

statehood. Following Schatzki (2005), it argues that the state and state institutions can be comprehended by identifying the actions that compose it.

II Conceptualizing the study of diplomats and diplomatic practice

Arguing that knowledge about diplomats and the diplomatic service is essentially interdisciplinary, this study draws on research produced within the fields of international relations, political geography, political sciences, sociology, and organization studies. In doing so, it follows an inductive, integrative, and question-driven approach; concrete empirical objects, structures, and processes are analysed in terms of concepts and theoretical tools chosen for their relevance, regardless of their disciplinary origins (Sil, 2000). This approach prioritises historically emergent questions as "the driving force of social research rather than *a priori* commitments to disciplinary traditions or methodological perspectives" (Sil, 2000, p.13). Specific theoretical frameworks and concepts are selectively applied to help explain and interpret this study's empirical findings.

Focusing on the Yemeni diplomatic service, this project places the diplomat and diplomatic practice at its core. As such, it contributes to the "practice turn" in qualitative research, shifting focus from the "big things", such as discourse and linguistic representation, to the "little things" of affect, objects, and daily practice (Müller, 2013). Keen to move beyond the representational surface of social events, an increasing number of scholars have begun to study and theorize minute practices. Referred to as "a diffuse movement" (Shove *et al*, 2012), the "practice"-theme has grown considerably in the early 21st century, embracing, among other disciplines, organization studies (Nicolini *et al,* 2003; Gherardi 2006; Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow, 2009; Nicolini, 2012), media studies (Couldry, 2010), and political sciences (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Freeman, Griggs & Boaz, 2011). As of late, an increasing number of political geographers (Jones & Clark, 2015, 2019; McConnell, Moreau, & Dittmer, 2012) and international relations scholars (e.g. Neumann, 2002; Pouliot, 2010; Adler-Nissen & Pouliot, 2014; Sending, Pouliot, & Neumann, 2015; Bueger & Gadinger, 2018; Bode, 2018) have turned to the concept of practice as well, studying events, processes, and entities at the world stage as "bundles of individual and

collective practices woven together" (Cornut, 2018, p.713). They viewed war, peace, diplomacy, states, and other "big picture"-components of international affairs to be organized by specific practices (Jones & Clark 2015; Shove *et al*, 2012).

Practices offer a suitable focal point in the socially grounded analysis of international affairs, one that transcends narrow dualisms such as agency and structure, material and social, as well as local and global scales. While the benefits of studying human practice are widely agreed upon, controversy prevails regarding the exact definition of practice and the feasibility of practice-centred research. "Social practice theory is not a unified theory, but rather a collection of authors and approaches interested in studying or theorizing practice, each of whom has his or her own distinctive vocabulary" (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow, 2009, p.1312). In an attempt to bring order to such fragmentation (Rouse, 2007; Ringmar, 2014), several scholars set out to review and synthesize commonalities of existing practice accounts (e.g. Reckwitz, 2002; Schazki *et al*, 2001). According to Reckwitz (2002), for example, the concept contains three major elements: 1) bodily and mental activities, 2) "things" and their use, and 3) background knowledge "in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (p.249).[6]

Definitional approaches such as Reckwitz' (2002) remain necessarily vague, leaving several questions unaddressed. The relationship between practice and the dualistic notions of change and continuity, for example, continues to spark scholarly debate. "While practice theorists generally share a conception of social or cultural structures as existing only through their continuing reproduction in practices, they differ extensively over the degree of stability that practices can sustain" (Rouse, 2007, p. 646). On the one hand, practices have been portrayed as spontaneous, dynamic, continuously changing (Bueger, 2014), and responsive to shifting contexts (Jones & Clark, 2015). On the other hand, practices have been viewed as "stable, regulated patterns, routines, and reproduction" (Bueger, 2014, p.391). [7] In fact, some researchers emphasize the role of practice in path-dependencies. Among other things,

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[6] Notwithstanding minor deviations, additions, and abstractions, Reckwitz' theorization of practice has been acknowledged in later works on practice (e.g. Shove *et al*, 2012; Bueger, 2014).
[7] According to Shove *et al* (2012), "stability is the emergent and always provisional outcome of successively faithful reproductions of practice" (cited in Jones and Clark, 2015, p.3).

they suggest that previously acquired schemes of action are applied through practices to new situations (e.g. Pouliot, 2010). In other words, every revision of social action is thought to take place on the basis of prior dispositions (Pouliot, 2010). Fixation on such social reproduction "can explain why practice theory is sometimes felt to overemphasize continuity and structure over change and agency" (Cornut, 2018, p.721). Bueger and Gadinger (2018) group scholars' varying emphasis of change and continuity into critical and pragmatic trends. Critical approaches draw heavily on Bourdieuan concepts in emphasising repetition and the reproduction of social systems (e.g. Pouliot, 2010), whereas pragmatic perspectives focus on fluctuation and contingency and are frequently influenced by pragmatic sociologists like Boltanski (e.g. Bode, 2018). In analysing simultaneous processes of continuity and change within the Yemeni diplomatic service, this project draws inspiration from both theoretic orientations.

A further point of debate regards what Reckwitz (2002) calls "background knowledge". According to Pouliot (2018), "an essential dimension of practice is the result of inarticulate, practical knowledge that makes what is to be done appear self-evident or commonsensical" (Pouliot, 2010, p.12). This implies that practices are acquired and enacted unthinkingly. Practice theorists go to great lengths explaining why practices, such as playing the piano or skateboarding, can only be learned by "practicing". Once acquired, they argue, the enactment of practices is neither based on "conscious deliberation" nor on "thoughtful reflection" – it is just done (Pouliot, 2010). Notably, the concept of background knowledge figures prominently in Bourdieu-inspired studies of social reproduction, while being less relevant to studies of controversy and change (Bode, 2018).

As shown in the remaining part of this study, the theorization of practice as a skill, or a craft, acquired over time is at odds with the empirical data gathered in this study. Due to a large number of political appointments and institutional rotations, Yemeni diplomatic practices are frequently enacted by "newcomers". Similarly, the notion of practical knowledge is difficult to reconcile with this study's focus on crisis, during which practices tend to be more "thought-through" and reflexive (Bueger, 2014). Instead of emphasizing background knowledge, this project therefore follows the examples of Bode (2018), who studied *reflective* practices of a strategic or tactical

nature at the UN Security Council. "Portraying practices as reflective rather than as only based on tacit knowledge highlights how actors may creatively adapt their practices to social situations" (Bode, 2018, p. 293). According to Bode (2018), competent performance rests not so much on tacit knowledge but on the personality of actors, which she conceptualized as a plural socialisation experience. Bode's focus on actors corresponds with Cornut's (2018) argument that "practice theory *is* a theory of agency" (p.714). All practice, while conditioned by material and social history, contains a degree of improvisation that requires "agential creativity" (Cornut, 2018). No situation equals another, and agents continuously develop new scripts at work (Wagenaar, 2004).[8] This study is particularly interested in the behavioural choices and justifications that inform diplomats' diverse practices at a time of rupture and controversy. These are theorized with the help of Hirschman's (1970) well-known theoretical trio of exit, voice, and loyalty, which allows for the study of actors' subjectivity and internal institutional heterogeneity.

In examining the agency and reflectivity that is entangled in diplomatic practice, this project benefits from its focus on crisis. It is in these moments that established practices are challenged, changed, and/or in need of new justification (Bueger, 2014). As Cornut (2015) put it, "when facing exceptional circumstances, even seasoned diplomats may act like beginners" (p.728). Increased doubt and uncertainty lead practitioners to reflect on the "common sensical" and (re-)think their practices at work (Bueger, 2014). According to political scientists Laws and Rein (2003), accepted stories are challenged in moments of doubt, when "events upset conventional accounts and an indeterminate situation arises that requires interpretation" (p.175). A similar argument was made by Boltanski and Thévenot (1999), who found that in "critical moments" actors "who are doing things together – let us say in politics, work, unionism – and who have to co-ordinate their actions, realize that something is going wrong; that they cannot get along anymore; that something has to change" (p.359). The subsequent quest for new arrangements is marked by controversy and power struggles, centred around competing narratives of justification. According to Boltanski

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[8]Among other things, state bureaucrats and administrators are required to respond to "the human dimensions of situations" which calls for "sensitive observation and judgment, which are not reducible to programmed formats" (Lipsky, 2010, p.15).

and Thévenot (1999), the re-development of temporary and fragile agreements depends on the assertion of a new narrative that secures sufficient legitimacy. The conceptualization of practice as "a process of social ordering occurring between justification and critique" (Gadinger, 2016, p. 188) foregrounds normativity and is echoed in other scholarly work on international practice. For instance, Jones and Clark (2015) find that diplomatic practice "gives rise to the ordering of the state at home and at – a – distance" (p.3). Conversely, they link the contestation of state legitimacy and authority to the "disordering" of routine diplomatic practices.

Contrary to abstract practice-based accounts that foreground the philosophical theorization of implicit knowledge, this study puts forth a more pragmatic and ethnographically inspired approach that centres around agential creativity. Borrowing from the often-cited work of Schatzki (1996, 2001), it understands practice as the "doings and sayings" of people. This broad definition purposefully circumvents the theoretical complexity of Schatzki (1996), which has been proven difficult to apply in empirical studies (Bueger & Gadinger, 2018). Throughout this project, the "practice"-term is used to capture a range of "doings and sayings" of diplomats, variably referring to activities, performances, narratives, behaviours, and behavioural strategies, to name just some examples. As understood in this study, "practices range from ephemeral doings to stable long-term patterns of activity" (Rouse, 2007, p.639). Describing singular and/or collective action (Rouse, 2007, p. 647), they contain a number of inherent opposites, being both un/intentional, in/sincere, un/emotional, and non/routinized.

This project hopes to contribute to existing studies of diplomatic practice by shifting focus onto internal practices of organisation, notably appointments and promotions, as well as crisis-specific practices of protest (and monitoring), revolving around questions of loyalty and voice.[9] Among other things, these include individual cases of disobedience, sit-ins, the establishment of a diplomatic labour union, ambassadorial

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[9]Diplomatic practices commonly studied by scholars include, among others, speech writing, conference negotiations, information gathering, visa delivery, multilateral debate, cultural exchange, treaty signing, twitter messaging, negotiating treaties, sitting on the United Nations (UN) Security Council, waging wars, conducting bilateral relations, sending reports, engaging with civil society, inviting state representatives for state visits, following speaking points, hosting seminars, workshops, and talks, and having informal meetings to learn about the positions of other diplomats (Pouliot & Cornut, 2015; Cornut, 2018; Jones & Clark, 2015).

resignations, and diplomats' public criticism of their government. Furthermore, this study's analysis makes reference to material practices, such as the hosting of dinner parties, and practices of protocol, such as the issuing of visas. In analysing these diplomatic practices, this project emphasizes practitioners' *intrinsic drive* and *context.*[10] As such, it looks at diplomats' individual attributes, for example their emotions, personality, ambitions, opinions, and values, as well as their social, political, economic, and institutional environments.

By combining personal with broader contextual variables, this study goes beyond the perennial dualism which lies between "the purposive and meaningful activity through which agents construct their world on the one hand, and the impersonal compulsion and limits the gravity of social structures impose upon them on the other" (Bourdieu, Waquant & Farage, 1994, p.3). Rather than merely combining "structuralist" and "constructivist" approaches, this study aims to demonstrate their simultaneous necessity and inseparability. As Bourdieu (1991) aptly put it, the true principle of action resides not in either institutions or agents, but in their interaction, meaning the encounter between "history objectified in things" and "history incarnate in bodies" (p.38). According to Bourdieu, Waquant, and Farage (1994), "it is out of this perpetual and multi-levelled dialectic of field and habitus, position and disposition, social structures and mental structures that practices emerge and (re)make the world which makes them" (p.4).

Bridging the conceptual divide between agency and structure means combining "the social" with "the material". By adopting a relational ontology that highlights the close interconnection between material and social resources, this study adds to a new strand of research in political geography, which explores the world as a conglomeration of "socio-material practices that are diffuse, tangled and contingent" (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011 cited in Jeffrey, 2017, p.2). The analysis of diplomats' agency and its interaction with material environments acknowledges the important role of objects. Following Bueger (2014), this study finds that certain ways of handling

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[10] This approach follows Bode (2015), who argued that "as conceptual sites, practices are equally based on the characteristics of actors and the constraints/opportunities inherent to social structures" (p.18).

things may be inscribed into an artefact, which can "authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on" (Latour, 2005, p.72). While studying the impact of objects and materiality on political developments, this study does not treat material features as "agents". Like Krause (2011), it finds that "it is one thing to acknowledge that non-human bodies contribute to human agency and another thing to attribute agency to them" (p.309). Clearly, diplomatic agency is materially mediated; a broad range of material resources and configurations, expressed through professional codes and symbolic systems, impact and constrain diplomatic behaviour. Yet, objects and material structures do not constitute a deterministic force that could define, let alone predict, human behaviour. On the contrary, existing institutions can be remodelled through changed collective practices and their large-scale structuring effects. As Giddens (1984) put it, "the reversible time of institutions is both the condition and the outcome of the practices organized in the continuity of daily life" (p. 36).

While this study aims to integrate "the social" and "the material", it does not entirely elide the distinction between these two conceptual categories. Separate references to material and social aspects are linked to Chatterjee's (1993) differentiation between the material domain of the outside – variably referring to the world, statecraft, and technology – and the inner domain of spirit, national culture, and identity (Chatterjee, 1989). Drawing on Chatterjee, this project occasionally refers to the "material structure" of Yemen's diplomatic corps, which includes architecture, technology, Constitutions, organisational charts, laws, formal titles, and material objects, such as passports, diplomatic salaries, formal dress codes, flags, and letterheads. The realm of "spiritual agency" comprises less tangible social and power relations, personal biographies, and individual beliefs, values, aspirations, and emotions.

This study's comprehensive conceptual approach is combined with rich data collected during nine months of multi-site ethnographic fieldwork in 2016-17 and extensive desk-based and archival research. Treating the global network of Yemeni diplomats as a single field site, fieldwork was driven by an opportunistic focus on trust-based

access. Inspired by existing global ethnographies[11] and a recent trend of people- and practice-centred studies on diplomacy (Jones & Clark, 2013; McConnell, Moreau, & Dittmer, 2012; Kuus, 2013; Pinkerton and Benwell, 2014), research was conducted across Europe, America, and the Middle East, involving diplomats from Yemen and other countries. While repeated narrative interviews constituted this project's primary research method, the researcher also engaged in sporadic participant observation within the "microgeographies" of ethnographic encounters (Elwood & Martin, 2004, p.653).

Practice theorists have long argued that the critical deconstruction of global developments requires empirical research (Cornut, 2018, Bueger & Gadinger, 2018). To better understand international practices, Neumann (2002) famously called on scholars to abandon their "arm-chair analysis", which he criticized lacked contextualizing data from the field, "data that may illuminate how foreign policy and global politics are experienced as lived practices" (p.628). Focusing exclusively on aggregate macro-level patterns risks producing an image of global politics "in which practitioners hardly recognize themselves" (Cornut, 2018). While most theorists in the field of international relations view diplomacy as "strategic action, instrumental rationality and cost-benefit calculations" (Pouliot, 2010, p.12), this scholarly understanding is at odds with that of practitioners.

III Outline of this thesis

At its core, this research argues that Yemen's diplomatic corps has witnessed the coexistence of institutional endurance and change since 2011 – a paradox that can only be grasped by conceptualizing the Yemeni foreign service as a dynamic, fragmented, and internally uneven socio-material institution. Diplomats interpreted the Yemeni crisis as a unique professional challenge that had to be "navigated" by means of different behavioural strategies. Their newly emerging practices constituted a key driver of change, having "structural effects" (Mitchell, 1991) and impacting the perceived institutional function of the Yemeni diplomatic service. However, shifts in

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[11] Global ethnographic studies have been conducted on foreign correspondents (Hannerz, 2003), ballet professionals (Wulff, 1998), the transnational organization of Apple (Garsten, 1994), and the "professional elite" of wealth managers (Harrington, 2017).

diplomats' subjectivity, their practice, and institutional form and functions never replaced strands of continuity. Notably, the visible "material form" of Yemen's diplomatic service was preserved, contributing to an outward image of stability. Likewise, a number of diplomats chose to actively maintain the status-quo, silently following established routines. To capture the complex interaction of institutional change and endurance, this study conceptualizes the Yemeni diplomatic service as a heterogeneous and fluid socio-material organization. Its internal diversity and flexible interaction with shifting external factors and individual demands is demonstrated by tracing its historical genealogy and by studying the micro-level developments that have unfolded since 2011.

This study's argument is presented in eight chapters. Its research design and data collection methods are discussed in **chapter two**, which introduces the Yemeni diplomatic service as a global, relatively exclusive, and fluid professional network. It also foregrounds the importance of trust and explains the usefulness of international snowball sampling. It is argued that access to diplomats and attainment of in-depth information about diplomatic practice was dependent on the quality of personal relationships. Rather than determining research sites *a priori*, the researcher followed diplomats' referrals whenever and wherever possible, tracing, tapping into, and benefiting from already existing relationships of trust.

As is typical for ethnographic projects, multiple qualitative research methods were deployed, including (repeated) narrative interviews, sporadic participant observation, and archival research. This multi-site and multi-method approach offers a valuable contribution to the methodological literature on global ethnographies and elite research, while also informing actor- and practice based research in diplomacy studies. To illustrate the complex and multi-layered power relations that shaped the researcher's fieldwork experience, issues of reflexivity, positionality, and ethics are discussed.

This project's third and fourth chapter outline the historical development of the Yemeni state and the Yemeni diplomatic service respectively. **Chapter three** introduces the Yemeni state as an important reference in this study. Instead of offering a static "snapshot definition", it suggests that the meaning of Yemeni statehood resides in the

fluid relation between institutions and agents over time. More specifically, it conceptualizes state development as a translocal practice of learning that involves people, materials, and shifting environments. This approach is particularly useful in studying the multiplicity of state-building in Yemen, which never followed a superimposed and externally enforced blueprint. In examining the formation and expression of state ideas, this chapter does not aim at covering the full intellectual history of Yemeni "statehood" but proceeds in a genealogical manner that emphasizes outwardly striking ruptures in Yemeni politics.

Chapter three offers important background information which helps to explain the development of the Yemeni diplomatic service, outlined in **chapter four**. Crucially, chapter four adds historical depth to this study's argument, demonstrating that the plasticity and internal unevenness of Yemeni foreign policy institutions have long comprised simultaneous change and continuity. Its analysis emphasizes information about diplomats' educational backgrounds, careers, and physical appearance. This sheds light on the translocal practices and socialization processes that shaped the institutional development of the Yemeni diplomatic service. Focus on diplomats' personal biographies also highlights the embodied nature of diplomatic practice and pinpoints their embeddedness in wider global power structures. By tracing historical legacies into the present, chapter four helps assess the significance and meaning of post-2011 developments.

Chapters five to seven examine to what extent and how Yemen's diplomatic state institutions have reflected regime change and war in the aftermath of 2011. **Chapter five** focuses on diplomatic practices and diplomats' experience of the 2011 uprising. It argues that Yemeni diplomats interpreted protests as a particular professional challenge and examines the various viewpoints and behavioural strategies they developed in response. Drawing on the concept of "social navigation" (Vigh, 2006) and Hirschman's (1970) trio of exit, voice, and loyalty, chapter five captures diplomats' oscillation between silent obedience and expressions of protest. Behavioural strategies and concomitant power struggles were informed by material as well as psychological and emotional factors. They centred around the concept of "diplomatic professionalism", which emerged as an important reference and practice of justification in 2011. Similarly, the notion of "diplomatic loyalty" emerged as a central

factor in the ongoing controversy that surrounded diverse diplomatic behaviour. While the findings of this chapter suggest that institutional boundaries are highly permeable, allowing broader socio-political changes to impact internal institutional developments, principles of diplomatic loyalty, staffing policies, and varying personal motivations helped maintain strands of continuity.

Following chronologically, **chapter six** focuses on the outbreak of civil war in early 2015 and subsequent developments unfolding within the Yemeni diplomatic service. The interrelated themes of professionalism, voice, and loyalty continue to inform its analysis of diplomatic agency and practice in the context of violent conflict. In exploring the micro-level dynamics of Yemen's (dis)ordered state representation during civil war, this chapter emphasizes diplomatic practices related to voice and loyalty, specifically diplomats' contested freedom of expression and appointments. Focusing on the important role of social media, it argues that the exiled Yemeni government managed the existent array of diplomatic voices more rigidly during the civil war than it did in 2011. At the same time, shifting appointment practices pushed the reward-function of diplomatic posts to new heights, triggering a "crisis of professionalism" among career-diplomats that altered the perceived institutional function of the Yemeni foreign service. The chapter concludes by examining how micro-level developments inside the diplomatic service reflect back on macro-level perceptions and understandings of Yemeni statehood. Specifically, it suggests that practices structured around diplomatic loyalty, no matter their effectiveness, were essential to governmental claims of legitimacy and sovereignty.

Chapter seven shifts focus onto the (changing) materiality of the Yemeni diplomatic service. Following a relational ontology, Bourdieu's concept of capital is applied to capture the interaction of material and non-material factors. Importantly, this chapter outlines the limitation of state-provided economic capital within the Yemeni diplomatic service, painting a picture that challenges widespread stereotypes of diplomatic luxury. It also indicates that diplomatic practice is shaped by a fluid constellation of scarce resources that are unevenly distributed within the Yemeni diplomatic service. This insight provokes a set of reflections that is termed "poor state diplomacy". At its core, the concept of "poor state diplomacy" addresses the difficult reconciliation of resource scarcity with materially embedded diplomatic functions. Grounded in

empirical data from the "geopolitical margin", it serves as a critical intervention in the Euro-centric field of diplomacy studies and its imaginations of global diplomatic uniformity. In particular, the concept challenges the idea of homogeneity that frequently underlies conceptions of diplomatic practice between and within national diplomatic services. The final part of chapter seven examines the material and symbolic co-constitution of the Yemeni diplomatic apparatus by focusing on the changing functions of the passport. It demonstrates that in 2016-17 the ability to provide internationally recognized passports emerged as an essential tool in the legitimation of competing claims to territorial control and state power.

Chapter eight contextualizes the Yemeni experience geographically by exploring developments inside the Egyptian and Tunisian diplomatic service at a time of sudden socio-political change. Its findings reveal similarities and differences that help assess the uniqueness of the Yemeni experience. While this chapter is not comparative *per se*, its outline of Egyptian and Tunisian developments provides empirical snapshots which can be productively juxtaposed with the Yemeni case study. To better draw out comparative insights, chapter eight maintains the conceptual categories already applied in the analysis of the Yemeni diplomatic service. Using Hirschman's (1970) trio of exit, voice, and loyalty, it focuses on diplomats' viewpoints and various behavioural strategies after 2011. The analysis of Tunisian and Egyptian diplomatic practices foregrounds and further illuminates the concept of diplomatic agency. Similar to developments in Yemen, a number of diplomatic actors in Egypt and Tunisia saw the uprising as an "opening" and engaged in unprecedented political activism in support of both change and continuity. While some aimed to reform diplomatic practice, others actively tried to maintain the status quo. A look at Tunisia and Egypt also lends support to the argument that diplomatic institutions are fragmented, ambiguous, highly responsive to environmental change and marked by unique institutional histories.

This project's findings are of both academic and political value. Academically, this study advances the people- and practice-centred research on diplomacy within the field of IR and political geography. To date, ethnographic studies on diplomats have mostly looked at diplomats in Brussels (Jones & Clark, 2015; Kuus, 2014), European foreign ministries (Neumann, 2007, 2015), and international organizations, such as

NATO (Pouliot, 2010; Dittmer, 2017) and the UN (Jones & Clark, 2019). While much has been written about diplomacy in the Middle East, and some scholars have assigned a distinctive diplomatic culture to it (Brown, 2003), no research on the region has focused on diplomats themselves and diplomatic state institutions.

This study of Yemeni diplomats and diplomatic practice produces country-specific findings that challenge the Western bias in current diplomacy research. In particular, it problematizes Euro-centric imaginations of global diplomatic uniformity, which assume universally shared professional codes, norms, structures and experiences.[12] This study's historical analysis also complicates narratives of diplomacy's European origins and linear diffusion,[13] pointing to the legacies of exclusion and oppression that have marked the early diplomatic history of South Yemen.

Besides contributing to diplomacy studies, this project's analysis of a non-Western case study adds to the diverse field of practice research. First, it combines postcolonial and practice theory, highlighting their ontological and epistemological similarities. Both postcolonial and practice-based approaches tend to view social order as multiplicity. Rather than speaking of universal wholes or truths, they examine multiple and overlapping orders and realities (Schatzki, 2002; Bueger & Gadinger, 2018) and foreground individual subjectivity, meaning, and power relations in their methodological designs. Notwithstanding these overlaps, postcolonial and practice theory have rarely been merged in the empirical research of international relations and diplomacy. Second, this project moves away from the focus on background knowledge, instead examining *reflexive* diplomatic practices and diplomatic agency in moments of rupture. Notwithstanding the interest that many practice theorists have expressed in "the innovativeness of reflexive agents" (Bueger & Gadinger, 2018, p.29) and questions of "competence" (Sending, Pouliot & Neumann, 2015, p. 18), many have "bypassed whether and how it matters which *individuals*, in the true sense of the word, perform practices" (Bode, 2018, p.299).

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[12] Melissen (2016), for instance, speaks of a "global diplomatic system" (p.xxi), marked by "shared values and diplomatic norms" (p.xiv). Likewise, Cohen (2016) suggests that "diplomatic relationships" are "grounded in a commonly accepted system of procedure, protocol and law; a *lingua franca;* and permanent diplomatic missions" (p.13).

[13] According to Cohen (2016), modern diplomacy "surfaced in Renaissance Italy" and spread "over the entire world after the Second World War" (p.13).

By exploring the relationship between diplomatic practice and the state, specifically state sovereignty, this study also contributes to the multi-disciplinary field of state theory. First, it sheds light on the micro-level mechanisms underlying the diplomatic maintenance of state sovereignty in moments of crisis. It suggests that the continued performance of diplomatic loyalty and the maintenance of institutional "outer form", no matter their effectiveness, are essential to claims of legitimacy and sovereignty – two concepts that emerged as crucial to regime survival in the Yemeni case study. A second contribution to state theory regards the role of state institutions in "revolutionary moments". By portraying foreign policy apparatuses as microcosms of broader political and social trends, this project emphasizes bureaucracy's fluidity and calls into question depictions of the diplomatic service as a counter-revolutionary force (Sharp, 2009; Ross, 2007; Frey & Frey, 2004). In fact, it indicates that resistance and contestation are as common within state institutions as they are outside of them.

The relevance of this project stretches beyond academia, offering a rare glance "behind the scenes" of Yemeni diplomacy. By adopting an actor- and practice-based approach, this thesis produces a level of nuance that is crucial for informed, sensible, and effective foreign policy-making pertaining to the Middle East. In particular, its research findings contribute to the understanding of (non-Western) diplomats' diverse subjectivities and practices. Such insights are of broader social and political relevance given that diplomats and their behaviour influence the policies and self-understanding of governments, while probably also impacting the public's understanding of foreign policy (Stanzel, 2018).

2 Following Diplomats Through a Translocal Field

The first Yemeni embassy I visited could only be accessed through a side-entrance in London's South Kensington neighbourhood. Its main door was closed and inscriptions on the doorbells were difficult to decipher. Upon entering, I found myself in a stuffy and small room, with a seating area to the right and a glass window, protected by a steel grid, to the left, showing a chamber with a desk, presumably the reception. The burgundy colour of time-worn chairs, fashionable maybe in the 1970s, matched that of the torn carpet. An oversized and faded banner in the right corner advertised Yemen as a tourist destination. On the wall just opposite the entrance hang a large gold-framed portrait of Yemen's president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi.
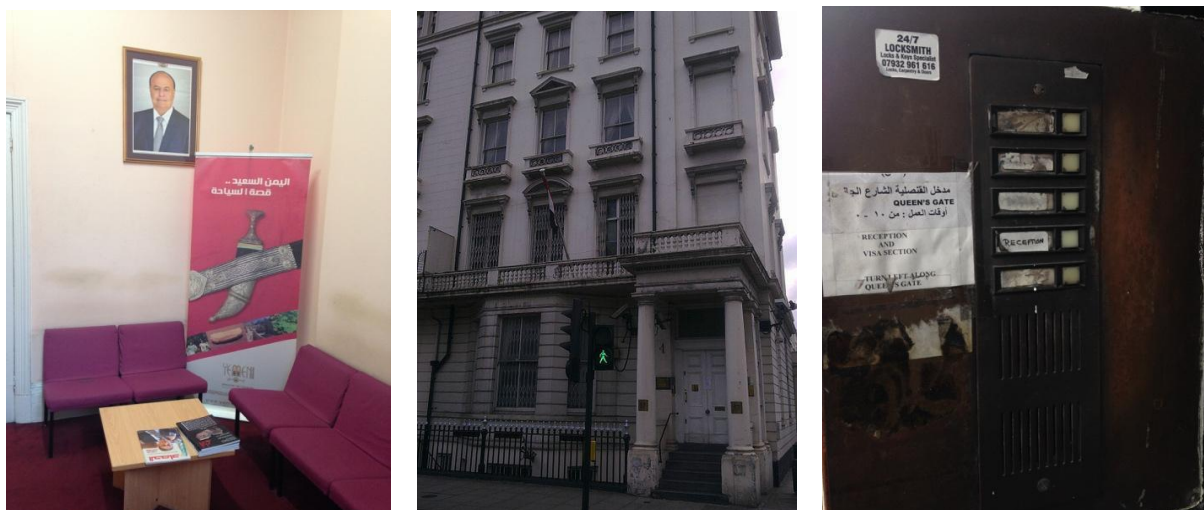
Figure 3: Yemeni Embassy in London

The embassy's "lobby" (left), its main door (centre), and doorbells with a sign asking visitors to enter the building through the side entrance around the corner (right).[14]

Initially I found myself alone in the room, as the reception was unattended. After waiting for a while, I knocked at the window and shouted a loud "hello?" A woman

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[14] Source for photo in the centre: "Embassy of Yemen in London". [Digital Image]. (2013). Retrieved 8 May 2018 from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Embassy_of_Yemen_in_London_1.jpg. Source for photos on the left and right: private.

promptly appeared, and I asked to see the ambassador. I remember I used the expression "his excellency the ambassador", which felt strangely old-fashioned and out of place spoken in the humble ambience of a basement room. I was led through a dimly lit hallway, filled with what appeared to be dusty thrown-out furniture, and up a staircase. The thick red carpet swallowed the sounds of my steps, emphasizing the absolute silence surrounding me. The large Victorian town house seemed empty, even abandoned. "Stuffy, dark, and quiet – a shadow of the glory it once was", I later wrote in my fieldnotes.

This first encounter with Yemeni diplomats radically challenged my preconceived images of diplomatic work settings. Influenced by mainstream cultural and media representations, I had pictured diplomacy as a glamourous world of galas and receptions, villas and suits, Champagne and flashy cars. Its distinctive aura of historic nobility and aristocratic etiquette made it look oddly detached from broader historical changes in political organisation. In short, I had viewed diplomacy as a "bubble" of material affluence, power, and conservative tradition.

In the process of meeting and talking to diplomats, I revisited many of these preconceptions. Fieldwork proved a learning experience in more ways than I imagined and was marked by self-reflexive openness, the frequent re-assessment of understanding, and flexible changes in my research design. As I traversed through diplomatic spaces, tracing the networks of Yemeni diplomats across countries and continents, I experienced the Yemeni diplomatic service as a highly heterogeneous field, marked by internal contradiction and variety. Meeting "rich" and "poor" diplomats, in five-star lobbies and shabby *Nero* cafés, expressing both criticism and support of the exiled Yemeni government, I gained insight into their lives, their different socio-material backgrounds and dispositions, struggles in their personal lives, and feuds at work.

In exploring how the Yemeni diplomatic service reflected socio-political crisis, I adopted a relational ontology that included both institutionalized and material aspects, such as stamps, payments, and official documents, while also taking into consideration personal relations, biographies, and emotions. Given my concern with attaining a holistic, yet in-depth and situated understanding of diplomats' meaning-

making processes, socio-material relations, and practice, I adopted a qualitative research methodology including multiple research instruments (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

In the remainder of this chapter, the specific methods deployed during fieldwork, and broader methodological concerns will be discussed. The first section theorizes the concept of trust and explores how I gained initial access to the Yemeni diplomatic network. It also examines the trust-building methods that facilitated my access to personal in-depth information during interviews. Next, the method of international snowball sampling and the translocal character of this project's research design are discussed with reference to Marcus' (1995) concept of multi-site ethnography. In a third step, this chapter outlines the specific methods used to collect data, including semi-structured narrative interviews, multi-site participant observation, as well as archival and online research. It then analyses questions of power and my own positionality, which impacted the production of knowledge. In doing so, it pays particular attention to the concept of "elite research" and the role of gender and "diplomatic culture" in building rapport. This chapter ends by discussing questions of ethics, which are of particular concern given the context of war in which this research took place.

I Trust and the challenge of gaining access

When I planned this research, friends and colleagues voiced concern that diplomats might refuse to meet me, "brush me off", or "be diplomatic" by feeding me official, vague, and unhelpful phrases. Likewise, academic sources warned "that many organizational elites spend a good part of the day acting as spokespeople for their organizations, so the interview becomes an extension of their daily routine" (Delaney, 2007, p.213). While beginning fieldwork with considerable scepticism, I took comfort in the reassurance by established diplomacy researchers like Merje Kuus, Alun Jones, and Julian Clark, who found that diplomats were approachable and supportive. Jones and Clark (2015), for instance, observed that many "European diplomats […] are prepared to talk, listen, reflect and argue for long periods with researchers" (p.4). However, the risk of encountering the "spokesperson problem" remained, acting as an

acute reminder that the development of trust and the building of rapport was crucial to my research.

The first obstacle I encountered at the onset of fieldwork revolved around access. Gaining first access to diplomats was complicated by the "institutional exclusivity" of formal diplomatic institutions. Diplomats could "resist the scrutiny of research" (Lancaster, 2017, p.95) by relying on, or reinforcing bureaucratic barriers. Their contact details were not publicly accessible, emails to embassies' generic "info@"-accounts rarely yielded results, and meetings personally requested on-site were skilfully stalled by secretaries. Even when access to diplomatic institutions and diplomats was granted, interviewees' responses could remain vague and unhelpful. As Ostrander (1995) famously put it, "gaining access is not the same as establishing the trust required for getting useful data" (p. 135).

In the course of this research project, barriers to accessing information laid in professional secrecy and normative discretion, which sporadically surfaced in interviews. One respondent evaded a question he deemed to be sensitive, explaining, with half-abashed laughter and lowered glance, "it is a little bit a secret for Yemenis, you know, for us diplomats only".[15] Another diplomat was seemingly nervous, and initially quite guarded, wondering throughout the interview whether he was transgressing his "obligation of discretion".[16]

To gain access, both to diplomats and useful information, I devised research strategies that centred on the notion of trust. Set in 2016/2017, fieldwork took place under unique conditions, in which trust was particularly contested within the Yemeni diplomatic corps. Any behaviour deemed "critical" could end a diplomat's post abroad and impend their return back home. This looming threat, among other elements, had an impact on diplomats' willingness to participate in my research, specifically since it touched upon a sensitive topic at the time. As one Yemeni diplomat explained by reference to his colleagues, "for those diplomats who are outside [i.e. abroad], they are afraid, they cannot talk, they cannot say anything because they know if they say anything, […]

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[15] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[16] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.

they will just get kicked out".[17]

The "crisis moment" within which this research took place not only hindered, but also, paradoxically, facilitated this study's data collection process. The disruption of professional routines, norms, and codes seemed to open up room for actors' independent decision-making and improvisation, while also creating grievances and feelings of frustration that probably motivated diplomats to talk to me. Offering an opportunity for respondents' own reflections and complaints, it can be assumed that interviews were experienced as cathartic by some diplomats, who went "off script" more readily at a time of "institutional rupture". In many cases, diplomats criticised unfair practices within the Yemeni diplomatic service and discussed the personal hardship they suffered due to unpaid salaries for example.

Trust-building efforts sat at the heart of this project's overall methodological design. It is established that trust is "important or even vital in cooperative efforts in all aspects of life" and central to any social research involving humans (McKnight and Chervany, 2001, p.28). Although trust is understood differently across disciplines, Bigley and Pearce (1998) observe that it is "almost always […] associated with the idea of actor vulnerability" (p. 407). Trust is widely described as someone's willingness to accept vulnerability on the confident expectation that the intentions or behaviours of others are positive (Mayer *et al*, 1995; Rousseau *et al*, 1998; McEvily *et al*, 2003).[18] Importantly, the trust between two people is influenced by their broader social environment and the trust-confirming information that is passed on by third parties (Williams, 2005). Applied to this research project, the social diffusion of trust was relevant in two ways: 1) the possibility of interviewees trusting me "by proxy", extending their trust in mediating agents to myself; and 2) the possibility of interviewees following laws of "conformism", deeming it "safe" to trust me because others have done so as well. In the latter case, trust-related behaviour is induced by imitation, following the simple logic "since they do I do; since they trust I trust" (Falcone & Castelfranchi, 2001, p.69).[19]

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[17] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017.
[18] For more information on the contested range of existing definitions of trust read Kramer (1999).
[19] For further information on trust transferability see Williams (2005).

Contrary to research that emphasizes trust as a means to gain "privileged insider status" (Tope, Chamberlain, & Crowley, 2005, p. 489), I followed Bucerius (2013), who productively combined the notion of trust with her status as an outsider, claiming that her "outsider status encouraged the young men to trust me with inside information that they would not otherwise have shared with 'real insiders'" (p. 715). In fact, this project suggests that "being an outsider trusted with inside knowledge […] can be a great research asset" (Bucerius, 2013, p. 715).

In gaining initial access to diplomats, I relied on network-based resources, or "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1986), which I gained through past research and professional experience in Yemen. In 2012, I conducted fieldwork on political Salafism in Sanaa and in 2014/15, I worked with a small newspaper there. In the process, I made friends and established contacts that proved useful for this project. Europe-based researchers on Yemen as well as Yemeni academics, political activists, and politicians could refer me to diplomats and helped me arrange my first interviews. Furthermore, I found out that a number of former, mostly British, diplomats worked in senior positions at the University of Cambridge and that a number of Yemeni diplomats used to attend the yearly Gulf Meeting Conference there. Students involved in the organisation of the conference and former diplomats working at the university introduced me to Yemeni diplomatic actors. Overall, I relied heavily on three interwoven milieus in gaining initial access to the Yemeni diplomatic service: diplomatic, political, and academic social circles.

Throughout my research, processes of trust diffusion, through shared friends or contacts, emerged as most relevant, although personal characteristics, individual predispositions, shared experiences and interests with respondents also impacted the establishment of trust. Where I tapped into close personal relationships, being recommended by a trusted friend or relative, respondents were more willing to open up. In these instances, I was occasionally greeted with a "his friend is my friend" comment and was told that the respondent intended to speak freely, following the example set by the mediating agent who, in some cases, had already been interviewed.
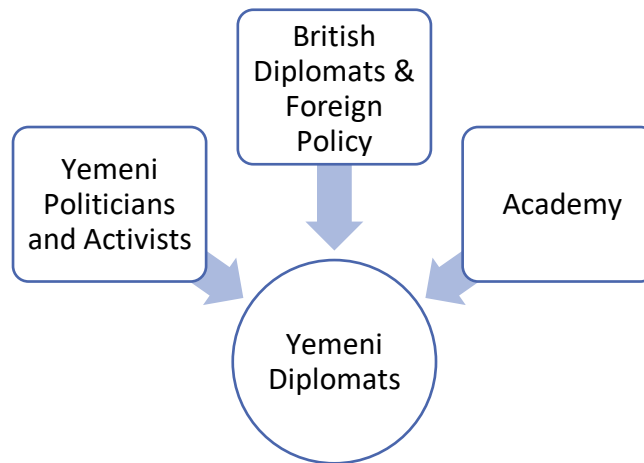
Figure 4: Accessing Yemeni Diplomats
Access to Yemeni diplomats was gained through contacts in the
diplomatic, political, and academic field.

Since I did not spend an extended period of time within a geographically bounded, small-scale community, the development of trust required the building of rapport and immersion into a fluid and global network of mobile professionals. Acknowledging the importance of shared third parties in the building of trust, this research of Yemeni diplomats was structured around the method of snowball sampling. This method is generally considered useful where target populations are hard to reach and "some degree of trust is required to initiate contact" (Atkinson and Flint, 2001, n.p.). In spontaneously following diplomats' referrals whenever and wherever possible, I traced, tapped into, and benefitted from already existing relationships of trust. Throughout this process, fieldwork quickly became multi-sited.

II International snowballing through a global professional network

In studying the Yemeni diplomatic service, I flew across 11 capitals in Europe, America, and the Middle East over a period of nine months, meeting diplomats in embassies, hotel lobbies and bars, exclusive clubs, restaurants and ordinary cafés, universities, offices and private homes. My stay in each capital was usually limited to a couple of days, which allowed for the possibility of follow-up interviews, the meeting of recommended new contacts, and in some cases the attendance of diplomatic events. Several cities were visited repeatedly, usually to meet interviewees a second

time, or to follow up on new leads and referrals. In some cases, I literally "followed" diplomats, who were either travelling or posted from one country to another.

This approach resembled the "multi-sited ethnography" coined by Marcus (1995), who recommended its conduct whenever the "object of study cannot be accounted for […] by remaining focused on a single site" (p.96). Many scholars who work "under circumstances of globalization" (Weißköppel, 2005, p.45) and/or on "transnational phenomena" (Mazzucato and Kabki, 2009, p.215) have adopted a multi-site style of ethnography. Viewing the global "as local in all its points" (Candea, 2009, p.29), they "follow the people" (Marcus, 1995, p.106), or variably life stories, objects, and metaphors, in order to detect relationships, processes, networks, and fields. As suggested in this study, multi-site research gains in importance in a context of violent conflict when access to a country is risky, if not impossible. Gathering "offline data" then becomes dependent on creatively tracing already existing global networks, such as the diplomatic one, or a war-induced and globally dispersed diaspora.

In devising the design of this project's multi-site study of Yemeni diplomats, I had initially planned to focus on three to five embassies. This approach was based on limited fieldwork funds and a pragmatic emphasis of network "hubs", which I assumed differed in importance and magnitude. The focus on particularly relevant embassies seemed to constitute a justifiable way of narrowing down the geographical scope and numerical size of my target group. It also complied with existing practice in global ethnographies: Hannerz (2003), for instance, visited Johannisburg, Tokyo, and Jerusalem in his study of foreign correspondents, while Wulff (1998) included Stockholm, New York, London, and Tokyo in her study of ballet professionals.

A few weeks into my fieldwork, it became clear that my locality-focused multi-*site* approach was not compatible with the fluid and highly personalized characteristics of the Yemeni diplomatic field. While *in theory* the research of diplomatic networks could start with any embassy and diplomat, I found that *in practice* access was dispersed unevenly across the network. Not all Yemeni diplomats were equally willing to meet and talk.

Figure 5: Mapping Translocal Fieldwork

Following diplomats and diplomatic networks led me to London, Paris, Den Hague, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Rome, Brussels, Cairo, Tunis, and Washington D.C..[20]

In some instances, ambassadors refused to see me, leaving me communicating with their respective secretaries. In other instances, it appeared that ambassadors "advised" other embassy employees against participation in this research project. Moreover, diplomats rarely suggested meeting colleagues who worked in the same embassy. Instead, I was referred to colleagues, relatives, or friends in faraway places. In many cases, notions of trust, friendship, and "usefulness" seemed to matter more than geographic closeness. I experienced that "what determines the texture of ties or trust is not spatial proximity, but the nature of contact, intermediation, and communicative complexity involving groups of actors and entities" (Amin & Roberts, 2008, p.366).[21]

As these examples illustrate, network nodes and hubs can "close down" to the researcher, a fact that underlines the importance of flexibility and mobility during fieldwork. In the research of exclusive and relatively "closed" networks, with irregularly

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[20] Google MyMaps (n.d.). Map showing interview locations marked by the author. Retrieved 15 April 2019 from https://www.google.co.uk/maps/d/u/0/.

[21] In some cases, diplomats' wish for privacy, anonymity, and safety might have motivated "remote referrals". Suggesting meeting spots outside their respective embassy, it is possible that some respondents found recommendations to faraway contacts "safer" as it prevented the researcher's presence from interfering in the social relations of their daily work, or from stirring unwelcomed rumours.

distributed points of access, I realized that the persistent focus on a limited number of pre-selected research locales could virtually be counterproductive. Thus, I began to follow diplomats' translocal referrals, flexibly choosing capitals in the course of fieldwork, and continuously adapting to unique, and newly discovered, network features and dynamics. The methodological approach that emerged through initial fieldwork experience was thus inherently *trans*local. In Berlin, I was instructed to get in touch with a friend in Paris, in Cambridge I was told to meet a cousin in Brussels, while in London I was offered contacts in Saudi Arabia. While these exact locations and referrals have been made up to maintain "internal confidentiality" (Tolich, 2004), they truthfully reflect the kind of referrals I witnessed during fieldwork. Diplomats' translocal introductions allowed me to tab into and benefit from pre-existing relationships of trust. Yet, they complicated the logistics of my research and posed a challenge to its original design. I learned first-hand that "carefully planned proposals may dramatically change as fieldwork begins" (Billo & Hiemstra, 2013, p.313) and came to agree with Hays-Mitchell (2001) that "regrouping, reflecting, accepting mistakes, and modifying plans are four cornerstones of fieldwork" (p.317).

Ultimately, I treated the global network of Yemeni diplomats as a "single geographically discontinuous site" (Hage, 2005, p.463), whose access points were rooted in localities across the globe. Rather than determining research locales *a priori*, methodological choices were largely driven by an opportunistic focus on trust-based access. Encountering few financial and time constraints, I followed most of diplomats' referrals, in the process tracing the various networks of trust embedded within the Yemeni diplomatic service. This approach complies with the observation that "site selections are to an extent made gradually and cumulatively […] and to some extent by chance" (Hannerz, 2003, p.207).

The frequency of trips was dependent on interview opportunities, which were usually arranged via email or WhatsApp. While I flew from one capital to another, I also spent weeks in between at my university office, waiting for emails, doing online research, organizing trips, and staying in touch with diplomats. As Hannerz (2003) observed,

> "multi-site ethnography […] may fit particularly well into that more drawn-out, off-and-on kind of scheduling, as the latter does not only allow us to think during

times in between about the materials we have, but also about where to go next" (p.213).

In some ways, the fast-paced "in-through-and-out" nature of this translocal research resembles Knoblauch's "focused ethnography", which "is characterized by relatively short-term field visits" (n.p.) that require "an intimate knowledge of the fields to be studied" (n.p.). By spreading across various "diplomatic spaces", I gained insight into diplomats' socio-professional geographies, and their respective sense- and place-making activities.

II.1. Semi-structured interviews and sporadic participant observation

This project's multi-site ethnographic work is structured around (repeated) in-depth interviews and sporadic participant observation. It treats ethnography as a "sensibility […] to glean the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality" (Schatz, 2009, p.5). This ethnographic approach foregrounds interviews as "an opportunity for creating and capturing insights of a depth and level of focus rarely achieved through surveys, observational studies or the majority of casual conversations" (Hockey & Forsey, 2012, p.69). Especially in professional and more difficult to access contexts, interviews have been described as the most appropriate form of participatory and ethnographic research (Hockey & Forsey, 2012). As Pouliot's (2010) practice-based research of NATO showed, qualitative interviews are generative of subjective meanings and "provide researchers with an efficient means to penetrate more or less alien lifeworlds" (p.68). Similar to Sorrell and Redmond's (1995) phenomenological approach, this project did not use interviews "to explain, predict or generate theory, but to understand shared meanings by drawing from the respondent a vivid picture of the lived experience, complete with the richness of detail and context that shape the experience" (p. 1120). Semi-structured narrative interviews served the practical purpose of learning more about the intrinsic and contextual factors impacting diplomatic practice.

Interviews were conducted in English,[22] took place in locations suggested by the interviewee, and were structured into three main parts: the first part involved small talk, with questions and anecdotes shared by both the interviewees and me. It served as an introduction, during which both interview parties developed an intuitive "sense of each other", built rapport and trust, and exchanged information about the research project. The second part of the interview involved open-ended questions about diplomats, their background, education, their decision to join the diplomatic service, and their diplomatic careers. This "narrative opening" aimed at putting diplomats at ease, while also transitioning the conversation into a narrative interview format and gathering information about diplomats' distinct experience and personality. Hoping that diplomats would "loosen up" in the process of talking, I asked questions about their regional affiliation, their parents' profession, their education, as well as their career choices, dreams, and ambitions. Inspired by Dezalay and Garth's (2002) "relational biographies", I inquired into "who these individuals are and where they come from in order to see the relationship between what they say and their own strategic positions" (p. 9). Focus on diplomats' personality and biographies allowed for the development of an actor- and agency-centred understanding of diplomatic practice. Specifically, it offered insight into the various intrinsic drivers underlying reflexive diplomatic practice and facilitated the analysis of diplomats' creative agency. At the same time, diplomats' "biographical accounts of […] choices and career strategies" (Dezalay & Garth, 2002, p.9) helped to better understand the socio-material make-up of diplomatic institutions and organizational structures.

The third part of interviews covered diplomats' experience of the 2011 uprising, the subsequent political transition, and the outbreak of civil war. Its design drew inspiration from Bueger (2013), who argued that

> "the strategy of crisis and controversies […] implies first identifying these critical moments and then studying how actors deal with these situations, how they justify what needs to be done, and how they proceed to act and adjust practices or invent new ones" (p.397).

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[22] Although most interviewees spoke English, some Yemeni diplomats, especially recent political appointees, were alleged to only speak Arabic. Unsure of my Arabic skills, diplomats seemed to select English-speaking colleagues in making their referrals at the end of interviews.

Diplomats were asked to narrate what happened in the diplomatic service between 2011 and 2017 and were questioned about how they felt and what they thought about developments at the time. Whenever I deemed diplomats' accounts to be too brief, I asked specifically whether they faced any challenges at work following the 2011 uprising. The last question did not only aim at comprehending change, but also the backdrop of routines and norms against which events were judged to be "challenging".

While the first two parts of interviews remained similar throughout fieldwork, the third part varied slightly over time and from person to person. In fact, "in-depth" conversations (Soss, 2006) served the in-built flexibility of this research project; in many cases I disclosed and followed unforeseen connections and subject areas. For instance, I asked individuals with unique experience and anecdotes, or exceptional historical knowledge, to expand on parts of their narrative. Similarly, once I discovered new information, for example on corruption or the formation of Yemen's first diplomatic labour union, I asked specific questions about these developments and practices in subsequent interviews. As is common for narrative interviews,

> "decisions about relevant and irrelevant content [were...] made during the course of the interview, both by the informant and in collaboration with the researcher […]. No information [was…] a priori ruled out, for any event or interpretation [could…] contribute to the meaning of a story" (Ayres, 2012, p.545).

In all cases, the line of questioning focused on "what happened", inquiring what diplomats did and why, how they felt, and what they thought.[23] While this approach tied diplomatic practice to "events", questions also addressed diplomats' day-to-day tasks, for instance by asking what an average work week looked like. The resulting information on mundane diplomatic tasks informed but was not prioritized in this project's analysis. Instead of emphasizing the expression and micro-elements of unceasing day-to-day practices, this study was interested in exploring diplomats' *choice* to continue tasks as usual, or not, and aimed to understand why some practices emerged as particularly contentious. By emphasizing diplomats' points of view, this

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[23] Following the example of Jones and Clark (2015), interviews were designed to not only address the how and when but also the why of diplomatic practice.

study managed to explore the meaning of being a diplomat and the significance of diplomats' "doings and sayings" (Neumann, 2002, 2007).

Where it was possible and relevant, I carried-out follow-up interviews with respondents. Diplomats who appeared cautious and shy in the first meeting often opened up in the course of (repeated) conversations. Given the length of interviews, which typically lasted between one and two hours, a number of diplomats seemed to develop trust or sympathy in the course of a single encounter, beginning to display a more relaxed demeanour and sharing insider and personal information halfway through an interview.

The nature and dynamics of each interview were highly relational and context dependent. While some diplomats deemed my opening questions unimportant, offering nothing more than a brief, two-minute summary of their CV, others did not mind walking me through their life history for hours, sharing anecdotes, thoughts, and memories. In many cases, the free-flowing and personal dynamics of conversations created moments of "connectedness" that were shielded from societal markers of power, such as titles, formal codes of conduct, and roles. In these instances, the researcher managed to meet "the person" behind "the spokesperson",[24] which positively impacted on the quality of information shared, the likelihood of being introduced to further respondents, and the chance of being offered a follow-up interview.

Overall, I visited eleven capitals during nine months of fieldwork (see Figure 5), interviewing 48 current and former diplomats; 33 interviews were conducted with 24 Yemeni diplomats, nine interviews were conducted with eight Egyptian diplomats, and 11 interviews were conducted with eight Tunisian diplomats. Overall, 10 diplomats were met repeatedly, in some cases up to four times. In addition, I stayed in touch with diplomats via Email and WhatsApp, posing follow-up questions and asking for clarification and comments throughout this research project.

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[24] The "spokesperson problem" has been described by Watson (2011), who argues that "people in organizations […] making verbal statements (written or oral) rarely do so without some consideration of their personal or group interests or preferences" (p.210).

While this project placed trust-based conversations and interactions with diplomats at the core of its inductive and bottom-up data collection process, it also paid close attention to the "microgeographies" (Elwood & Martin, 2004, p.653) of interview settings, including the interviewees' interaction with physical attributes, other people, and the interviewer. Meeting diplomats in places of their own choosing improved the researcher's understanding of their spatial positioning and the multitude of localities in which the Yemeni diplomatic network is enacted and materializes. As Elwood and Martin (2004) put it,

> "not only is it useful to observe the microgeographies of a single interview as an opportunity to learn more about a particular participant or place, but analysis of the microgeographies of a number of interviews can also offer important opportunities to learn about the social geographies of a community" (p.653).

The exploration of ethnographic locales offered insight into the (material) spatiality of the Yemeni diplomatic service. For example, I bumped into the Saudi ambassador at the end of a multi-hour interview in the bar of a high-end Ritz Carlton hotel, which suggests that the hotel might be a diplomatic "hang out spot". Likewise, it was only by visiting an embassy that I discovered its central heating system was broken for several weeks on end. Similarly, a toothbrush in an embassy bathroom, the emptiness of an embassy building, and a glance at standard embassy decoration shed light on the material set up of Yemen's diplomatic service. At times I was left with the vague impression that the few Yemeni objects and people in each embassy could not fill and did not quite fit antique architectural structures of grandeur.

Participant observation was particularly rich outside the interview setting. In one capital, I was invited to join a gala concert organized by and for the local diplomatic community. I also attended meetings of the APPG Yemen in Westminster, which were frequented by Yemeni diplomats who actively participated in discussion. Likewise, I met diplomats at workshops and conferences, which confirms the aforementioned overlap between academia and diplomacy. These moments provided a "first-hand encounters with the actors in their own settings, in the midst of doing whatever it is that they do every day, with whatever is required to do it" (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow, 2009, p.1315).

II.2. Acquiring archival and online data

To historically embed the Yemeni case study, fieldwork included six weeks of archival research conducted in the National Archives in London (NA) and the "Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes" (PAAA) in Berlin. Yemeni archives could not be consulted, as fieldwork took place in the midst of Yemen's internationalized civil war, making travel to Sanaa impossible.

Given the British colonial past in South Yemen, the diplomatic material produced by colonial officers constitutes a rich resource, containing detailed information about the Yemeni social and political system during and after colonization. Likewise, documents produced by the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG's) embassy in Taiz and later Sanaa offered invaluable insights. The Federal Republic was among the first "Western" countries to be diplomatically represented inside Yemen and was the only one, alongside Italy, to have diplomats in Yemen throughout the civil war period in the 1960s. While the Federal Republic supported a range of development projects in Yemen, it had few tangible interests in the country, aside from preventing Yemen's recognition of the German Democratic Republic. The reports of FRG diplomats are rich in observations of the minutiae of daily politics: government initiatives, behind the scenes manoeuvring, and evaluations of the developing state bureaucracy (Rogers, 2018).

In reading and interpreting archival information I was critically aware of the unequal power relations and the context of coloniality within which diplomatic papers were produced. I found that many British and German documents contained a tone of superiority, which went hand in hand with the exoticization of Yemeni culture, society, and politics. For example, a German diplomat praised the "oriental generosity" and "Arab brotherliness" he witnessed in Yemen (PAAA B12 1067, 22 April 1956). Likewise, a German ambassador who travelled the country in the 1950s seemed fascinated by the "pictorially wild warriors in their colourful and varying garbs" (PAAA B11 347, 22 August 1953). To add Yemeni voices to such outside perspectives, I made an effort to include Yemeni memoirs, interviews, and official documents in my historical chapters. Among other things, this involved the use of an improvised

"Facebook archive" which contains historical pictures of state events, figures, and institutions uploaded by Yemenis.

Archival material was complemented by online research, which involved the browsing of foreign ministries' websites, relevant Yemeni newspaper articles, and research reports. It also included ministries' and embassies' official social media accounts. Concerns regarding constructed "online personas" (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011), inconsistent expressions of attitudes (Gladwell, 2010), and lacking subtlety on social media were all taken into account during the collection and analysis of online data.

To sum up, I conducted semi-structured narrative interviews and engaged in sporadic participant observation within the diverse microgeographies of interview settings. During fieldwork, I also spent six weeks reading countless British, German, but also Yemeni diplomatic papers stored in the National Archives in London and the "Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes" in Berlin. Last but not least, I conducted substantive online research, reviewing relevant news sources, embassy and foreign ministry websites, as well as diplomats' social media accounts. I thereby gained access to Yemeni sources that was difficult to secure offline given the context of war.

III Positionality in the research of diplomats: a reflection of elites and gender

This project considers all knowledge to be situated (England, 1994). It therefore deems it crucial to identify subjective and normative choices involved in fieldwork (Knafo, 2016). This call for reflexivity notably involves the discussion of positionality, i.e. the process of taking oneself, as a researcher, into account (Knafo, 2016). Although reflexivity and discussions of positionality have become a "received wisdom" in qualitative research (Kobayashi, 2003, p.346), they have been criticized for being practically unfeasible (Knafo, 2016) and potentially out-worn (Kobayashi 2003). In particular, critics have argued that absolute knowledge and understanding of one's own positionality is unattainable. After all, "there is no clear landscape of social positions to be charted by an all-seeing analyst" (Rose, 1997, p.316). While reflexivity might never be fully achieved, it has been a guiding aspiration in the conduct of this project, which acknowledges the relational and political nature of knowledge production.

Following the epistemic approach of feminist and critical geographers, as well as post-colonial theorists (Falconer Al-Hindi & Kawabata, 2002; Moss, 2002; Bondi, 2003; Mukherjee, 2017), I reflected on power relations and my own positionality during fieldwork. This involved recording analytical thoughts regarding my learning process, for example by writing down changing first impressions and assumptions. I recognized that ethnographic encounters were infused by multiple relations of power (Naples, 2011) and that I constantly "self-situated" myself as a result (Haraway, 1988; Neuman & Neuman, 2015). The contingency of power and relational positionalities involved in this study is outlined in the following sections. The first part critically reflects on "elite research", arguing that the power relations involved in this project cannot be narrowed to a rigid bottom-up, or top-down affair. The second part describes "diplomatic culture" and gender as specific challenges to the building of rapport.

III.1. Understanding Yemeni diplomatic practice: a case of elite research?

In preparation of my fieldwork, I reviewed existing literature on "elite research" (e.g. Harvey, 2010; Delaney, 2007; Lilleker, 2003; Ostrander, 1993; Odendahl & Shaw, 2002; Thomas, 1993). As mentioned above, I perceived the Yemeni diplomatic service as an exclusive elite network, marked by material luxury and power. Yet, in the course of my investigation, I encountered a degree of heterogeneity that made me question the usefulness of the "elite" label in qualitative research.

Existing definitions of elite actors tend to be rather broad, describing "the elite" as "a relatively small group within the societal hierarchy that claims and/or is accorded power, prestige, or command over others" (Abbink & Salverda, 2012, p.1). Elite status thereby becomes applicable to a great variety of actors, ranging from tribal elders and small-town mayors to CEOs of multi-national corporations. In light of such variety, a number of scholars concluded that "elite" was a highly contextual and relative concept (Harvey, 2010). Nevertheless, the idea prevailed that elite research methods constitute a collective that is somehow different from other qualitative research tools (Delaney, 2007). As Desmond (2004) explained,

> "with elite interviewees the relationship is inevitably asymmetrical regardless of the research strategies deployed. The researcher is dependent on the

cooperation of a relatively small number of people with specialized knowledge" (p.265).

To successfully study *up*, vertical effects of power must be skilfully negotiated (Rice, 2010). Initially developed by Nader (1972), the notion of "studying up" encourages research of "the colonizer rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless – in order to understand social processes that produce both" (p.289).

The Yemeni diplomatic corps is itself heterogeneous and seemed to differ from other foreign services. This problematizes the use of distinct "elite research methods", developed around the dualism of bounded "elite" and "non-elite" categories. In some instances, my whiteness, German nationality, and "elite university"-background placed me on par with, if not in a comparatively more privileged position than Yemeni diplomats. This was especially true in the case of mid-ranking diplomatic actors from modest family backgrounds, who struggled financially and, in many ways, suffered from the war in Yemen. In light of such complexity, the de-contextualized and generalized use of the "elite" label and common methodological denominators in "elite research", is problematic, if not misleading.

Instead, a more particularistic, relational, and personal approach is put forth in this study. Placing the individual respondent at its heart, this strategy accounts for the unique combination of each person's character traits, personal history, interests, social networks, and professional rank, to name just a few examples. Intrinsic factors, such as interviewees' personal inclination, motivation, thoughts, feelings, sympathies, and curiosity are of central importance in navigating power relations and developing successful access strategies. Of course, it can be argued that a highly successful and busy "elite" actor might be less motivated to spend his or her precious free time on an interview. However, as suggested in this study, time is only one of many factors determining respondents' motivation to meet and open up to the researcher. Others include, for example, social relations with the person "introducing" the researcher, interest in his or her project, or sympathies triggered by a shared university background.

Questioning the usefulness of the "elite label" does not mean that power asymmetries did not exist and posed a challenge in the context of this study. In many instances, diplomats' superior position was expressed and fortified through institutional barriers, as mentioned above. At times, perceived asymmetries were amplified by the exclusivity of research locales. Not being used to glittering lobbies of 5-star hotels, these luxurious environments had an intimating effect on me. While I did not try to show it, "elite material spaces" might have impacted my behaviour as a researcher. Likewise, in one interview, an affluent retired ambassador literally dictated his answers to my questions, always checking that I copied his responses correctly. In this case, I felt that relations were indeed hierarchical, resembling traditional professor-student dynamics. While experiences like these confirm the commonly presumed power asymmetries involved in "elite research", they cannot be generalized and applied to all Yemeni diplomats, let alone "elite actors". Less affluent, mid-ranked, and younger respondents often behaved in less status-conscious ways, which led to more egalitarian interview dynamics and positionalities.

In addition to individual factors such as age or diplomatic rank, the existence of shared contacts frequently impacted power relations, often acting as an "equalizing force". Diplomats who were asked by close acquaintances to meet me, seemed to extend their friendship and concomitant trust to our first encounter. Additionally, shared educational backgrounds helped flatten out hierarchies. Some diplomats emphasized their own experience of doing a PhD, for instance, and expressed their sympathy for academic research and my project. Especially those who showed appreciation for academia ascribed prestige to the University of Cambridge, which I was affiliated with. The positionalities of the researcher and interviewees could switch and change multiple times in the course of a single interview. While the initial small talk was commonly based on shared interests and academic backgrounds, interviewees could emphasize their high diplomatic rank and professional expertise in later conversation, or make remarks that created gendered power asymmetries – a point that will be further discussed in the following section.

The situational character of power relations became particularly visible in diplomats' discussion of their temporary war-related struggles. It was in these fleeting moments that I found myself in a relatively more privileged position. Diplomats' financial

struggles, their separation from family members in Yemen, and the difficulties they faced in providing for their family challenged prevalent assumptions of fixed, "elite"-based hierarchies. Instead, they highlighted broader global power structures, in which international economic hegemonies and colonial histories determined the relative privilege of certain nationalities. Yemeni diplomats' hope for asylum in the UK or Germany, for instance, accentuated the benefits attached to my own nationality as a German, leaving me with the vague feeling of being "lucky", comparatively "better off", and possibly even in a perceived position of power. Several Yemeni diplomats assumed that I would commence a career in diplomacy following my PhD, possibly perceiving me as a "useful" (future) contact. In another example, my nationality and its placement in broader global power relations subtly emerged in conversation with a Tunisian diplomat, who expressed his gratitude for the economic support Tunisia had received by the German government after 2011. Knowing I was from Germany, he complimented the German government, economy, and people on multiple occasions, which made me feel uncomfortable. Not only did I disagree with many of his generalizations, I also felt I was given "power by proxy" creating interview dynamics I deemed unjustified. My relations with Yemeni and other Middle Eastern diplomats cut across broad geopolitical north-south divides crudely associated with unequal privileges, such as material wealth, human security, or global mobility, to name just a few examples. As shown above, these global inequalities could momentarily resurface in interview settings, placing me in a position of relative power.

My research experience suggests that power relations cannot simply be viewed as a rigid bottom-up, or top-down affair. Over-emphasis of material and societal markers of participants' alleged "elite status" clouds the complexity and fluidity of relations involved in the conduct of qualitative research. Following Mountz (2002), this study argues that researcher and participants are defined in relation to each other, as well as in relation to wider political, institutional, and spatial dynamics. This necessitates "restless contemplation of reflexivity and of the ways in which people are inside and outside of various hierarchies" (p.193).

III.2. Gender, the building of rapport, and 'diplomatic culture'

I was nervous when entering my very first meeting with a high-ranking diplomat. Intimidated by the respondent's title, I formally introduced myself by reciting a memorized text and rushed through a printed list of prepared questions. I sensed that my counterpart was tense and guarded and that the meeting stayed overly "official", which made it difficult to solve the "spokesperson problem" described above. I therefore decided to emphasize the building of rapport and adopted a more personal and relaxed approach in conducting later interviews. In doing so, I navigated challenges related to 'diplomatic culture' and gender.

In the beginning of fieldwork, I was unsure how to treat and address diplomats who seemed to have a distinct "professional culture". In formulating my emails to former prime ministers, ambassadors, and diplomats of different ranks, I relied heavily on Google, specifically Robert Hickey's "guide to names, titles, and forms of address" (see Figure 6 below). Although I travelled across multiple countries, I felt I entered a single new terrain and was disoriented at the beginning of fieldwork. In that respect my experience resembled that of other ethnographers who explored "cultures" within their immediate living and/or work environments (Nathan, 2006).

While I tried to learn "the rules of the game," I was left with the impression that Yemeni diplomats as well did not know, or care, about diplomatic etiquette. In my first email to a former Yemeni ambassador, who held a doctorate degree, I decided to address him as "Dr". In his response, the interviewee signed his email with "Dr. Ambassador" followed by his first name – a choice that seemed unorthodox to me. Since diplomatic titles and demeanours were rather formal, I felt that they created a distance that complicated the building of rapport and the conduct of interviews. I therefore decided to circumvent them by displaying a more "natural" and "informal" demeanour. I hoped to thereby meet interviewees on an inter-personal, human-to-human level, and to create an environment in which they felt comfortable opening up. In subsequent meetings, I thus approached ambassadors and other respondents with a huge smile, a relaxed, warm, and open attitude, and a strong handshake.

Figure 6: Website "Honor and Respect"
A website offering advice on how to address retired and current diplomats of different ranks.[25]

In my attempt to build rapport and trust, I usually began my interviews with small talk, speaking about the office space, my journey, the weather, or other readily available topics. I then introduced myself and my research, usually mentioning the fact that I had previously lived in or visited Yemen (Tunisia or Egypt), which often triggered smiles, questions, and led to further small talk. My goal was to create moments of "connectedness", a momentary space that was shielded, as much as possible, from forced formalities, such as titles, stiff codes of conduct, and professional roles. Throughout the interview, I stayed aware of my own body language, trying to display

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[25] [untitled screenshot of Robert Hickey's website "Honor and Respect" taken by the author in November 2017]. Retrieved November 2018 from http://www.formsofaddress.info/FOA_ambassador_f.html.

a relaxed, open, and confident posture. In general, I confirmed interviewees' opinions and statements verbally or through body language, such as heavy nodding. I wanted diplomats to feel heard and understood and I wanted to give the impression that I was someone "to be talked to". I also tried to answer questions about myself very truthfully to appear authentic and trustworthy.

My pursuit to establish personal and "intimate" interview settings was at times facilitated, and at other times complicated by my gender. Most of the interviewees I met were male, the implications of which I had not fully thought through prior to fieldwork. Occasionally, I assume being a woman was associated with being kind, emotional and understanding, which made me less of a threat. This facilitated access and might have encouraged male respondents to disclose personal information, an interpretation I share with other female researchers who conducted ethnographic work in male dominated settings (e.g. Gurney, 1985; Williams & Heikes, 1993; Easterday et al, 1977). Furthermore, I have also reason to believe that my femaleness and outward appearance, in combination with the charm I consciously tried to apply, motivated diplomats to meet me a second time and to willingly share personal anecdotes in an effort to both help and impress me. While this proved useful, it appeared that diplomats occasionally exaggerated their own role and power – a possibility I considered in evaluating and interpreting my data.

In some instances, I felt I was sexualized by respondents, who seemed to perceive me first and foremost as a woman, not a professional researcher. Throughout fieldwork, I encountered moments of "sexual hustling", involving "behaviour such as sexual flirtations, sexually suggestive remarks, and overt sexual propositioning" (Gurney, 1985, p.75). I felt uncomfortable walking into an embassy office and being greeted with "wow, this is really not what I expected. I expected someone old and grey, but you are really beautiful. Really beautiful". Likewise, I got annoyed when a retired ambassador, sitting next to me in a hotel lobby, "casually" placed his hand on my leg. To cultivate goodwill, I swallowed my anger and tried to navigate my way out of sexualized moments of discomfort. I laughed comments off as jokes, switched subjects, moved my leg in trying to reach my phone, and emphasized my role as a researcher, for example by asking a diplomacy-related question in a serious tone. I later found out, that other female researchers responded similarly to moments of

"sexual hustling" (Gurney, 1985). For example, Pante (2014) wrote that she and her female research colleague "inadvertently prioritized our status as researchers. We went along with the [sexist] jokes, laughed, and built rapport with important personalities in the community" (p.78).

Throughout fieldwork, I constantly straddled the very fine line between "being charming and personal enough" for respondents to like and trust me, without letting charm and "intimacy" take over the professional intention of my meetings and messages. As other researchers have pointed out, the building of rapport and the avoidance of sexist hustling can pose a dilemma: "Being close to respondents may give access to their candid thoughts and personal narratives which are important sources of data but our closeness made me vulnerable to sexual advances" (Pante, 2014, p.78).

Following my first experience of "sexual hustling", I began worrying about giving off the wrong impression by being too open, too friendly, or by meeting diplomats "at the wrong time and place". For example, I was concerned that after-work meetings in hotel bars, might be misinterpreted, and tried to arrange lunch meetings instead. If daytime interviews were not possible, I reinforced and clarified boundaries by adopting a more "distant" tone and behaviour and by emphasising my professional interest in "interviews" rather than "meetings". While I wanted to lift boundaries enough to gain access to personal information and "insider knowledge", I did not want to eliminate boundaries altogether.

The outcome of such "boundary work" was highly relational and contextual. In some cases, interviewees seemed unwilling to let go of their "officiality" and I could not get through existing "barriers of professionalism". In most cases, however, I think I managed to meet "the person" behind "the spokesperson". Where rapport could successfully be established, it positively impacted the quality of information shared with me, the likelihood of being introduced to further respondents, and the chance of follow-up interviews. The degree of openness displayed by research participants and the occurrence of "sexual hustling" was not solely dependent on my own research strategies but again relational. For example, one former ambassador explained, his connection to powerful individuals and personal wealth made him feel "protected" and

willing to be very frank. He did not care whether or not I recorded our conversation and freely shared very personal anecdotes and insights.

IV Ethical research in the field of diplomacy

Throughout this project I strove to conduct ethical, transparent, and respectful research. In order to gain informed consent, I described my research aims and scope to respondents and discussed their rights and potential questions at the beginning and/or end of each interview. I also clarified and upheld my role as a researcher and treated participant data confidentially. Importantly, I made every effort to ensure participants' anonymity. At times, this required the omittance of information or the explicit permission from diplomats to use data that might allow the informed reader to guess their identity. At a time of conflict and heightened suspicion, when diplomats' expressions in public could lead to their removal from office, ensuring anonymity was crucial.

A further ethical concern revolved around the use of Internet data, specifically the blurred and contentious lines dividing public from private domains. In line with "best practice" (Townsend & Wallace, 2016), I considered diplomats' Twitter accounts to be public, while treating their Facebook sites as private sources (British Psychological Society, 2013). While no "closed" Facebook groups were accessed, some information could only be obtained through "Facebook friendships". I typically sent friend requests after my first interviews, which means that diplomats knew about my research role and could choose to ignore my online invitations. All information obtained through social media sites was anonymized. Where anonymization was difficult, information was only included if explicit permission was given by respondents via email or WhatsApp.

Yemen's internationalized conflict also raises ethical points regarding this project's inclusiveness and balance. At the time this research was conducted, two self-proclaimed governments fought for recognition and territorial control in Yemen. As such, two foreign ministries existed: the foreign ministry of the exiled government in Riyadh, led by president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, and the foreign ministry in Sanaa, which was run by members of the Houthi movement. Importantly, Yemeni embassies were paid by, and officially affiliated with, the Hadi government. Given the

researcher's lacking access to Sanaa, self-declared "Houthi voices" have remained absent from this project, which must be kept in mind when reading its research findings.

Questions of inclusiveness also concern the voice of Yemenis in general, irrespective of their political affiliations. Pointing to academia's entanglement in the maintenance of unequal power relations, postcolonial theorists have long warned against "pro-Western" bias and lacking epistemic openness (Elie, 2012, p.1217). In calling for the "democratization" of global knowledge production, they advocate the inclusion of unmediated "non-Western" views (Sharp, 2008; Spivak, 1994). Bonnefoy (2019) emphasizes that the context of war further excluded Yemeni voices from the international social science community, which amplifies the responsibility of foreign social scientists to involve them in the production of knowledge. Critically aware of the power-knowledge nexus, which has been famously theorized with reference to the Middle East by Edward Said (1978), this project placed great emphasis on including a plurality of Yemeni primary sources, both written and oral. Its empirical analysis contains a large number of quotes, which allows Yemeni diplomats to speak and offers rich and unmediated insight into the complex and multi-layered world of Yemeni diplomacy.

One final ethical remark regards this project's negative environmental impact. I felt guilty for the number of airmiles and the irresponsibly high carbon footprint of my research design. While I tried to rely on eco-friendly transportation within Europe, especially trains, these were often more expensive. Given my limited fieldwork funds, I was required to make trade-offs between my carbon footprint, on the one hand, and the perceived quality of my research, on the other. So far, environmental costs in academic conduct are mostly raised by universities with regard to commutes. In a rare intervention, Phillips and Johns (2012) published an introductory textbook chapter on fieldwork, advising students on how to assess their carbon footprint. Going beyond the issue of flying, they ask "where is the nearest place to study the phenomenon that you are interested in?" (p.19). Given the seemingly rising number of global ethnographies (e.g. Falzon, 2009), environmental costs are a point of great relevance that has, as of yet, received limited attention.

3 The Pedagogy of State-Building: Learning the Yemeni State

Since the Yemeni state constitutes a frequent reference in this study's analysis of diplomats and diplomatic practice, its historical emergence is outlined in the following. Instead of offering a static "snapshot definition", this chapter suggests that the meaning of Yemeni statehood can only be grasped against the backdrop of historical-institutional developments. "Since no social realities are natural, they are the results of political and social processes that are rooted in history" (Pouliot, 2010, p.63). Understanding Yemeni statehood thus resides in the fluid encounter between institutions and agents over time, between "history objectified in things" and "history incarnate in bodies" (Bourdieu, 1981, p.313).

In historically defining "the Yemeni state" this chapter adopts a pedagogical lens: it conceptualizes state-development as a translocal practice of learning that involves people, materials, and shifting environments. This approach captures the multiplicity of state-building in Yemen, which never followed a superimposed and externally enforced blueprint. Instead, ideas regarding the Yemeni state and their implementation have been driven by personhood, shifting relational alignments of Yemeni (and other) individuals, and international and domestic material environments. This perspective acknowledges the importance of individual backgrounds, interests, values, and aspirations, emphasising "the unceasing work of human creators" as well as "the unstable and hybrid character of their creation" (Asad, 1993, p.2). The state is continuously (re-)learned by people, "often for very different reasons, from coping mechanisms and personal advancement to policy-making and questions of contestation and justice" (McFarlane, 2011, p.8).[26]

Learning is very broadly understood here as a name for specific socio-material practices through which knowledge about the state is created, contested and

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[26] While McFarlane (2011) discusses the learning of cities, his work is also useful in outlining Yemeni state-learning.

changed. [27] In exploring the historical process of learning the Yemeni state, the remaining part of this chapter focuses on the complex translation of globally circulating "state models", their partial application by Yemeni state actors, and the creation of new and hybrid forms of Yemeni statehood. To better conceptualize "state models", it deploys Hansen and Stepputat's (2001) linguistic of "languages of stateness". Each of these languages describes a certain "register of governance and authority" (p.6), capturing specific ways of viewing, experiencing, and expressing the state. From this perspective, every state emerges as

> "a historically specific configuration of a range of languages of stateness, some practical, others symbolic and performative, that have been disseminated, translated, interpreted, and combined in widely different ways and sequences across the globe" (p.6/7)

The practice of (re-)learning languages of stateness involves their translation, which according to McFarlane (2011) centres around particularistic and comparative processes of distributing and mediating knowledge. By conceptualizing how knowledge is facilitated, distorted, contested, or radically re-packaged over time and space (McFarlane, 2011), the practice of translation resembles "hybridity approaches" prevalent in the field of postcolonial state theory (Chatterjee, 1993; Asad, 1993, Hansen and Stepputat, 2001; Sharp, 2008). It emphasizes the materiality, relations, and spaces through which ideas disperse in a non-linear fashion. The study of translation thereby challenges existing diffusion models, which link travelling knowledge to an authoritative knowledge-transmitting centre, usually "the West".

By portraying Yemeni state building as a practice of learning and translation, this study emphasizes human agency. As will be shown in the following analysis, high-ranking Yemeni politicians appear to have learned the state in part by translating knowledge through mediated and dispersed models. They selectively drew on and combined state attributes already available. While such intermediation implies the existence of a "source", the following analysis does not try to trace alleged "roots" of variously implemented state ideas and images in Yemen. Instead, it limits itself to outlining

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[27] This definition borrows heavily from McFarlane (2011), who understands learning as "processes, practices and interactions through which knowledge [about the state] is created, contested and transformed, and for how perception emerges and changes" (p.3).

existing *narratives* of ideational origins and "state models". As argued in this chapter, the Yemeni state has emerged as a unique and ever-forming hybrid. Such hybridity is not seen as the failed attempt of mimicking others, but as the result of translating (globally dominant) "languages of stateness".

Notably, this chapter recognizes that human agency is materially mediated. Given the historical dependence of Yemeni state makers on external aid and loans, it is not far-fetched to assume that state institutions were at times designed so as to match the preferences of major donors. In these instances, the advantage of adopting globally dominant languages of stateness lied in the securement of ongoing external support. Speaking the same language than powerful and potentially threatening states also carried more indirect advantages, such as facilitated diplomatic communication. For instance, the Yemeni Imam Yahya Hamid al-Deen decided to refer to himself as "king" in the early 20th-century, a time when European dominance was spreading in the Middle East. He presumably deemed it beneficial to choose a form of self-representation that was readily understood by European and other Middle Eastern representatives. At the time, Egypt, Iraq, and other states in the region became headed by "kings", a change in title that can, at least in part, be understood as the emulation of European monarchies. Aware of these power-knowledge dynamics, the following analysis of Yemeni state configurations is informed by postcolonial theory.

Unequal global power relations shape the learning and translation of "languages of stateness". As Hansen and Stepputat (2001) point out, not all "languages of stateness" are equally influential. Their varying global authority is tied to material and political constellations, in which "Western registers" rank particularly highly (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001, p.6). As mentioned above, it appears that state-makers in Yemen, and elsewhere in the Middle East, increasingly viewed the European nation-state as a proto-type of successful political organization, which they aimed at emulating – at least in part.

While "influential" state languages were applied relatively literally within the "material realm" of Yemen's institutional structure, they were translated more freely within the

domain of social relations, views, and practice.[28] Early "ministries", for example, did not initially operate from within public buildings, but gradually developed around key figures, tasks, and social relations. While ministry buildings and complex organizational structures were added over time, often mirroring existing ministerial models elsewhere, underlying social norms and practices continued emphasizing the importance of network-based resources and personalized "neo-patrimonial" decision-making.

By studying the actors and practices involved in Yemen's state building, the following analysis responds to a recent strand in IR literature that emphasizes processes of international socialization. Zarakol (2010), for instance, depicts the international system as a stigmatizing arena, in which feelings of inferiority explain collective elite efforts to adapt to "Western" norms. She observes that state leaders frequently internalize "the idea of linear progress and the idea that European material advancement was somehow connected to European culture and lifestyle" (p.55). Their consequent effort "to catch up" is specified in Mitchell's (1988) analysis of nineteenth-century Egypt, where processes of (self-) colonization occurred "through the internalization of scientific genres of knowledge, modern methods of administration and surveillance, and styles of cultural self-objectification through European registers" (Hansen and Stepputat, 2011, p.13).

The remainder of this chapter outlines the historical development of Yemeni state ideas and their institutional manifestation. Its analysis combines secondary sources with original documents, such as the Yemeni Constitution, and archival material from the British National Archives (NA) and the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany (PAAA). Although the German Federal Republic has been a significant source of development assistance for the North Yemeni state, and the only Western country with uninterrupted diplomatic representation there, Rogers (2018) finds that the West German papers have been under-utilised in the study of the Yemen Arab Republic. The use of commentary and analysis by West German diplomats does not compensate for lacking access to Yemeni archives. Yet, it enriches this historical

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[28] With reference to Chatterjee (1993), this study draws a conceptual distinction between outwardly visible material form and less tangible social practices, ideational developments, and personal biographies.

outline with unique empirical details that offer insight into diplomatic interpretations of Yemeni state-learning.

Given this study's interest in the Yemeni diplomatic service, the following historical outline pays particular attention to central government institutions, first and foremost state ministries but also legislative bodies. This means leaving out other aspects involved in the learning of the Yemeni state, such as military institutions, the geographic reach and effectiveness of the judiciary, and government-tribe relations, for example. In examining the formation and expression of state ideas, this chapter does not aim at covering the full intellectual history of Yemeni "statehood" but proceeds in a genealogical manner that emphasizes outwardly striking ruptures in Yemeni politics. Examining how seeming political turning points have impacted state-related meanings and practices, it finds that the fluid expression of state ideas has been accompanied by surprising endurance. As such, the history of the Yemeni state emerges not so much as a series of drastic ruptures, but as a story of simultaneous change *and* continuity. Drawing inspiration from Bourdieu, it is argued that besides outwardly striking and widely studied events, such as rebellions, conspiracies, and insurrections; "what is [also] staggering and amazing is the opposite: the fact that order is so frequently observed" (Bourdieu cited in Riley, 2015, p.265). While history is often thought of as a series of change and rupture, this chapter indicates that it is equally marked by continuity, with a variety of state practices and institutions finding ways to endure. From this perspective, "Each 'new' combination of [state] elements and practices is in some sense an emergent outcome of those that went before" (Shove *et al*, 2012, p.125). The following sketch of developing state ministries in Yemen is divided into three main parts, first discussing historical events in Northern Yemen, then Southern Yemen, and lastly the unified Republic of Yemen.

I Learning the Yemeni state in the north

Recent writing on Yemen's history traces the early beginning of "statehood" back to the kingdoms of Saba and Himyar, "two major states" (Dresch, 2000, p.5) that ruled over much of South Arabia in pre-Islamic times. An alternative, and more common historical narrative treats the ninth century as a starting point of "the state" in Yemen,

pointing to the emergence of an "Imamic state administration" (Vom Bruck, 2005, p.3) that lasted for roughly ten centuries. Until 1962, a succession of Zaydi Imams, "drawn from the descendants of the Prophet" (Dresch, 2000, p.11), ruled over Yemen's northern territories (Madelung, 1992; Vom Bruck, 2005).[29] It was not until the mid-19th century, following the British takeover of Aden's port in 1839 and the Ottoman occupation of Yemen's northern highlands in 1872, that Yemenis were said to have experienced a shift in predominant notions of authority, order, and space (Messick, 1993).[30] In the north, reforms such as the codification of sharia and the introduction of Lancaster method schools[31] have been portrayed as "Western" influences, that were mediated "through Ottoman-introduced institutions or filtered northward along the trade routes from colonial Aden" (Messick, 1993, p.9).[32]

Following the departure of Turkish forces from northern Yemen in 1918, the acting Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamid al-Din (1904-1948) gained back full political control. In an effort to maintain sovereignty and power, he was said to have chosen a "path of isolation" (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.7). Yet, it is a misconception to think that the Imam's governance or the lacking interest of imperial powers resulted in the complete isolation of Yemen (Bonnefoy, 2018).

Following independence, Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din continued many of the reform processes once started by the Ottoman occupiers. In fact, the Yemeni state was said to have in many ways been learned from the Ottomans, at least into the 1920s: Ottoman reforms shaped the top levels of regional administration and the Imam adopted the model of a professional military (*jaysh al-nidhami*) from the Ottomans, to name just some examples (Rogers, 2018). Later, the Imam allegedly modelled Yemen

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[29] "The religious and political legitimacy of the imamate was grounded in Zaydism, a branch of Shia Islam specific to Yemen" (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.2).

[30] "Save for the Ottoman Empire's twice-held grip on the country in the sixteenth and then the nineteenth century, primarily remote in nature and in many ways less devastating than occupation by Western European powers, the north never experienced the traumas of colonisation" (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.20).

[31] The schools were adapted from instructional methods developed by Joseph Lancaster in the 19th-century. Offering a precise guide for schools' physical layout and instruction, the Lancaster design was described as "widely influential" (Messick, 1993, p. 102). "Model schools were established in France, Germany, the United States, and a number of colonial settings" (Messick, 1993, p. 102)

[32] Until 1961, when the port of Hodeida was expanded, eighty percent of North Yemen's trade passed through Aden Port. While petroleum was the most important traded good, other items included food, tobacco, raw materials, as well as some machinery and manufactured goods (Halliday, 1974).

more explicitly after European nation-states. In doing so, he was never coerced by "Western" colonialists, but supposedly driven by a more subtle strife for imitation. As Dresch (2000) observed, the "Yemeni state" became increasingly understood "in its relation with the world beyond", which made "emulation, both within and between states […] a prime concern" (p.267). The Ottoman-introduced printing press in Yemen, and the increasing consumption of foreign newspapers, literature, and later also radio and television, impacted Yemenis' self-awareness and the number of circulating "languages of stateness". These trends were exacerbated by the Middle East's reorganization into multiple nation-states following the end of World War I. By imposing their own "language of stateness", European colonizers restructured "the Orient" according to "European taxonomies", thereby reinforcing their recently gained control of the region (Sharp, 2008, p.18). Presumably hoping to facilitate his communication with European rulers, the Yemeni Imam translated his title into "king" in 1926. At the same time, he insisted on continuously representing himself "first and foremost as the *amir al-mu'minin* (leader of the faithful)" (Vom Bruck, 2005, p.48). This example points to the comparative, dispersed, and multiple nature of translating "languages of stateness" and to the unique hybrids born in the process.

With regards to domestic government institutions, a first "mimicking step" was taken by the Imam in 1931, when a Cabinet with appointed ministers was put in place, including ministers for war, foreign affairs, justice, finance, agriculture, communications, and education (Peterson, 1982).[33] Notably, the initial delegation of ministerial functions was not accompanied by the construction of imposing *public* buildings. As Peterson (1982) observed, "these ministries never involved more bureaucracy than the 'minister' and a clerk or two, with the premises of the 'ministry' simply being the incumbent's home" (p.52). Thus, no distinction was made between a visible exterior of institutions and a less visible "inner structure" (Mitchell, 1991, p.59).[34]

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[33] In 1937, the Ottoman advisor Qadi Raghib Bey suggested the establishment of an additional health ministry to manage the country's three clinics and the procurement of medical supplies (Peterson, 1982).

[34] In the writings of Ibn Khaldoun and other Arab historians, official activities are never indicated by reference to or in terms of an imposing building. Urban life was understood by function not by buildings (Mitchell, 1991).

It was only during the reign of Yahya's son Imam Ahmad (1948-1962) that the material outer form of the Yemeni state was further developed. Imam Ahmad's state-building efforts allegedly drew on external funds and involved the translation of various "languages of stateness" that were mediated by European as well as Egyptian consultants. As early as 1959, Egyptian experts advised the Imam on agricultural issues, the development of the Yemeni police and security apparatus, as well as the health and education sector, to name just a few examples (PAAA, B12 1059a, 29 June 1959).

While the outer form of state institutions changed and developed, political decision-making remained personalized. Hence, the effectiveness of early ministries continued to depend on the motivation and pro-activeness of their respective ministers (Peterson, 1982). Further undermining the power of ministries was the fact that many of the ministerial and assisting civil servant roles were nominal in nature (PAAA, B12 1058a, 8 September 1955): they were handed out and existed on paper but did not reflect any actual ministerial portfolio or function. Real political authority remained within the hands of Imam Yahya and later Imam Ahmad (PAAA, B12 1058a, 8 September 1955), who jealously protected all decision-making power and allegedly insisted on micro-managing each ministry. "There is no official who carries even the slightest personal responsibility, let alone would dare to claim any," a Yemen-based diplomat reported in the early 1960s (PAAA, B12 1058, 21 November 1960). It was the Imam, not newly developed institutions, that embodied the Yemeni state. Thus, new "languages of stateness" were not suddenly spoken, i.e. adopted in full, but translated to suit the interests of the (leading) Yemeni state actors. "When a project is translated from one site to another, from one agent to another, versions of power are produced. As with translations of a text, one does not simply get a reproduction of identity" (Asad, 1993, p.13).

While Burrowes (1991) described the late Yemeni Imamate as a "traditional theocratic state" (p.486), his description misses the increasing blend of "state languages" that marked Yemen's development in the first half of the 20th-century. While traditional state registers remained dominant, they began merging with an increasing number of alternative state ideas. As shown below, certain parts of that mix had "greater power to influence the direction of change [than others]" (Sharp, 2008, p.3). In Yemen, it was

especially "Western languages of state" that began to gain traction after the "1962 Revolution", which replaced the Imamate with a "nation-state republic" (Messick, 1993, p.8).

I.1. The 1962 revolution and the rise of the Yemen Arab Republic

On the night of 26 September 1962, a group of lieutenants and officers shelled the Imam's palace in Sanaa, while also capturing military headquarters, the radio station, and other strategic facilities (Peterson, 1982). In the absence of an immediate royalist response, the "Yemen Arab Republic" (YAR) was declared by the next morning. Imam Mohammad al-Badr, who had succeeded his father only one week earlier, fled to Saudi Arabia, where he aimed at reversing Yemen's new political power constellation. In the years that followed, a civil war erupted between royalist and republican forces, who advocated two different "languages of stateness". The conflict involved a broad range of external actors, including the region's two power houses at the time: Saudi Arabia, who supported the Imam and his exiled government in Jeddah,[35] and Egypt, who supported the republican government in Sanaa. While Egyptian state actors allegedly aimed at shaping Northern Yemen in the image of "Arab socialism", Saudi Arabian politicians were described as eager to protect royalist "state registers" in the region.

Both Yemeni royalists and republicans were dependent on the material support of their respective regional patron.[36] Saudi Arabian rulers, for instance, provided the Imam with sufficient funds to continue mobilizing Yemenis in northern and eastern regions (PAAA B36 46,1963), while Egyptians sent up to 70,000 soldiers to support the republican government.

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[35] The royalists established formal governmental structures in Jeddah, containing a "royal council", which was headed by Imam al-Badr as president, and a "transitional cabinet" containing a prime minister, as well as ministers of interior, transport, foreign affairs, defence, information, justice, education, finance, social affairs, the royal palace, health, and economics. It is unclear whether the "exiled royal government" existed only on paper or took on real governmental functions (PAAA, B36 299, 30 April 1967). Presumably, it helped the Imam's effort to maintain, or gain, international recognition, which was essential to securing material support from external powers.
[36] The Imam was not only supported by Saudi Arabia, but also by British agents Israelis, and a few Frenchmen. "Sent by MI6 and the CIA, these foreign combatants were determined not to see a regime inspired by Arab nationalist ideology take hold" (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.25).

While literature on the history of Yemen identifies the 1970s as the true period of state-building,[37] this chapter agrees with the more recent analysis by Rogers (2018), who finds that the basic institutional groundwork of the young Yemeni republic was already developed in the 1960s. Geographically removed from the frontlines of war, important institutional changes had been unfolding in Yemen's urban centres since 1962.[38] Already existing ministries were reformed and expanded at the time, including the ministries of justice, education, health, agriculture, public works, foreign affairs, communications, and industry. Other institutions were created from scratch, such as the ministries of interior, economy, and local administration (Peterson, 1982). New public buildings were set-up for ministries, with Burrowes (1991) observing that following regime-change, "a full panoply of ministries and other state agencies [was erected] almost overnight" (p.486).

Between 1962 and 1967, the process of state building in Yemen was heavily influenced by Egyptian civilian advisors, who had accompanied Egyptian troops to Yemen (Rogers, 2018).[39] Approximately 350 civilian advisors, managers, and teachers worked to improve existing administrative institutions, while also creating a range of new ministries, offices, schools, hospitals, as well as a central bank (Rogers, 2018). Yemeni decision-makers were highly sensitive to Egyptian threats to cut off the supply of paper riyals, which were printed in Egypt, suspend funding, or to freeze Yemen's currency reserves, which had been transferred to Cairo (Al-Aini, 2004). As Rogers (2018) put it, Yemeni officials in the 1960s were "performing stateness for external donors" (p.174).

To operate these new organizations, thousands of Yemeni civil servants were recruited and trained (Rogers, 2018).[40] In July 1963, the Yemeni government created

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[37] See Peterson (1982 and 1984) and Burrowes (1987 and 2010).
[38] Yemen's urban centres included Sanaa, Taiz, and Hodeidah.
[39] Egyptian advisors impacted the drafting of the YAR's Constitution (Rogers, 2018) and influenced day-to-day politics. "Present and influential in all government bodies and public institutions" (cited in Rogers, 2018, p.178), the most important Egyptian advisors sat in the office of the ministers themselves (Rogers, 2018). It was only in 1964, that Yemeni politicians began to increasingly oppose the extent of Egyptian interference. For instance, Yemen's newly established national security council was dissolved that year due to opposition to its inclusion of three Egyptian members (PAAA B36 115, 18 February 1964).
[40] In the mid-1960s ministries in Yemen included the ministry of foreign affairs, education, health, tribal affairs, interior, justice, agriculture, finance, labour, information, and the economy (Rogers, 2018).

an institute of public administration, offering crash courses on administration and a range of other subjects relevant to governance. As the "Yemen News" reported at the time, the institute served "as a means of increasing the officials' efficiency…" (cited in PAAA B36 45, 1963). Teachers at the institute were mostly Egyptian, including Abdul Hafiz Abu Schuhud, who had previously served as Egyptian ambassador to Saudi Arabia (PAAA B36 45, 27 July 1963).[41]

As these examples indicate, ongoing learning processes were closely tied to shifting power relations and involved the translation of new "languages of stateness", mediated by Egyptian and European "advisors". While these developments all point to change, they have been accompanied by important strands of continuity. Existing institutions and institutional practices were built on and further developed rather than abolished and fully replaced by new ones. As was the case during the Imamate, reform was more visible in outward institutional structures than in the realm of social relations and practice, leading scholars such as Peterson (1982) to conclude that "while the institutions have changed [following the 1962 revolution], Yemen still relies on the role and force of dominant personalities at the expense of more enduring and legitimate structural institutions" (p.11-12). German diplomatic sources added that by 1974 the Yemeni state administration remained strained by "nominal civil servants" (PAAA B36 108796, 11 April 1975). Likewise, a UNDP assessment conducted in 1971 pointed to the "duplication of functions" and the "overlapping and conflicts of jurisdiction" both between and within ministries. The report criticized that administration was "personal and individual rather than institutional" (cited in Rogers, 2018, p.175).

The above-mentioned administrative changes were embedded in broader transformations of ordering systems regarding both time and space. For instance, in February 1963, a new time system was introduced, formally integrating the Yemen Arab Republic in global UTC time. Prior to 1963, Northern Yemen had operated on the basis of a solar time system, where the day began with sunrise, at 0:00 o'clock, and ended with sunset, at 12:00 o'clock. This measurement was made possible by Yemen's geographical proximity to the equator, which ensured that the sun rose and

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[41] Years later, teachers were also recruited from other countries, including Germany (PAAA B36 108796, 23 December 1974). In addition, high-ranking Yemeni officials were sent abroad to study administrative practices there (PAAA B36 32768, 1968).

set at approximately the same time throughout the year (PAAA B36 45, 2 February 1963). In addition, territorial space was fundamentally restructured in the early 1960s. A system of governorates, including administrative units of municipalities, was introduced (PAAA B36 45,19 June 1963; Rogers, 2018) and the ministry for communal and village affairs began allocating street names within major Yemeni cities (PAAA B36 45, 27 July 1963).[42] In fact, territory has long constituted a key concern in the learning of the Yemeni state, leading to the geographical expansion of state services, for instance, and infrastructure projects, such as the construction of roads linking the cities of Taiz, Hodeidah, and Sanaa. While the communication of state ideas and the forging of state-related affiliations may be described as fragmented, they were crucial to ongoing efforts at territorially consolidating "the Yemeni state".

Following post-war reconciliation in 1970 and the partial integration of royalists in the republican government, the continuous learning of the state was complicated by considerable "in-house" fighting and the constant re-shuffling of the cabinet in the 1970s. While state institutions remained dependent on dominant personalities, no consensus could be reached regarding the allocation of high-ranking positions. This led to constant and unproductive struggle between competing factions and individuals. Between 1962 and 1978 four presidents succeeded each other, often through violence (Bonnefoy, 2018).

The in-fighting of competing political factions decreased somewhat with Ali Abdullah Saleh's rise to power in July 1978. His ability to remain president for 33 years has been linked to the growing influence of loyal military and security forces[43] and his successful co-option of diverging political forces and tribal elders (Burrows, 1991; PAAA B36 137628, 15 August 1980). The political system he built was described by German diplomats as "not dictatorial" but a "moderate one-man-rule", in which "the president bases his power on the benevolence of the tribes and a powerful security apparatus" (PAAA B36 137776, 8 February 1984, PAAA B36 137777, 1 February

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[42] Names were to serve the memory of alleged martyrs, including Yemenis who had died in the 1962 revolution but also those who gave their lives in previous wars, going all the way back to fighting the Ethiopian occupation in the 6th century AD (PAAA B36 45, 27 July 1963).
[43] The armed forces were reformed, enlarged, and re-equipped in 1979 and again in 1986 and 1988 (Burrowes, 1991).

1985). Notably, Saleh applied an increasing number of democratic state registers,[44] establishing a one-party-system built around the "General People's Congress" (GPC),[45] for instance, and orchestrating elections in 1988 to "democratically confirm" his presidential power (PAAA B36 154168, 6 July 1988). The translation and performance of democratic stateness has, again, been particularly visible in the outward material form of central government institutions. In contrast, Burrowes (1991) observed that "the politics of the YAR continued to revolve largely around notables, traditional as well as modern, and, of course, President Salih and his close associates" (p.495). A German diplomat at the time agreed, writing, "Saleh tries to build a centralized nation-state with increasing democratic elements – this should not distract from the fact that staying in power was a key priority. Legitimizing this power came second" (PAAA B36 154168, 1988). By 1990, Ali Abdullah Saleh had built a system that was based on military and security forces who were personally loyal and often related to him. In what was widely described as a (neo-)patrimonial system, he granted a certain level of autonomy to tribal leaders and other powerful stakeholders, in exchange for their support of his presidency.

II Learning the Yemeni state in the south

Historically, the Zaydi Imamate "was either absent or fragile and disputed" in the south-east of Yemen, where a large part of the population has been Sunni (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.2). A notable rupture along northern and southern lines occurred in the early 18th century, when the sultan of the southern region of Lahj, who served as a local administrator of the Imam, revolted and broke away from the Imamate, with various other tribal leaders following suit. Until the British occupation of Aden in 1839, southern Yemen was comprised of a range of independent sultanates, amirates, and shaykhdoms, which were typically structured around a central leading figure and tribal law (Halliday, 1974). This section traces the learning of a single southern state to the

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[44] First parliamentary election occurred in 1971, but the parliament only existed until 1974, when the military took over in 1974 (PAAA B36 154168, March 1988). It was only in July 1988 that elections were allowed again.
[45] The GPC party constituted a central platform for patrimonial exchanges and negotiations. "Ministers, businessmen, national and local leaders, all having a vested interest in the system, were in the GPC, which rarely pretended to have an ideology" (Brehony, 2011, p.183).

gradual introduction of central government institutions in the late 19th and early 20th century. The early translation of languages of stateness served the interests of British colonizers and has always been partial in reach, co-existing and at times blending with alternative state registers.

In 1937 British occupiers solidified their presence by declaring Aden a "crown colony", whose "hinterland" was divided into two administrative units a few years later in 1940: The Western Protectorate and the Eastern Protectorate. Both protectorates were initially managed through a system of "indirect rule" (Halliday, 1990, p.108), which means that British officials concluded a series of "advisory treaties" with tribal leaders, promising money and arms in return for their obedience. According to Halliday (1974), the main purpose of Aden's hinterland was to serve as a buffer zone protecting the urban Crown Colony.

British colonizers interfered more forcefully inside Yemen's southern port city, where they placed great emphasis on introducing new languages of stateness. For the most part, this involved translating British state registers so as to match colonial interests and local specificities. In 1947, a Legislative Council was established, whose functions and procedures were roughly modelled after the British Parliament (Sheth, 1980). Likewise, in February 1961, the leaders of newly established executive departments were upgraded to "ministers" (PAAA B12 1137, 8 September 1962). Importantly, these changes were of a cosmetic nature, pertaining more to outward form than "inner essence". First ministerial positions and institutions were mostly "nominal" in nature, lacking power and democratic legitimacy. According to Halliday (1974) and others, "no real attempt was made to democratize the government of Aden" (p.170). [46] The Legislative Council operated under direct control of the British Governor in Aden, the chief executive. Half of its eighteen members were *ex officio* while the other half was being nominated (Sheth, 1980). Its democratic deficit was reflected spatially as well. Detached from Aden's broader popular base, the Council was based in a converted Methodist chapel atop a hill in the Crater district in Aden – "an ugly and alien symbol brooding uneasily over the predominantly Moslem town underneath" (Halliday, 1974,

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[46] Colonial orders provided for a centralized, personalized form of government under the direct control of London (Sheth, 1980).

p.186). While the number of electable council members gradually increased, voting rights remained restricted, only allowing British subjects or people born in Aden to participate in elections (Halliday, 1974).

As these examples indicate, unequal global power relations allowed colonial officials to selectively pick and mimic political structures "from home". The Council's appearance and official functions might have resembled British Parliament, yet, its social composition, practice, and power remained under the authoritarian control of the British, specifically the Governor. While scholars such as Liebesny (1955) positively commented at the time that "British advice and British participation in legislative drafting no doubt have introduced a certain amount of Western thought and Western method" (p.396), the translation and implementation of allegedly "Western" languages of stateness was incomplete and contradictory at best.[47]

Over time, Yemenis began to increasingly learn and shape the southern Yemeni state by pushing for the training and employment of locals, initially within the lower echelons of the Adeni civil service. A variety of vocational training schools were set up training, for instance, women to work as nurses and teachers. In addition, a small number of Yemenis were selected by British officials to receive training overseas or to participate in internal government training schemes (Little, 1968).[48] Several of newly trained professionals became ministers or senior officials after independence in 1967, a development that links expertise to state-related continuity. Fadhl Ahmad Sallami, for instance, was educated at Aden College and served in an administrative capacity in various government departments during British rule. Following independence, he became head of the presidential office and later held the positions of head of the general intelligence, permanent secretary for the ministry of foreign affairs (1969), and ambassador to the UK (1970) (NA /8/1705).[49]

Slowly shifting power dynamics were also reflected institutionally. With the beginning of 1959, political and administrative structures in South Yemen were gradually re-organized into a single federal government representing Aden and most of its

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[47] "Direct British rule has given the Colony a Western-type administration" (Liebesny, 1955, p. 396).
[48] For more information read Little (1968).
[49] High-ranking political figures, including the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister studied at the Aden College (Halliday, 1974).

hinterland. While these developments point to the emergence of functioning federal government, Yemen's state development was yet again marked by a gap between outward material form and actual political power. While the British undertook a range of (cosmetic) administrative changes,[50] they simultaneously set up a treaty ensuring their ongoing sovereignty in Aden (Pieragostini, 1991), which in essence remained a "crown colony" (Brehony, 2011, p.10). In addition, the Federation had to assign responsibility for external affairs to the British government, and agreed to refrain from entering into any treaty, agreement, correspondence or other relation with any foreign government or international organisation without knowledge and consent of the British (Little, 1968).[51] Financially as well, the Federation remained dependent on their colonial masters. While attempts have been made since 1956 "to fill the vacancies for administrative, professional, and technical officers" with Yemeni recruits, the payment of the Federation's approximately 6,000 civil servants and a similar number of locally recruited military was entirely reliant on the British government (Governor Luce cited in Sheth, 1980; Halliday, 1974).

II.1. Southern independence and emergence of the PDRY

Existing dependencies in South Yemen were transformed considerably in 1967, when British colonial control was put to an end and members of the National Liberation Front of Occupied South Yemen (NLF) announced the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY). Subsequent state-building efforts involved the translation of new state languages, notably socialist registers, which were combined with already existing "languages of stateness". In fact, several state registers learned from the British were deemed useful and survived the political rupture of independence. Such continuity supports arguments made by postcolonial theorists who recognize that "colonial effects" remain tangible even after acts of decolonization (Sharp, 2008, p.5). Notwithstanding the departure of (British) senior staff in 1967, a sufficient number of state employees remained in South Yemen to manage colonial administrative

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[50] Aden's Executive Council, for instance, was renamed "Council of Ministers", and the title of the British Governor was changed to "High Commissioner". In addition, the number of governmental ex officio members was reduced to one and the position of "Chief Minister" was created (Pieragostini, 1991).

[51] The Federation was also bound to accept British advice on any matter connected with the "good governance" of their territories (Little, 1968).

remnants. In fact, given the administration's ongoing functionality, the new Yemeni government decided to extend the Adeni administrative system to the whole country. Within a few years, it thereby established its presence, and a certain degree of control, in nearly all parts of South Yemen – a fact that set it apart from the YAR government at the time (Brehony, 2011).[52]

Besides maintaining existing institutional structures, South Yemen's new leaders in many ways continued speaking the "language of stateness" they had learned from the British. Prime Minister Ali Nasir Muhammad, for instance, insisted in the 1970s that existing civil service disciplines were to be maintained: "meetings were expected to start on time, minutes kept, and decisions recorded and followed up" (Brehony, 2011, p.59).[53] NLF leaders were also said to have internalized more abstract norms and concepts such as "modernity" and "progress" (Messick, 1993). Among other things, this was expressed in measures taken against tribal forms of political authority less than two weeks after independence. In a landmark decision on 17 December 1967, all tribal leaders were declared to lose land and title (Müller, 2015). At the same time, the PSRY was divided into six provinces, each being subdivided into numbered regions and districts. [54] The boundaries of new provinces intentionally ignored those of previous sultanates and tribes, which were perceived as "backward" (Brehony, 2011, p.69). The close relationship between political power and spatial organization indicates that learning the PRSY involved a considerable territorial element; consolidating "the state" was as much a geographical as it was a socio-political project.

Rather than producing absolute outcomes, efforts to remove wide-spread tribal structures and related registers of political authority frequently resulted in fragmentation, combining changes in outer form with continuity in traditional modes of personalized power. As Brehony (2011) described it:

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[52] South Yemeni leaders also benefitted from a functioning army, for instance, as well as a rudimentary education sector already in place (Brehony, 2011). In its early years, the education system was "largely dependent on importing foreign teachers, mostly from friendly Palestinian organizations and Sudan" (Lackner, 2017, p.688).
[53] In the late 1970s, the civil service could attract a number of South Yemenis who used to live in exile or had graduated from soviet and foreign universities (Brehony, 2011).
[54] Müller (2015) points out the similarity to East German reforms, where existing states were no longer referred to by their names but were labelled with numbers.

"The old tribal chiefs had gone, but were in effect replaced by NF officials from the tribe: the party secretary was the new shaykh; he was the source of influence and jobs. In return, he expected the loyalty of his beneficiaries" (p.70).

Besides strands of continuity, radically "new languages of stateness" were introduced with the establishment of the PRSY, notably including socialist state registers. PSRY officials turned toward governments commonly labelled anti-imperialist and socialist, asking for assistance and guidance in their state-building effort. A day after independence was declared, East Berlin agreed to offer training to South Yemeni political cadres in the east German Democratic Republic (GDR). Soon afterwards, Otto Winzer, GDR minister of foreign affairs, reacted to the PRSY's demand for "advisors on state and administrative affairs", promising to promptly send a group of consultants (Müller, 2015, p.262).[55] The PRSY's socialist orientation was pursued more forcefully following a regime change in 1970, when left-wing politicians gained the upper hand within the NLF and began learning and applying languages of stateness that were labelled "democratic" by East German advisors, while appearing outrageously "socialist" to others (Müller, 2015). In November 1970, a Constitution was issued in Aden, replacing the "People's Republic of South Yemen" (PRSY) with "People's Democratic Republic of Yemen" (PDRY). The Constitution branded South Yemen more clearly as a "revolutionary socialist state". Reflecting the PDRY's political leaning, its capital was described by Bonnefoy (2018) as "a meeting place for Arab, European, African and Asian leftist militants alike, as well as for Soviet, East German, Bulgarian and Ethiopian training officers and agents" (p. 28).[56]

Written with the help of Egyptian and East German advisors (Brehony, 2011), the South Yemeni Constitution was claimed to have followed the blueprint of East Germany's Constitution in its structure, language, and content (Müller, 2015). Next to granting citizens a wide range of rights and entitlements, such as free access to education and healthcare, the PDRY's Constitution emphasized the importance of its

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[55] The GDR thereby established what Müller (2015) labelled "political engagement through 'advisory groups'" (p.262). "It was assumed that after [...] independence the PRSY would mostly need political-ideological help and advice on fundamental questions about the economy and the state apparatus" (Embassy of the GDR in Aden on the activities of East German advisors, 1972, cited in Müller, 2015, p.275).

single party, declaring that the National Front leads, "the political activities of the masses and the mass organizations [based on Scientific Socialism], to further the society's non-capitalist path" (PDRY Constitution 1970 cited in Müller, 2015, p. 257).

In line with new constitutional requirements, the organizational structure of both the state and the party was changed. Besides promoting the notion of a shared presidency,[57] the Constitution stipulated the establishment of a proper legislative body, the Supreme People's Council. Continuing a history of discrepancy between material outer form and political power dynamics, the Supreme Council was described as little more than "a façade of democracy" (Brehony, 2011, p.55). Similar to practices once applied by British colonizers, democratic state languages were deployed to legitimize an otherwise centralized and hierarchical regime.[58] While the 101 members of the Supreme People's Council were supposed to be elected by local councils and trade unions, in reality, a large number was appointed by, and from among the ranks of, the General Command of the National Front (NF) - as the NLF was then called. Their main purpose was to obediently approve political decisions made by party leaders in top government positions (Müller, 2015). From the onset of the PSRY/PDRY, personalized structures of power and patrimonial bureaucratic practices co-existed with colonial-British and socialist "languages of stateness".

At party level, socialist state registers were translated more literally in 1972, when the party was modelled explicitly as a "Soviet-style vanguard party" (Müller, 2015, p.265): The party's General Command was replaced by a "Central Committee" and its Executive Committee by a "Politburo" (Müller, 2015). The Politburo effectively emerged as the main centre of power during the 1970s, gradually overtaking the Presidency Council in importance. In 1973, the British embassy noted that, with one exception, "all members of the Politburo now hold key positions, and of the total 18

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[57] The "Presidency Council" contained five and later three members. Following constitutional amendments in 1978, it was re-named "Presidium" (Brehony, 2011).

[58] The government's lacking political debate and autocratic tendencies were reflected at a broader societal level, where freedom of expression became severely constrained, the media was tightly controlled, and fear of the newly created state security spread (Brehony, 2011). In 1975, a law was passed banning contact with foreigners, mostly directed at Western diplomats in Aden (Brehony, 2011).

ministers the six who are neither members of the Politburo or Central Committee are all in the most insignificant posts" (Brehony, 2011, p.58).

A final series of institutional reforms took place in 1978, when the NF became part of a newly established Yemen Socialist Party (YSP). According to West German analysis, the amended Constitution, specifically the structure and content of its articles, continued reflecting the influence of East European advisors (PAAA B36 137633, 27 May 1979). West German diplomats claimed that the Soviet Union and East Germany had "experts and advisors in all ministries, public offices, and administrations" by 1978 (PAAA B36 119926, 20 August 1978; PAAA B36 137633, 1 March 1979).[59] Learning processes also involved training abroad, with a number of high-ranking party functionaries being educated in Moscow and East Berlin. As Bonnefoy (2018) described it, "South Yemeni students went abroad to train in 'people's democracies,' faced the harsh Moscow winter, gave their children names like Guevara, Lenin, Thwra (revolution) or Dawla (state), and occasionally married in their host country before returning to lead the civil or military administrations at home" (p.28).

The increasing adoption of "socialist state registers" was in part motivated by ideological conviction, but also linked to broader material power configurations, specifically South Yemen's need for development aid (Weeden, 2008). "Effectively, the state had no source of income other than fisheries and limited agriculture, as well as whatever aid it could obtain from its very few friends" (Lackner, 2017, p.688).[60] These friends included communist governments, whose decision-makers provided money, goods (especially weapons), and expertise. China built a road connecting the PDRY's eastern and western peripheries (PAAA B36 137634, 25 November 1979), East Germany gave millions in "solidarity support" (PAAA B36 119926, 18 June 1977), and the Soviet Union emerged as the PDRY's most important donor. In 1981, German

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[59] Weeden (2008) agrees that "the South's government structure was organized on the basis of the Soviet model, with the familiar party central committee and the smaller, more powerful politburo ruling within it" (p.58). Likewise, Müller (2015) finds that in its heyday, the PDRY housed more than 2,000 East German experts and advisors, who sold their concept of socialist state- and nation-building.

[60] The PDRY government also received support from the UN and other international organizations as well as a range of individual countries (PAAA B36 137894, 12 November 1986)

diplomatic sources described the uneasy relation between applied state languages and material support as follows:

> "Ali Nasser [head of state] has dutifully continued the uncritical political support for Soviet policies and has stressed that relations with the Soviet Union are the cornerstone of PDRY's foreign policy. Ali Nasser realizes that the Soviet bloc is the PDRY's only certain source of support and assistance, but he probably also realizes that the Russians are not popular in his country and their interest is not an altruistic one" (PAAA B36 137676, May/June 1981).

In a cold war context, in which socialist and capitalist languages of stateness competed for prominence, the (outward) learning of socialist registers was rewarded materially. Yet, as suggested in this chapter, socialist languages of stateness were not "just" copied, but translated, leading to fragmented outcomes that were deeply embedded in interpersonal, domestic, and international power relations. The PDRY Constitution, for instance, named Islam as a state religion, with leading politicians displaying their religious affiliation and practice in public (PAAA B36 137633,15 March 1981).

The late 1970s and 1980s were marked more by political division and power struggles than state-building and institutional state reform. According to Bonnefoy (2018), "the socialist project did not erase either the disjunction between Aden and the PDRY hinterland or the strength of local identities that structured political competition". Five PSRY/PDRY presidents succeeded one another "in a climate of merciless personal rivalries, coups d'état, purges and assassinations" (p.28). A putsch attempt in January 1986 led to a two-week outburst of violence that left thousands dead (Bonnefoy, 2018). Realizing that conflict between political factions stood in the way of effective governance, PDRY officials concluded that regime survival would either require major reforms or a long-aspired union with the YAR (Brehony, 2011). Like the PDRY, the YAR faced a range of domestic challenges at the time and viewed unification as an impactful gesture of change (Brehony, 2011).[61] Rather than viewing unification as the compromise it was, both governments hoped to expand their respective political

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[61] While Saleh had successfully consolidated his power and developed a patronage system that incorporated powerful tribal leaders, he wanted to divert attention away from rarely improving government services and the economic impact of declining remittances (Brehony, 2011).

system and to use the strength of a united Yemen to resolve their problems. In May 1990, a unified "Republic of Yemen" was announced, with Ali Abdullah Saleh and Ali Salem al-Beidh as its president and vice president respectively (Dunbar, 1992).

III The Republic of Yemen: unifying the learning of Yemeni statehood?

In ruling and administering a "joint Yemen", northern and southern party leaders agreed that, until formal elections were to take place in 1993, the distribution of senior government positions should follow a strict 50-50 split – notwithstanding the 80-20 population disparity (Hudson, 1995). Hence, the unified Cabinet held an equal amount of southern and northern ministers, who were each assigned a "regional counterpart" as deputy (Dunbar, 1992). Since politicians on both sides wanted to see as many of their civil servants as possible included in unified state institutions, merged ministries ended up being unproportionally large. The provisional joint Cabinet, for instance, consisted of 39 members, including ministers of both South and North Yemen (Burrowes, 1992).

Agreements regarding the distribution of posts were embedded in a wider discourse of democracy deployed by political leaders on both sides. Their supposed democratic commitment was later described as a cover for ongoing partisan power struggles and diverging self-interests (Schwedler, 2002; Brehony, 2011). As mentioned above, government officials on both sides viewed unification as an opportunity to expand their own political power at the expense of their respective counterpart. PDRY leaders were hoping to use the freedom of press and freedom of expression to convince northerners of the advantages of their political system. According to Brehony (2011), "they felt that their superior organization, system ideas, and perhaps their record of giving rights to women, would attract the support of northerners" (p.183). YAR president Ali Abdullah Saleh, in turn, was banking on Yemen's demography and the resilience of the political system he had set up in the north. Given that the population of the YAR was about 15.8 million, compared to approximately 2.9 million in the PDRY (Brehony, 2011), the option of democratic elections presumably appealed to him. By translating democratic

"languages of stateness" to mask and legitimize their own interests, both sides continued a history of instrumental democratization (Jeffrey, 2007).[62]

Notwithstanding its functionalist nature, the democratic registers led to real institutional and societal change in the unified Republic of Yemen. Its 1990 draft Constitution was described as "probably the most democratic in the Arab world" (Brehony, 2011, p.183), defining the newly established "House of Representatives" as the republic's primary legislative authority, to be elected "in a secret, free and equal vote directly by the people". In addition, the Constitution prescribed that a five-member "Presidential Council" was to be set up and that a "Council of Ministers" should act as the "highest executive and administrative authority of the state" (Constitution of the Republic of Yemen, 1990). The Constitution also granted unprecedented civic freedoms to Yemenis, which led to the rise of around 40 new political parties, 20 newspapers, and numerous research institutes, women's and human rights groups (Brehony, 2011; Schwedler, 2002). Claiming inspiration from Baathism, Zaydism, Nasserism, and other political and/or religious references (Bonnefoy, 2018), political newcomers participated in Yemen's 1993 parliamentary elections, described as "the first to be held under universal suffrage in the Arabian Peninsula" (Schwedler, 2002).

Behind the curtain of fairly shared democratic governance, political leaders and civil servants continued competing for political power along regional fault lines. Ministries remained divided into two camps, with many employees speaking different "languages of stateness", for instance on matters such as education or the economy (Brehony, 2011). In addition, political power did not follow organisational hierarchies. Southern ministers, for example, complained that important ministerial decisions were frequently made by northern deputy-ministers, who, despite their lower position, held greater influence in Sanaa (Hudson, 1995; Brehony, 2011).[63] At lower ranks, political power occasionally amounted to a numbers game, with southern civil servants pointing out that their northern colleagues were simply too numerous to be stopped (Hudson, 1995). These imbalances were exaggerated by the fact that at regional bureaucratic

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[62] Looking at Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iraq, Jeffrey (2007) examines the legitimizing role of democratization discourse in the politics of international interventions.
[63] Haytham Qasim Tahir, Southern minister of defence, for instance, complained that the northern chief of staff tended to ignore his orders (Brehony, 2011).

echelons "more northern officials had moved into government positions in the south than vice versa" (Brehony, 2011, p.187).

Regional tensions deteriorated when southern leaders realized they had miscalculated their chances of success. While the PDRY had considerable state capacity, a civil service that was better organized than its YAR equivalent, and effective armed forces, it had been weakened by 1986 events, leaving the YAR in a comparatively stronger political and economic position at the time of unification (Brehony, 2011). Following the state merger, Saleh's patronage system proved to be not only resilient but was further strengthened by the privatization of southern land and industries (Bonnefoy, 2018). Taken together, these developments generated a strong sense of injustice and distrust among southerners, leading to a southern attempt of secession, which in tun triggered a two-month civil war in 1994.[64] The war was won by northern forces and bolstered Saleh's supremacy within the new Republic. In the south of Yemen, notions of insult and exploitation spread, not least because of crimes committed by northern combatants following their victory. Aden's public infrastructure was plundered and the files of its former PDRY ministries destroyed. Importantly, the feeling of having been "absorbed" or even "occupied" by the north has fuelled the emergence of southern opposition movements ever since unification (Weeden, 2008; Brehony, 2011; Day, 2012).[65]

With Ali Abdullah Saleh establishing himself as the republic's definite leader, his outward commitment to a language of plural democracy declined.[66] He emptied electoral procedures of their fair and competitive elements (Weeden, 2008) and developed a hybrid language that contemporary scholarship has struggled to define. Some researchers described it as a "quasi-autocracy" (Weeden, 2008, pp.219-220), while others called it "semiauthoritarian" (Phillips, 2008, p.3). Following Phillips (2008), this study uses the term "neo-patrimonialism" to rhetorically capture Saleh's self-

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[64] The increase in political tension between the north and the south was also impacted by a worsening economic situation, especially for southerners, and a series of assassinations of southern politicians in the north (Brehony, 2011).

[65] Following the 1994 war, only eight of twenty-seven ministers were from the south. With few exceptions, all southern ministers were GPC members (Day, 2012)

[66] "Since 1993, a succession of parliamentary, presidential and local government elections has not delivered the peaceful rotation of power that is the hallmark of established democracies" (Whitaker, 2009, n.p.).

serving translation of various state languages. It understands neopatrimonialism as the penetration of informal patrimonial loyalties into formal political institutions. Thus, in a neo-patrimonial system, "political parties, civil society organizations, and parliaments—institutions associated with a modern state—are used in conjunction with traditional informal organizations by the leaders to expand their patron–client networks" (Phillips, 2008, p.4). Rather than managing the payment of salaries or economic rewards directly, for example, Ali Abdullah Saleh went through the Ministry of Finance (Phillips, 2008). As a former member of parliament explained, "when Saleh wanted to get something done, for example when he had problems with tribesmen and wanted to pacify them, he would just send a little note to the Minister of Finance signed by him saying 'give this sheikh one million riyals.' The sheikh would receive it, and problems were solved" (cited in Phillips, 2008, p.74). Non-merit appointments or co-option through financial means were the order of the day, mostly benefitting individuals who had proven their loyalty to the regime (Phillips, 2008). While at top-level, material rewards were mostly motivated by political calculations, at the lower echelons of Yemen's state bureaucracy the sustenance of unofficial financial hand-outs was based on economic grievances. Given their low salaries, Yemeni civil servants were often reliant on loyalty-based financial bonuses (Phillips, 2008). As illustrated in this chapter, "neo-patrimonialism" has not been invented by Saleh but describes a combination of state registers that has long shaped the learning of the Yemeni state. While it does not account for the Yemeni hybrid in its entirety (and eternity), it usefully summarizes a set of views and practices which have characterized state ministries since the Imamate.

IV Conclusion: the dispersed and multiple learning of Yemeni Statehood

As this chapter has demonstrated, McFarlane's conceptualization of learning constitutes a useful framework for understanding the crisis-ridden emergence of a geopolitical actor known as "Yemen". McFarlane's emphasis of translation – in combination with Hansen and Stepputat's "language of stateness" – conceptually captures the fluid multiplicity that has long characterized the development of Yemeni statehood. Learning is a complex, contingent, and never-ending process that is highly

responsive to shifting personal, material, and environmental factors. Its emphasis facilitates this study's analysis of socio-material developments and human agency, both within the domain of diplomacy and "the state". Specifically, it introduced concepts and ideas relevant to the remaining part of this thesis, including the internal fragmentation and contradictions of state institutions, differences between visible organizational structures and less visible power dynamics, as well as concepts used to describe common bureaucratic practice, such as neo-patrimonialism. The historical outline of the Yemeni state showed that the fragmentation and fluidity of the Yemeni diplomatic service is no singular occurrence but reflects a broader set of state ideas and practice.

In examining the formation and expression of state ideas, this chapter did not aim at covering the full intellectual history and "origins" of Yemeni "statehood" but proceeded in a genealogical manner that emphasized outwardly striking ruptures in Yemeni politics and circulating narratives of alleged external influences. Contemporary writing about the non-European state has been pre-occupied with the notion of "origins" (e.g. Grice, 2015; Zarakol, 2010; Chakrabarty, 1992; Owen, 1992). This chapter hopes to add a critical voice to these discussions by examining how different ideas of "state origins" are being presented in academic and non-academic discourse in the Yemen example. It points to scholarship emphasizing the impact of Ottoman, British, Egyptian, and generally "Western", "European", or "socialist" state registers. Emphasising the partial, multiple, comparative, and dispersed nature of translated "languages of stateness", this chapter outlined shifting and historically unique institutional hybrids. In doing so, it provided important background information which helps understand the contingent (re-)construction of Yemeni statehood – a recurring theme in this thesis – and the historical development of the Yemeni diplomatic service, outlined in the following chapter.

4 Development of the Yemeni Diplomatic Service: Tracing the History of a Profession

Having outlined the historical learning of the Yemeni state, this chapter zooms in on the development of a single state institution: the Yemeni foreign ministry and its network of embassies. Tracing the historical legacies of Yemen's diplomatic service into the present facilitates assessing the significance and meaning of contemporary events. Crucially, this chapter adds historical depth to this study's argument that the Yemeni diplomatic service has to be conceptualized as a dynamic and fragmented socio-material institution in order to comprehend the paradoxical co-existence of institutional endurance and fluidity. It shows that the socio-material divisions, contradictions, and plasticity of the Yemeni diplomatic service have emerged over time and that not all political ruptures have been translated into radical institutional reform. This indicates that the development of Yemen's foreign policy institutions has long been marked by both change and continuity.

This chapter's historical approach also introduces ideas, practices, and concepts that are central to this study's later analysis. For example, the allocation of diplomatic posts to "reward" and/or "exile" individuals after 2011 was no new practice at the time but constituted a custom as old as the Yemeni diplomatic service itself. Likewise, the relationship between state sovereignty, international recognition, and the foreign service figures prominently in the institutional history of Yemen's diplomatic corps. To better understand contemporary diplomatic practices, this chapter explores the historical formation of "diplomatic professionalism" in Yemen, outlining the emergence of diplomacy as a specialised field of governance and its later institutionalization – a process that involved acts of legal codification, the addition of formal organizational structures, and the material reflection of ideational developments in choices pertaining to building design and functionality.

Conceptually, the following inquiry must be read as a continuation of the previous chapter, which studied the *learning* of the Yemeni state through a post-colonial lens. In a slight deviation, the following analysis emphasizes personal biographies over the

translation of "languages of stateness". Information regarding diplomats' educational backgrounds, careers, and physical appearance (e.g. clothing and beards) sheds light on the socialization processes that shaped the institutional development of the Yemeni diplomatic service. It also highlights the translocal and embodied nature of learning and diplomatic practice and pinpoints their embeddedness in wider global power structures.

This chapter is divided into three parts: The historical development of the Yemeni diplomatic service is first traced in the north, then in the south, and lastly in the unified Republic of Yemen. Since no written work has specifically dealt with the history of the Yemeni diplomatic service, the following analysis draws heavily on interviews with Yemeni diplomats and archival material from the British National Archives (NA) and the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany (PAAA).[67]

I Learning the diplomatic service in the Imamate and YAR

Describing Yemeni foreign affairs in the early 20th century, Peterson (1982) points out that relations with "the world outside" were kept at a minimum during the sovereign reign of Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamid al-Din (1918-1948). "No foreign missions were allowed to take up residence in Yemen and Yahya maintained no emissaries abroad" (Peterson, 1982, p.60). Taking foreign affairs into his own hands, the Imam delegated tasks to personal envoys, who were dispatched on an ad-hoc basis.[68] Rare diplomatic missions to Europe and other places were mostly carried out by the Imam's sons (Peterson, 1982). In a few instances, Imam Yahya also relied on diplomatic services provided by well-known and trusted foreign individuals who resided abroad. Up until the mid-1940s, for instance, he had a Beirut dignitary, Muhammad Jameel Bayhom, handle his affairs in Lebanon (Al-Aini, 2004). In the early 1940s, foreign (re)presentation inside of Yemen was limited to a British native clerk, who resided in the city of Hodeidah, and "the semi-political functions of Italian and British medical missions in Sana'a" (Peterson, 1982, p.60).

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[67] The archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany is called "Politisches Archiv the Auswärtigen Amts" (PAAA) in German.
[68] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 August 2017.

It was only toward the end of Imam Yahya's rule that foreign policy gained in importance and became institutionalized. In 1928, the Imam signed a treaty of friendship and trade with the Soviet Union (*al-Eiman Newspaper*, 1929),[69] while ratifying a first treaty of cooperation with Baghdad in the 1930s. He also maintained close relations with Italy, which enacted colonial rule over Ethiopia at the time and were a major power in the Red Sea area (Bonnefoy, 2018). The Imam's increasing engagement with foreign actors triggered a gradual process of institutionalization, which Peterson (1982) described as follows:

> "Foreign affairs was a relatively simple matter, consisting in the main of a secretary to answer messages from foreign governments. As the number of governments involved increased and grew more varied (and less Arab), Imam Yahya was forced to rely on his former Ottoman diplomat, Raghib Bey, to handle the correspondence and increasing number of treaty negotiations" (p.55).

Qadhi Muhammad Raghib Bey was a Turkish Cypriot, who came to Yemen during its brief Ottoman occupation (1849-1919), when he served as the Ottoman governor of Hodeidah. Following Yemen's independence, he moved to Turkey, but was unable to find suitable employment there, thus returning to the southern Peninsula in 1924. Hired as an advisor by the Yemeni Imam, he began specializing in foreign affairs (Peterson, 1982).

Coloured by colonial condescendence, British observers at the time wrote that the Imam and his most trusted right-hand al-Qadi Abdullah al-Amri had somewhat of an "inferiority complex in matters which concern[ed] the great world" (cited in Peterson, 1982, p.46). Allegedly, none of them had seen the shores of the Red Sea, let alone travelled outside of Yemen. They were thus believed to have welcomed the international experience and language skills brought to the table by Raghib Bey, who handled treaty negotiations with various European powers and joined Yemeni delegations abroad (Peterson, 1982). As Peterson (1982) put it, Raghib Bey "was used as a channel of communication to the non-Arab world, due to his diplomatic experience in Ottoman service" (p.52). His career suggests that expertise and professional skills

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[69] جريدة الإيمان

informed strands of continuity in the formation of foreign affairs as a specialised field of governance.

Notably, the position of Raghib Bey triggered tensions between institutionalized and personal power, which have marked Yemeni foreign policy institutions ever since. Notwithstanding his titular command over the Imamate's external relations, Raghib Bey faced a number of unwanted intrusions into his "niche of expertise" (Peterson, 1982). For example, the Imam continued delegating certain diplomatic matters to his sons, regardless of their diplomatic experience and knowledge, which was taken as a personal affront by Raghib Bey.

It was not until 1931, with the Imam's establishment of a first Cabinet, that Raghib Bey was officially named "foreign minister", a title he carried until 1948, when he was retired by the Imam's son Ahmad, who had taken over (Peterson, 1982). According to Peterson's (1982) analysis, Yemen's first "ministry" of foreign affairs can be pictured as the foreign minister himself and a small number of aides. In the context of this study, first reports of a foreign ministry building could only be traced to 1949. It occupied a few rooms above the "post and telegraph office" in Taiz (PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961).[70] The institution was described as small and provisional by both Yemeni and foreign observers. A senior Yemeni diplomat remembered that Yemenis at the time refused using the word "ministry" (*wizara*) and spoke of an "office" (*maktab*) instead.[71] The German ambassador to Egypt, who visited Yemen in 1953, emphasized the ministry's simplicity, writing:

> "The staff of the foreign ministry consists of […] the acting foreign minister himself, Qadi Mohamed Abdullah al-Omari [al-Amri], the Lebanese […] secretary Sami Izzedin, who also serves as interpreter and head of protocol, a Palestinian steno typist, and a Yemeni writer. The ministry has four rooms, one of which serves as a reception room. Only this room is equipped with furniture, a desk and some chairs" (PAAA B11 347, 19 December 1953).[72]

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[70] A year earlier, Imam Ahmad had declared the city of Taiz as Yemen's second capital (Peterson, 1982).

[71] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.

[72] Another German diplomat reported in 1961 that the ministry had six rooms (PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961).

A few years later, in 1961, his colleague continued describing the foreign ministry as "improvised" and "primitive" (PAAA B12 1058, 8 May 1961; PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961):

> "Its organization can in no way be compared with what we would [usually] expect from such a government agency. There are very few officials who are all immensely underpaid and therefore show little eagerness to work and are indecisive. As a source of information, they are worth nothing. Whenever the minister of state Abdurahman Abdusamad Abu Talib, the director of the foreign ministry, is absent, all wheels stand still" (PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961).

Nonetheless, the ministry carried some weight in Yemeni politics,[73] being of personal interest to the Crown Prince Mohammad al-Badr, who continuously aimed at improving its organizational efficiency. An Asian and African department, as well as a department for Western countries were established in 1961 (PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961). The first department was headed by Abu Talib, whereas the second was led by Abdulwahid al-Kharbash. Kharbash was one of the few Yemenis at the time who had received a university education abroad, speaking Italian, English and some French (PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961). He earned his PhD in political sciences in Rome, followed by a 12-month internship at the Italian foreign ministry. Allegedly, he was asked by the Crown Prince to use his experience to help "modernize" (PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961) and develop the foreign ministry's administration. German diplomats at the time described Kharbash's presence in the ministry as notable: "since the beginning of his function, we receive written responses to the notes we sent to the foreign ministry, which earlier only happened in rare exceptional cases" (PAAA B12 1058, 12 July 1961).

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[73] According to a German diplomat in 1962, ministerial positions existed, but – with the exception of the foreign ministry – were not accompanied by an actual ministry and lacked any practical functions (PAAA B12 1059, 25 January 1962).

Figure 7: Former Foreign Ministry Building in Taiz

The photo was found on a Facebook page called "photos of old Yemen" that was referred to by Yemeni diplomats as an "archive". The photo's description referred to the ministry as Yemen's former "office of foreign affairs".[74]

Besides institutionalizing foreign affairs in Yemen, Imam Yahya and his son Ahmad began setting up permanent diplomatic missions abroad. The foundation of the Arab League in March 1945, with Yemen as a member state, "resulted in the first Yemeni diplomats being posted abroad on a permanent basis" (Peterson, 1982, p.55).[75] Notwithstanding the delegation of foreign policy functions, the Imam was said to have maintained strict control over diplomatic representatives in Egypt. According to one

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[74] [Untitled illustration of the former Yemeni Foreign Ministry in Taiz]. Retrieved 6 February 2019 from https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.350057438429477&type=1

[75] Throughout the second half of the 1940s, Yemen became increasingly involved in international affairs. For instance, in 1948, an Arab League delegation was sent to Sanaa (Al-Aini, 2004).

Yemeni diplomat, "Yemen's delegate to the Arab League under the Imam was famous for not speaking at meetings […] on orders from the Imam".[76]

Following the posting of a permanent Arab League delegate, Assayed Hassan Bin Ali Ibrahim presented his letter of credence to the Court of England in 1950[77] and diplomatic missions were opened in Lebanon and Italy in 1955 (PAAA B12 1064a, 19 March 1955; PAAA B12 1064a, 20 April 1955).[78] In 1958, a Yemeni mission was also opened in Saudi Arabia (PAAA B12 1064a, 24 February 1958),[79] followed by legations in Jordan (1961), Iraq (1961), the German Federal Republic (1961), as well as Indonesia (1962).

The emergence of Yemen's institutionalized diplomatic network was accompanied by the gradual opening of foreign missions on Yemeni soil. German sources indicate that in 1953 a British chargé d'affaires was based in Taiz (PAAA B12 1058a, 1954; PAAA B12 1060a, 13 October 1955), while an Egyptian chargé d'affaires lived in Sanaa (see PAAA B12 1060a, 13 October 1955; PAAA B12 1058a, 1954). A few years later, in 1957, Italy was reported to have a chargé d'affaires in Hodeidah (PAAA, B12 1058a, 27 June 1957; PAAA, B12 1058a, 14 May 1958).[80] Initially, none of these foreign diplomats, who were all based in different cities, operated at the level of ambassador. This was viewed as a reflection of the Imam's mistrust vis-à-vis foreigners and foreign influences. "He even wants to minimize contact among foreign representatives," claimed one German diplomat at the time, who argued that the Imam perceived external reform projects – or "progress", as he called it – as a potential threat to his "traditional rule" (PAAA, B12 1058a, 27 June 1957). Allegedly, the vice king of Hodeidah had told a German diplomat in 1957 that he would prefer a flawed *Yemeni*

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[76] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 May 2019.
[77] The Foreign Office List for 1952. Public Record Office Library.
[78] The establishment of a Yemeni legation in Rome has been linked to the Imam's personal health and related hospital trips (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017).
[79] In 1957, Yemen was reported to have embassies and consular missions in the UK, the US, Italy, Egypt, Lebanon and Ethiopia (PAAA, B12 1058a, 27 June 1957).
[80] By the end of the 1950s, the number of diplomatic missions inside Yemen grew to also include the US, Russia, China, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and West Germany (PAAA B12 1064a, 25 June 1960). Other countries had also established formal diplomatic relations with the Yemeni Imamate but handled Yemeni affairs through missions outside the country, mostly based in Jeddah and Cairo (PAAA B12 1064a, 17 November 1953). Examples include Poland, Czechoslovakia, Sudan, Pakistan, and France.

administration over a more efficient imposition by foreign powers (PAAA, B12 1058a, 27 June 1957).[81]

In spite of the Imam's skepticism and the limited presence of foreigners in Yemen, diplomatic relations and corresponding institutions developed further. Peterson (1982) explains the expansion of Yemeni diplomacy and foreign policy institutions by reference to the Imam's ego and related processes of transnational socialization. "Eventually, the desire to be considered as an equal in the community of nations […] resulted in the acceptance of diplomatic representatives in Sanaa or Taiz by the 1950s and the dispatch of the Imamate's own permanent emissaries abroad" (Peterson, 1982, p.74).

I.1. Liminal diplomatic space: reward, exile, and threats

Under Imam Ahmad (1948-1962), the Yemeni diplomatic service was filled with members of the royal family, including, among others, four of the Imam's brothers,[82] the Imam's nephew,[83] and at least one of his sons.[84] Other diplomatic positions were occupied by notables from among the country's elite, including, for instance, Qadi Mohammed al-Amri and his son-in-law Abdurahman Abu Talib, as well as Qadi Mohammed Abdullah al-Shamy and other members of the al-Shamy family.

The high number of royal family members in the Yemeni diplomatic service is indication of both nepotism and political rivalries that have traditionally divided the Yemeni royal family. Threats faced by the Imam frequently stemmed from within his

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[81] The limited number of foreign diplomatic missions could have also been linked to the low number of foreign residents in Yemen. A German diplomat counted eleven foreigners in Sanaa in 1953: Two Italians (doctors), one Albanian refugee with a Syrian passport (doctor), two Palestinians (doctors), two Syrians (teachers), two Egyptians (teachers), and two Persians (traders) (PAAA B11 347, 19 December 1953).

[82] Emir Seif al-Islam al-Hassan, was Yemeni representative to the UN (PAAA B12 1063, 14 December 1956; PAAA B12 1063, 31 January 1958), Emir Seif al-Islam Abdurahman, was temporarily appointed as minister of foreign affairs, Emir Abdullah was permanent representative to the UN and minister of foreign affairs (until 1955), while Emir Seif Ul-Islam Ismail was permanent representative at the United Arab Republic in Cairo (PAAA B12 1058, 28 December 1961; PAAA B12 1058a, 10 May 1955).

[83] Emir Yahya Bin al-Hussein, the Imam's nephew, served as diplomat in Western Germany (PAAA B12 1058, 21 November 1960)

[84] Imam Ahmad's son, Crown Prince Mohamed al-Badr, had been minister of foreign affairs (since 1955). One of the most influential Yemeni diplomats at the time was Hassan Bin Ibrahim. He served as Yemen's representative to Rome, Germany, Italy, Moscow, Prague, Egypt/UAR, and the UN, and was appointed minister of foreign affairs in 1962. (PAAA B12 1059, 25 January 1962).

inner circle, specifically from close relatives aiming to take the throne. In an attempt to protect his power, the Imam began using Yemen's newly established network of diplomatic legations as a liminal space of exile. For instance, in 1958, Imam Ahmad posted his nephew Emir Yahya Bin al-Hussein to Germany, following the latter's alleged involvement in a failed revolt in 1956 and his temporary imprisonment thereafter (PAAA B12 1058, 21 November 1960).[85] While his diplomatic appointment allowed the Emir to "escape" prison at home, he complained about his low diplomatic rank abroad (as first secretary), which he deemed unfit for a prince. When asking the Imam for permission to return to Yemen, the Imam allegedly responded with a rather unappealing ultimatum: to either return to prison in Yemen, or to continue working as a diplomat in Germany. Yahya Bin al-Hussein preferred to stay in "diplomatic exile" (PAAA B12 1058, 21 November 1960). Given the coercive nature of his diplomatic function, Yahya Bin al-Hussein's loyalty and honest representation of the Imam's interests can be questioned.[86] While in Germany, he openly called for changes inside Yemen and told other diplomats that the Imam deemed it safer to know him outside than inside the country (PAAA B12 1058, 21 November 1960).

Another member of the royal family member who was sent into diplomatic exile following his alleged participation in the 1956 revolt was Emir Seif al-Islam al-Hassan, the brother of Imam Ahmad (PAAA B12 1058a, 19 July 1956; PAAA B12 1058a, 13 July 1955). Soon after his appointment as permanent representative to the UN and head of the Yemeni delegation at the UN General Assembly (PAAA B12 1063, 14 December 1956; PAAA B12 1063, 31 January 1958), his son, who according to German diplomats was also deemed a political threat by the Imam, was appointed ambassador to Ethiopia. "Given that his father rivaled with the crown prince as pretender to the throne, his posting abroad might well be linked to the Imam's effort of removing from vicinity as many intelligent princes and potential opponents to his son as possible" (PAAA B12 1066, 18 March 1962).

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[85] Emir Yahya Bin al-Hussein had previously been imprisoned for two years following his alleged involvement in the revolt (PAAA B12 1058, 21 November 1960).
[86] Adding personal grievance to existing political tensions, Yahya Bin al-Hussein's father, Prince Seif al-Islam Abdullah, was executed on the Imam's order for his leading role in the revolt (PAAA B12 1058, 21 November 1960).

As these examples indicate, "exterior diplomatic spaces" carried a broad range of meaning and functions in Yemeni politics. To the Imam, "the international sphere" constituted a double-edged sword, facilitating both the removal and the creation of potential rivals. While the Imam could get rid of disagreeable family members by posting them abroad, the diplomatic realm came with its own set of dangers. Prince Seif al-Islam Abdullah, for instance, a leader and alleged orchestrator of the 1956 coup-attempt, had previously served as foreign minister, representing Yemen at the United Nations and conducting special diplomatic missions abroad. According to Little (1968), it was Abdullah's international experience and subsequent strive for reform that explains his leading role in the attempted 1956 coup. "As his mind broadened in contact with leading figures of other countries, he conceived the desire to modernise Yemen to an extent that Imam Ahmad would never contemplate" (p.47). While international experience, specifically the learning of foreign languages and diplomatic practice, was considered an asset, it also increased the risk of subversion.

I.2. Divided, shifting and improvised representation during the 1962 Revolution

The regime change, and Yemen's subsequent civil war (1962-1970), temporarily split the Yemeni diplomatic service between royalists and republicans. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the incumbent Imam, Mohammed al-Badr, fled to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia where he began allocating ministerial positions to family members and royalists. Besides establishing a cabinet, with Mohammad Ahmad al-Shamy as foreign minister, the Imam continued dispatching diplomats abroad, appointing his minister of information, Hussein Ibn Ali Murfik, ambassador to West Germany in January 1964, while making his private secretary, Ibrahim Kibsi, General Consul there. Kibsi was allegedly asked to advocate the "royal perspective" among foreign missions in Bonn (PAAA B36 117, 15 January 1964). In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the Imam's royal government was supported by at least one Yemeni diplomatic legation.[87] Diplomats in Washington D.C. dispatched letters to other foreign representatives in late 1962, emphasizing the Imam's continued political leadership (PAAA B12 1066, 9

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[87] One diplomat reported that the royalists "still had two or three embassies" after the revolution (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017).

October 1962). Notably, these letters were branded with royal letterheads and stamps (PAAA B12 1066, 7 November 1962) (see Figure 8).

In contrast, the Yemeni mission in the Federal Republic of Germany promptly turned republican after the 1962 revolution, with diplomats engaging in a range of improvised state performances to display their shifting loyalty and representation. For instance, they crossed out all royal identifiers in diplomatic documents, including the crown of the Imamate's emblem and the words "Mutwakilia Kingdom" in official letterheads (see Fig. 8).

.''the charge d'affaires of the mutawakelite kingdom of yemen presents his compliments to their excellencies and messieurs the chiefs of mission and has the duty to inform them that the yemeni people have risen to prevent foreign domination of yemen.

yemen has never succumbed to foreign domination through its long history and will continue to fight to preserve its sovereignty and independence.

his majesty imam al-hassan, the only legitimate ruler of yemen, has rallied all tribes and people in yemen to his support and is advancing to suppress the attempt by foreign powers to seize control in yemen for the sole purpose of achieving selfish aims and advancing a certain ideology alien to the arabian peninsula and the yemeni religious and traditional adherences.

Figure 8: Royalist Letterhead and Stamp
Extract of a Yemeni diplomatic letter sent on 9 October 1962 using the royalist letterhead and stamp.[88]

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[88] PAAA B12 1066, 9 October 1962; PAAA B12 1066, 7 November 1962.

At a time of rupture, at which no single hegemonic understanding of the state was able to assert itself, small objects and mundane human practices emerged as important sources of meaning, able to impact grand political representations. Documents linked physically disconnected sites, constituting the "basic glue" by which diplomats managed to "relate to each other and organize their activities" (Bueger, 2014, p.398). By shifting focus onto "the little things" (Müller, 2013), including the spontaneous altering of stamps by pencil, this chapter acknowledges that "political situations are not merely discursive constructs" but assemblages, involving material artefacts and behavioural strategies (Barry, 2013, p. 428).
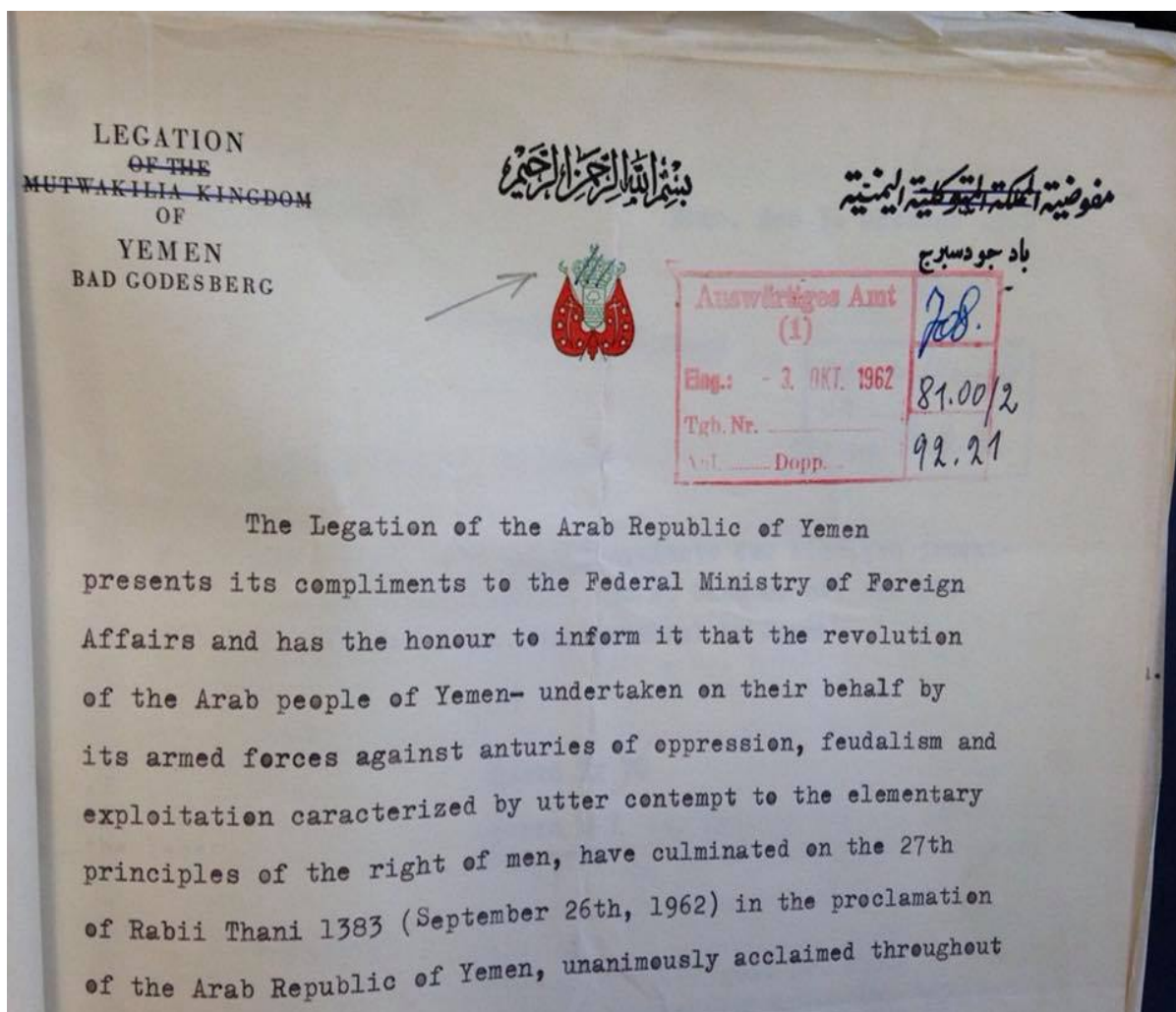
Figure 9: Improvised Diplomatic Scripts
Published in Bonn, Germany, this letter shows an arrow that was drawn by pencil to point out the crossed-out crown in the Imamate's emblem. Similarly, the words "Mutwakilia Kingdom" are crossed out in both the English and the Arabic letterhead.[89]

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[89] PAAA B12 1059, 3 October 1962.
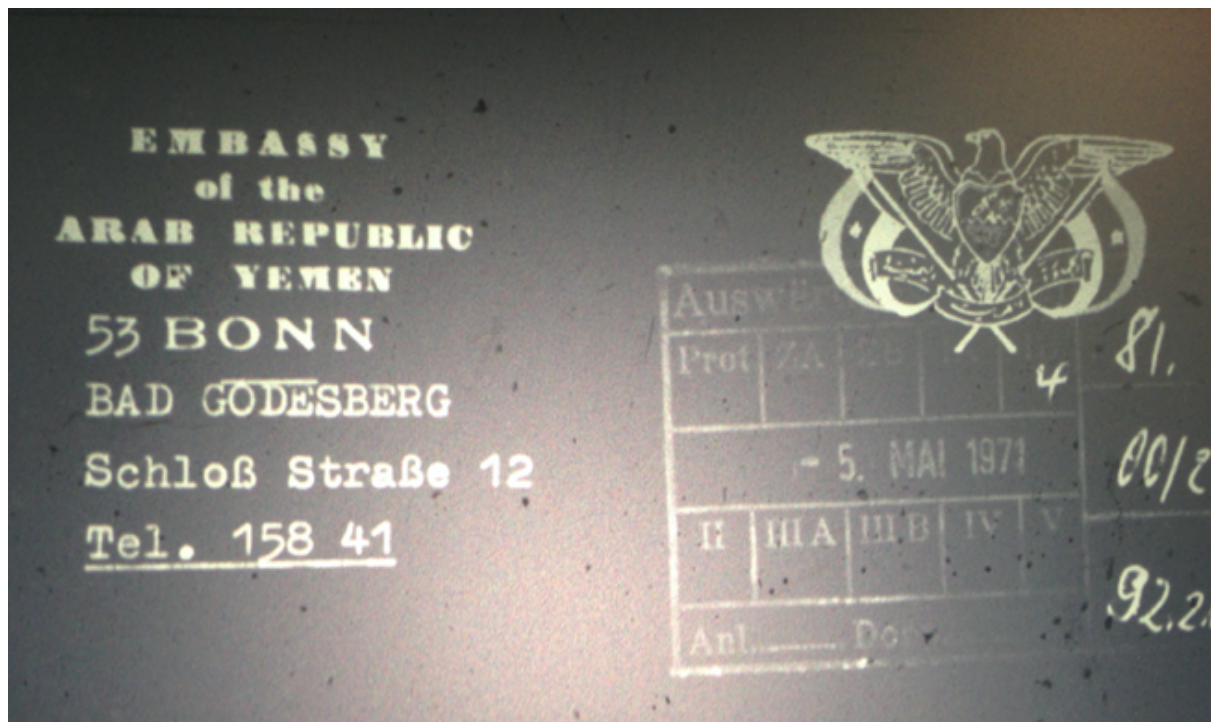
Figure 10: New Republican Letterhead and Emblem[90]

Divisions within the Yemeni diplomatic corps also surfaced, and were made public, at the UN. A delegation of royalist diplomats attended the 17th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which began in mid-September 1962 a few days prior to the Yemeni "revolution". When the new republican foreign minister Mohsin al-Aini arrived in New York following the regime change, he found that the "Yemeni seat" at the UNGA was already taken. Eager to translate domestic regime change at UN-level, he put together a team of sympathetic Yemeni students and young professionals living in the US to advocate the "republican narrative" among UN diplomats.[91] In his memoirs, al-Aini (2004) recalls that he and his team "were working in the corridors of the United Nations, outside official meetings, making contacts with various delegations and the UN Secretariat" (p.74). On 19 December 1962, following the official recognition of the Yemeni republican regime by the US and other states, the UN credentials committee approved al-Aini's republican "delegation" as the legitimate representatives of Yemen, a decision that was confirmed in a UN assembly vote. Although al-Aini was asked to wait until the 17th session had concluded, he and his

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[90] PAAA B36 469, 5 May 1971.
[91] "We explained to them, verbally and in writing, all the past oppression, backwardness, isolation, and deprivation that Yemen had suffered" (Al-Aini, 2004, p.69).

team entered the General Assembly right after their credentials were approved in order to claim Yemen's seats.

> "As soon as the president of that General Assembly's regular session […] announced that the delegation of the Yemen Arab Republic was the legitimate representative of Yemen, we headed right away to Yemen's seat amidst roaring applause by most […] as the Royalist Delegation withdrew" (p.75).

In the context of civil war, the diplomatic sphere emerged as an important battle ground for international recognition. Both sides deemed it beneficial to rely on diplomats to globally advocate their respective portrayal of events.[92] Diplomatic actors were equipped with symbolic and functional tools constitutive of statehood, including stamps and letterheads. Their use was traced in this chapter by closely examining Yemeni diplomatic documents.

I.3. The foreign ministry in Sanaa: new buildings, staff, and training

Inside Yemen, the 1962 revolution impacted the foreign ministry in multiple ways. Following the regime change, the institution moved from Taiz to Sanaa, temporarily operating inside the former premises of the Imam's palace guard. One Yemeni diplomat recalled laughingly "it was based in a few offices at the gate of the republican palace [formerly known as the Imam's palace]. A few offices! That was *wizarat al-kharijiyya* [the foreign ministry]".[93]

Besides these geographical changes, a diplomatic law was issued which, according to German analysis, mimicked Egyptian regulations and signalled the involvement of Egyptian advisors.[94] Moreover, the ministry was re-organized by December 1964, when it reportedly comprised a protocol department, an international department, a consular department, a cultural department, an information section, and a political department (PAAA B36 115, 10 December 1964).[95] An Egyptian report dated 5 August

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[92] Passports began to be issued in Yemen under Imam Yahya, as demanded by officials in countries visited by Yemeni workers (Peterson, 1982).

[93] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.

[94] As in Egypt, Yemeni diplomats were forbidden to marry non-Arab foreigners, for instance (PAAA B36 115, 5 August 1963). This stipulation can still be found in Article 28, section 5, of Yemen's 1991 diplomatic law (Law No. 2 of 1991 Concerning the Diplomatic and Consular Service, 1991).

[95] At the time, the foreign ministry still had an office in Taiz, which was headed by Ahmad Mufarrah, the director, and including a foreigners department and an information department (PAAA B36 115, 10 December 1964).

1967 described the functioning of the Yemeni Foreign Ministry, supposedly to prepare its later re-organization by Egyptian officials. According to the report, "the ministry in Ṣanaʿāʾ had 45 employees, but significantly fewer desks and chairs". With some alarm, the report noted that ministry officials did not respect formal hierarchies, granting all employees direct access to the minister. It further criticized that ministry officials did not keep minutes, did not receive reports from Yemeni missions abroad, and that the number of employees under each director was typically limited to two or three, "suggesting a top-heavy organisation" (Rogers, 2018, p.175).

Post-1962 changes extended to the level of personnel, infusing the Yemeni diplomatic service with new "revolutionary characters", such as members of the army and intellectuals who had supported and risen in prominence with the 1962 revolution. Hamud al-Gaifi, for instance, who worked as an army officer, became Yemeni ambassador to Egypt in October 1963. Likewise, in March 1964, Saleh al-Ashwal, who had risen through the ranks in the police, and later the military, was appointed ambassador to the USSR, following his temporary membership in the newly established presidential council (PAAA B36 117, 28 March 1964). Civilian examples include Mohammed Ahmad Noman, who was appointed head of the Yemeni mission to the Arab League, and Ahmad Hussein al-Marwani, who became deputy head of the Yemeni delegation to the UN in New York. Al-Marwani had worked at a radio station in Sanaa during the Imamate, where he was tolerated, but suspected of harbouring oppositional sentiments. Following the revolution, al-Marwani rose to the rank of information minister, before being sent in a diplomatic capacity to the US (PAAA B12 1066, 22 November 1962). Mohammed Ahmad Noman, in turn, was the son of Yemeni oppositionist Ahmad al-Noman, who had fled the Imamate in the late 1950s and supported the revolution and the revolutionary government (al-Aini, 2004).

While the re-shuffling inside the ministry and in Yemeni legations was partially based on diplomats' alleged political orientation and perceived loyalty, the chaos and flux that followed the 1962 regime change was seen by some as an opportunity to get rid of personal rivals. Suleiman Wafa Dajany, for instance, who worked as a diplomat in Bonn between 1956 and 1962, was fired by the temporary foreign minister al-Baydany, allegedly due to personal differences. Dajany, who considered himself neutral and had assumed he could keep his diplomatic position following the revolution, took on a job

as a local employee in the Saudi embassy after his dismissal, while also seeking German citizenship (PAAA B36 45, 9 April 1963). In other cases, shifts in Yemen's diplomatic personnel were of a nepotistic nature, reflecting the change of powerful personalities and their respective entourage within Sanaa. In March 1967, for instance, Ali Abdullah as-Sallal, the son of the Yemeni president, was appointed ambassador to the USSR. Diplomats in Moscow, who assumed as-Sallal junior to be in his mid-20s, found his experience and knowledge unfit for his high rank as ambassador. It was speculated that the president had used the ambassadorial appointment to remove his son from an increasingly dangerous context of war (PAAA B36 299, 19 March 1967).

While the 1962 revolution triggered change and division within the Yemeni diplomatic service, these developments were accompanied by strands of continuity, often necessitated by rare professional expertise. Rather than removing diplomats as "royalists", most were asked to continue their service under the new republican regime. Kharabash, for instance, who served as the director of the Imam's foreign ministry in Taiz, was appointed foreign policy advisor to the YAR's first president al-Sallal (PAAA B36 45, 13 March 1963). Likewise, Dr. Tarcici was kept by the republican government as a diplomatic representative to Lebanon. Tarcici was a Lebanese citizen who had lived in Yemen for a long time, built a fairly close relationship with Imam Ahmad, and was sent to Lebanon as the Imam's diplomatic agent in 1959 (PAAA B12 1066, 25 October 1962). Tarcici's political survival was linked by German diplomats to his personal relationship with interim YAR foreign minister al-Baydani (PAAA B12 1066, 23 November 1962). Similar to Tarcici, Abdul Koddos al-Wazir, who used to serve as the Imam's chargé d'affaires in Rome (1959-1961) re-entered the YAR diplomatic service after a brief moment in British exile, as ambassador, first in Beirut and Rome (1970-1974), and later in Amman (1975-1978) (PAAA B36 137676, 21 November 1978).[96]

Following the end of civil war in 1970, a few royalists were integrated into the republican government and its foreign ministry, and an increasing number of security

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[96] The Yemeni embassy in Jordan was simultaneously accredited to Pakistan, Turkey and Lebanon (PAAA B36 137676, 21 November 1978).

sector employees were allegedly transferred into the diplomatic service.[97] Moreover, the ministry was relocated twice in the early 1970s. It first moved from its "palace guard" facilities into a town house at al-Ulufi square, newly named after a martyr of the 1962 revolution. Allegedly, the house had previously been confiscated from the royal family and their in-laws. "It's called 'Beit al-Kibsi'", recalled one diplomat, laughingly pointing out the ministry's ongoing inhabitation of (formerly) royal spaces.[98] The ministry soon re-located again, moving to a "modern Sanaani house" that had been built specifically for that purpose in 1974 (see Figure 11). "It's like an office, corridors with rooms on the side, like a modern office building," recalled one diplomat.[99]

Figure 11: Former Foreign Ministry Building in Sanaa

The former foreign ministry building was turned into the mayor's office in 2008.[100]

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[97] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 May 2019.
[98] The al-Kibsi house was described as "a two-storey house with a basement, a 'Mafrag' [living room, usually at the top floor], and a fountain" (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017).
[99] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[100] Photo source: private.

Many years later, in 2007/8, the ministry moved into an even larger edifice that was paid for by the Chinese and was, again, specifically built to serve as a foreign ministry.[101] In explaining the move, one diplomat said, "the ministry was getting bigger and bigger, in personnel, in functioning, it needed the space, new electronic archives...etc".[102] The ministry's ongoing growth was accompanied by a new law determining its structure and organizational tasks. Similar to its legal predecessor in the early 1960s, it was said to have been influenced by the "Egyptian model". As one Yemeni diplomat put it:

> "It was done with the help of the Egyptians, this law. So, we built our ministry in the Egyptian style. We had an [Egyptian] ambassador, I still remember his name, Ambassador Said Abd al-Sallam. As a retired ambassador they sent him to help us to make the rules, the regulations, in the early 70s".[103]

His colleague confirmed that the ministry's structure mirrored the Egyptian influence at the time. "They exactly transferred the structure of Egypt to Yemen, with the help of special advisors from Egypt".[104]

I.4. Learning and embodying the Yemeni diplomatic service

Following the end of the civil war in 1970, central goals of the YAR foreign ministry included the mobilization of development aid and the further training of its staff.[105] As one German diplomat put it in August 1976 "development aid is the deciding almost sole criterium for good relations [with Yemeni diplomats]" (PAAA B36 108795, 1 October 1976). Likewise, German diplomatic sources reported a strong interest on part of the Yemenis to be trained in practical matters of protocol, involving technicalities such as seating orders or the organization of state visits (PAAA B36

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[101] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[102] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[103] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017. His colleague confirmed that Egyptian legal experts helped drafting a new law for the diplomatic service in the early 1970s (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017).
[104] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017
[105] By 1989, the YAR maintained official diplomatic relations with 73 states (PAAA 36 154168, March 1988).

119924, 28 March 1977).[106] While some Yemeni diplomats were trained by foreign governments, others participated in programmes by international organizations,[107] or attended relevant courses at universities abroad.[108] "We received three or four scholarships every year", recalled one Yemeni diplomat, who reported colleagues had enrolled in a course on diplomacy at the University of Oxford.[109]

Available records suggest that Yemeni diplomats' participation in foreign training programmes commenced in the 1970s and lasted well into the 1990s. One respondent re-called his enrolment in a workshop in Europe, where he learned to engage with the media and to approach foreign ministries with funding requests. "We came from developing countries," he remembered, adding that all participating diplomats were trying to bring infrastructure, economic cooperation, and investment to their respective home country. The transfer of such technical knowledge was accompanied by more subtle forms of learning. In practicing media engagement, short interviews were recorded and later presented to and analysed by the group. "As soon as I saw my face on TV, I found that I have a big mustache," remembered the participating Yemeni diplomat and laughed. "What the hell?! What is this mustache? Okay, this is not a mustache for a diplomat." Claiming that a beard was normal, if not expected, in many countries in the Middle East, he figured it was inappropriate in the European context. He vividly compared himself to one of the workshop organizers, "this big guy, tall, big body, and did not have a mustache. So, I looked at my face, I am short, small one, and my mustache is like this…!" – and he gestured a large moustache. "So, as soon as we finished the class […] I reduced it".[110]

This anecdote illustrates that the learning of the Yemeni diplomatic service constitutes an embodied process that transcends the transfer of theoretical knowledge. It also shows that corporeal appearance is socially and materially mediated and closely tied to processes of identity constructions and wider power relations. Normative

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[106] In 1977, the Yemeni government requested the German foreign ministry to train one of its diplomats in matters of diplomatic protocol (PAAA B36 119924, 13 February 1977).

[107] Allegedly, the UN, through the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR), offered training to Yemeni diplomats in New York and Geneva (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017).

[108] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017

[109] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.

[110] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 September 2017.

professional images and practices are (re-)learned and (re-)produced in a context of material inequality: Yemeni diplomats travel to Europe where they are taught to draft funding requests and alter their bodily appearance so as to match the "European mainstream".[111] Certain imageries and practices are voluntarily translated and at least partially adopted in a process that resembles the "self-colonization" and "international socialization" described in the previous chapter.

The corporeal and affective aspects of Yemeni diplomacy were further reflected in Saleh's "hospital diplomacy", which frequently bypassed Yemeni embassies and diplomats.[112] Throughout the 1980s, Saleh (and his family members) visited the military hospital in Koblenz, Germany, for regular medical check-ups. Many of these visits were linked to meetings with the German president. Thus, in 1984, the German foreign ministry thanked the hospital in a formal letter for the care and service provided to both the Yemeni president and people close to him. "Thereby the political relations, in whose development we are very interested, are complemented with a personal component, which is particularly important in Arab countries" (PAAA B36 137776, 2 May 1984). In this example, the human body emerges as a biological organism, whose sustenance and care shapes diplomatic practice and inter-state relations. This process is not detached from broader material contexts, as "the body is never isolated in its activity but always already engaged with the world" (Weiss, 1999, p.1). The unequal distribution of medical equipment and expertise was reflected in diplomatic practice, providing German diplomats and politicians with an advantage, if not leverage, in its diplomatic relations with Yemen.

Corporeal aspects of diplomacy also informed the increasing securitization of Sanaa's diplomatic scene. As discussed in the previous chapter, the centralization of state power under Saleh was accompanied by a strengthening of the military and the intelligence sector. Possibly as a result, Yemeni government officials demonstrated

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[111] "Europe" and "European" are treated here as hyperreal terms in that they refer to certain figures of imagination that are grossly generalized and whose geographical referents remain somewhat indeterminate.

[112] For instance, in August 1984, Ali Abdullah Saleh sent his seven children as well as a supervisor for two weeks to Cologne for a medical check-up in the nearby clinic in Wiesbaden. He informed the German foreign ministry but asked them not to share that knowledge with the Yemeni embassy in Bonn, which did not know of his plans (PAAA B36 137777, 13 August 1984).

increasing suspicion against foreigners, especially diplomats, whose interaction with the local population was severely constrained. In August 1983, an announcement was made requiring foreign diplomats in Sanaa to inform the foreign ministry's protocol department about the date and topic of each meeting they intended to have with Yemeni officials and ordinary citizens. The movement of foreign bodies became closely monitored and restricted, which shaped diplomatic practice and relations. German diplomats at the time suggested three possible reasons for the government's tightened control: 1) the foreign ministry's increasing bureaucratization; 2) concern about diplomats' potentially subversive influence; and 3) "the strange fear of espionage". The latter had escalated to such an extent that, according to one German diplomat, "a simple map, which could be purchased last year in any book shop, can [now] only be bought with a special permit issued by the foreign ministry" (PAAA B36 137776, 13 August 1983).

II Learning the Yemeni diplomatic service in the PSRY/PDRY

Under British colonial rule, South Yemen was denied any claims to sovereign statehood and was forbidden to establish official diplomatic relations with foreign governments. While a "minister of external affairs" was appointed in 1959, it was a meaningless title as responsibility for foreign affairs remained firmly in the hands of the British (Little, 1968). In acknowledgment of British colonial power over South Yemen, foreign officials refrained from establishing any embassies in Aden. Instead, a few countries sought representation through lower-ranked consulates, such as France, India, Italy, and the US.[113] Others relied on the establishment of so-called "honorary consulates" (PAAA B12 938, 9 June 1954), institutions that are even further removed from the formal state representation of embassies.[114] Honorary consulates are offices that focus on administrative tasks and may be led by non-diplomats of a nationality different to the country they represent. In 1953, German foreign ministry employees contemplated establishing a consulate in Aden. Fearing that it would upset

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[113] These countries were reported to have consulates in Aden in 1954 (PAAA B12 938, 9 June 1954).
[114] In June 1954, the following professional consulates existed in Aden: France, India, Italy, the USA. The following countries had "honorary consulates" in Aden: Ethiopia, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Lebanon, Norway, Portugal, Sweden (PAAA B12 938, 9 June 1954)

the British, they ultimately decided against it and instead opted for the creation of an honorary consulate (PAAA B12 938, 16 November 1953). After all, Aden was considered part of Britain's overseas territory, "where for strategic reasons, the British government generally did not like seeing foreigners and foreign representation" (PAAA B12 938, 16 November 1953).

It was only with independence on 30 November 1967, that the PSRY/PDRY established a fully functioning ministry of foreign affairs and started building its diplomatic service. Its first minister of foreign affairs was Sayf al-Dhalai, who had emerged as a skilful negotiator during independence talks with the British in Geneva (Brehony, 2011). Under his discretion, first diplomatic missions were set up abroad in 1968.

British and South Yemen representatives had already agreed to enter into full diplomatic relations once independence was formally announced in Geneva. Only a few days after its independence, the PSRY government gave its "agrément" to British ambassador Hooper (NA FCO/8/282). In May 1968, it then announced the appointment of its own ambassadors to the UK, the US/UN, Egypt, and the USSR (NA FCO/8/282).

The early development of the PSRY diplomatic service illustrates the close relationship between diplomatic relations, state sovereignty, and international recognition. According to Eckes (2015), external sovereignty hinges on a government's ability to take effective action at the international level, most notably by entering into diplomatic relations – a step that is widely presumed to require international recognition (Murphy and Stancescu, 2017). In other words, the demonstration of external (diplomatic) competence, and the success of a government's claim to statehood, are inherently relational and dependent on the policy choices of foreign governments.

In the case of South Yemen, international recognition and external sovereignty were denied to the Federation for the political reason of not upsetting British colonizers. Likewise, it appears that British colonizers, while willing to grant increasing domestic (administrative) autonomy to Yemenis, were reluctant to give up their control over Yemen's foreign affairs. After all, the building of formal diplomatic structures required

international recognition and was as such considered a constitutive step toward external state sovereignty, or "statehood proper". Not willing to risk their position of control, the British blocked Yemeni politicians from developing any external relations, let alone a functioning foreign service. Many years later, the historical link between Yemen's diplomatic service and (external) state sovereignty re-gained in significance. With the outbreak of war in 2015, having a diplomatic service became crucial to regime survival.


Figure 12: PRSY Letterhead

Once the PRSY embassy was established in London, its members of staff began using symbolic objects and markers similar to those used in other embassies.[115]

As was the case in the north, building a diplomatic service in the PRSY (and later PDRY) constituted a lengthy process of learning. The first PRSY ambassadors to the

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[115] NA FCO/8/1705

UK and the US/UN were both young men without any prior diplomatic experience. Ali Jafr Muhammed Nasser was only 30 when being posted as ambassador to the UK. He had previously attended government schools in Aden and was educated at university level in the UK, where he spent six years in London, taking a degree in mathematics and chemistry, and one year in Edinburgh, on a post-graduate teachers' course. Upon his return to Aden he was appointed deputy dean of Aden College in 1967 before joining the young PSRY government. As British officials noted, appearing to speak from a position of superiority, "he seems […] to be somewhat overwhelmed by his new role as Ambassador and this might show itself in shyness and taciturnity" (NA FCO/8/282). Prior to taking office in London, Ali Jafr Muhammed Nasser was invited to a cocktail party at the British embassy in Aden. Following the event, British ambassador Hooper reported to the Foreign Office,

> "Ali Ja'afar is of course completely new to diplomatic life, and the thought of all the formal side, in particular climbing into a boiled shirt and white tie (which I suggested he should hire from Moss Bros. if he could reconcile it with his Arab Conscience!) and going to see the Queen seems to be rather on his mind" (NA FCO/8/282).

Minuscule practices of clothing, orientalising language (e.g. Arab conscience), and individual emotional clues (e.g. Ali Jafr's discomfort) point to wider power relations and processes of socialization within the world of diplomacy.[116]

Similar to Ali Jafr, Ismail Said Noman was only 27 when he was appointed ambassador to the United States and the United Nations. Prior to his diplomatic career, he had studied chemistry in the US and worked in the Aden Electricity Corporation. Like other appointed diplomats at the time, he was assumed to have been a member of the NFL, though not a very high-ranking one. According to British analysis "one can only assume that the Southern Yemen Government chose him because they could not find anyone else and, more positively, because of his American experience" (NA FCO/8/282).

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[116] Fadhl Ahmad Sallami, who took on the role of UK ambassador after Ali Ja'afar, had also attended Aden College and used to serve in various government departments under British rule prior to independence (NA FCO/8/1705).

In September 1968, the PSRY showcased its diplomatic activity at the UN in New York, sending a delegation of four representatives to the General Assembly, including Ismail Noman and Jaffer Muhammad Nasr, as well as two Foreign Ministry employees, Anwar Qutb and Abu Bakr Shafiq.[117] Abu Bakr Shafiq had only recently been appointed ambassador in the foreign ministry after having been replaced as governor of the first province (which included Aden) - "probably to keep him on the pay-roll", as a British diplomat suggested at the time (NA FCO/8/282). By 1970, the PSRY (PDRY) had a diplomatic representative in the United Kingdom, the United Arab Republic, the USSR, East Germany, the United Nations, Somalia, China, and Ethiopia (NA FCO/8/1446).

Following the re-shuffling of the Cabinet in 1970, Ali Salim al-Beedh became foreign minister, assisted by Permanent Secretary Mohammed Hadi Awad, who had also attended a teachers' course in Edinburgh during British occupation (NA FCO/8/282).[118] The ministry at the time was structured into the minister's office, a political department, a Western division, and a department for Protocol and Consular Affairs (NA FCO/8/1446). With only four departments, the foreign ministry was considerably smaller than the ministry of interior, for example, which had over ten departments at the time (NA FCO/8/1446). Later, regional divisions were added within the ministry of foreign affairs covering 1) Eastern Europe and the SU, 2) Asia and Australia, as well as 3) Africa and Latin America (PAAA B36 137731, 19 November 1982; PAAA B36 137894, 16 December 1986). The size of departments was reflective of the PDRY's foreign policy emphases. In June 1981, for instance, the one-man department for Western affairs was increased to three employees, reflecting the growing importance of Western countries to the PDRY (PAAA B36 137731, 9 June 1981).

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[117] Ismail Noman and Ali Jafr Muhammad Nasr were described as "lightweight young men with no diplomatic experience" (NA FCO/8/282).
[118] The former president and prime minister Qahtan al-Sha'bi refused to cooperate with the new regime and declined a fairly substantial pension "and a choice of an Ambassadorship in any country he cares to name" (NA FCO/8/1446).

Figure 13: Former PDRY Foreign Ministry

This photo was allegedly taken in the 1970s and shows the PDRY foreign ministry building in Aden. It was found in the same "Facebook archive" than Figure 7.[119]

Throughout the 1970s, the PDRY's diplomatic service expanded further, with missions being added in Iraq, the Arab League, and Lebanon (PAAA B36 104807, 1973). By November 1975, the young republic had established formal diplomatic relations with 40 states, a number that rose to 73 by 1980 (PAAA B36 108803, 10 November 1975; PAAA B36 137633, 15 August 1980). Among those, 25 states were represented in Aden, including the Soviet Union, Somalia, Romania, Korea, India, East Germany, France, Egypt, Cuba, China, the UK, and Bulgaria.

All of the PDRY's high-ranking diplomats were party members (PAAA B36 137731, 1 November 1982), many of whom had studied abroad and held high-ranking positions in government prior to their diplomatic appointment.[120] "They were not career- and

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[119] [Untitled illustration of the former PDRY Foreign Ministry building in Aden]. Retrieved 6 February 2019 from https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.350057438429477&type=1

[120] In October 1977, Dr. med. Abdel Aziz Addaly, who previously served as minister of health, was appointed as ambassador to Moscow, for example (PAAA B36 119926, 25 October 1977).

professional diplomats but party advocates", one Yemeni diplomat claimed in 2017.[121] As was the case in the north, diplomatic appointments in the PDRY were driven by notions of reward and/or exile. Centering on loyalty and trust, they were highly responsive to political power struggles. In 1981, for instance, newcomer-president Ali Nasser Mohammed got rid of the incumbent chief of the general staff by appointing him ambassador to Ethiopia (PAAA B36 137730, 17 February 1981). The move was intended to undermine the position of the second most powerful man in the PDRY, Ali Ahmad Nasser Antar. Rather than dismissing Antar directly from his position as defense minister, Ali Nasser Mohammed began removing powerful figures in his immediate military surrounding (PAAA B36 137730, 17 February 1981). Another example of enforced "diplomatic exile" occurred in the aftermath of violent 1986-events, when Dr. Ali Muthana Hassan was posted as new ambassador to Bonn, Germany. He had previously served as director of the foreign minister's office and was considered an influential figure representing a powerful political grouping in the governorate of Lahj. He was presumed to be ambitious and it was rumored that his diplomatic posting was a way "to simultaneously satisfy and neutralize him" (PAAA B36 137894, 19 November 1986).[122] In total, 13 new ambassadors were posted abroad following the deadly clashes of 1986. While some filled diplomatic posts that had been vacant, for instance in Budapest and Delhi, others replaced ambassadors who were suspected of continuously siding with the ousted president Ali Nasser Mohammed, for instance in Djibouti and Rome (PAAA B36 137894, 30 September 1986).

II.1. Liminal diplomatic space and the securitization of diplomatic practice

Much like their northern counterparts, foreign diplomats in Aden were often viewed with suspicion by the central government, whose officials were wary of potentially corrupting external influences. Diplomatic representatives from abroad were closely monitored and highly constrained in their movement and interaction with locals. In 1987, an Aden-based German diplomat wrote:

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[121] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017
[122] He had studied in Paris, where he also did his PhD in international law. He previously served as Chargé d'affaires in the mission to the UN in Geneva (PAAA B36 137894, 19 November 1986).

"Having contact with foreigners is a punishable offence for Yemenis. Besides grocery shopping or similar forms of 'cultural contact', each conversation [with Yemenis] requires a prior written appointment [scheduled] by the foreign ministry. Natives are only allowed to visit the embassy if they received permission by the protocol department. In front of the embassy, an armed soldier of the security forces ensures that nobody enters without such permission. In Aden, the maintenance of close [personal] contacts is only possible within the very small colony of foreigners, in this case, especially with the other three Western embassies (Great Britain, France, and Italy). Diplomats are not allowed to leave the city of Aden without written permission" (PAAA B36 140010, 27 January 1987).

PDRY diplomats as well were closely monitored, suggesting that the diplomatic realm was seen by central government officials as a multi-functional field that came with both benefits and risks. In particular, diplomats' relations with foreign actors and potential exposure to oppositional political ideas was regarded as a threat, running the risk of complicating diplomats' loyalty to the PDRY government. Such suspicion was presumably amplified by geographical distance, which stood in the way of governmental surveillance, and could have deadly consequences. In 1980, the PDRY foreign minister Mohammed Saleh Mutea, who served as interior minister (1969-1973) and as foreign minister (1973-1979) was accused of conspiratorial relations with the Saudi secret service and of plotting to turn the PDRY into a conservative Islamic state (PAAA B36 137730, 7 March 1981). Mohammed Saleh Mutea was executed for his alleged crimes soon after accusations against him were issued (PAAA B36 137730, 4 March 1981). A year later, in summer 1981, the head of the ministry's department for Western countries was also executed. He had worked closely with al-Mutea and, like his former boss, was accused of having spied for imperial powers and Saudi Arabia (PAAA B36 137730, 6 August 1981).

While these events resemble a staged Greek drama, marked by conspiracy and deadly power struggles, the government's suspicion against PDRY diplomats was not entirely unfounded. In 1982, diplomatic German cables sent from Aden mention the planning of a coup d'état by South Yemenis who lived in exile. The potting notably involved Mohammed Saeed Abdullah, the incumbent PDRY ambassador to Hungary,

who used to work as the head of the secret service under the former PDRY president Abdul Fattah Ismail. Ambassador Mohammed Saeed Abdullah was said to have met with Abdul Fattah Ismail, who lived in exile, on multiple occasions in 1982 and allegedly handed out unauthorized diplomatic passports to members of the conspiracy (PAAA B36 137730, 7 September 1982; PAAA B36 137730, 27 September 1982).

III Between unification and division: representing the Republic of Yemen

Diplomatic cooperation between YAR and PDRY representatives preceded unification. Already in 1977, the two Yemeni heads of state, Ibrahim al-Hamdi and Salim Rubai Ali, agreed that each Yemeni embassy should co-represent the other in countries where one state lacked representation (PAAA B36 119926, 26 February 1977). Similarly, northern and southern diplomatic representatives began making public statements in the name of both Yemeni governments in the late 1980s, for example at the FAO conference in Rome in 1989 (PAAA B36 154169, 20 November 1989). "When Yemeni diplomats were debating at the UN, one representative would speak on behalf of the other between 1987 and 1990", recalled one Yemeni diplomat.[123] As early as 1989, embassies began uniting following a strict 50-50 rule. Half of the embassies were headed by northern ambassadors, who were assisted by financial and administrative attachés from the south, and vice versa. Notably, this rule only applied to the level of ambassador and positions crucial to the allocation of resources. In Germany, the newly established "Republic of Yemen" kept the former YAR embassy building, with YAR diplomat Yacubi remaining ambassador there.[124] In the UK, the embassy building of the former PDRY in Cromwell Road, South Kensington, was turned into the official representation of the new unified republic. In addition to merging Yemeni embassies abroad, foreign embassies in Aden were converted into consulates (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.46).

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[123] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017.
[124] In a diplomatic note sent to the German foreign ministry in May 1990, the Yemeni embassy formally announced unification and the establishment of the "Yemen Republic", which, as was emphasized, had its own national anthem, its own flag, and its own "state logo". Notably, the notification was validated by the new stamp, illustrated above (PAAA B36 154169, 22 May 1990).

BOTSCHAFT
DER
...SCHEN ARABISCHEN REPUBLIK
BONN

321.21 JEM

سفارة الجمهورية العربية اليمنية
بـــون

VERBALNOTE

Die Botschaft der Jementischen Arabischen Republik
begrüßt das Auswärtige Amt und beehrt sich das
Auswärtige Amt darüber zu informieren, daß die
Botschaft von Jemen einen neuen Siegel mit
sofortiger Wirkung hat, wie folgt:

1.- Alter Siegel, ab sofort UNGÜLTIG

2.- Neuer Siegel ab sofort GÜLTIG

Die Botschaft der Jementischen Arabischen Republik
benutzt diesen Anlaß erneut den Ausdruck seiner
ausgezeichneten Hochachtung zu versichern.

BONN, den 22. August 1989

AN DAS
AUSWÄRTIGE AMT

BONN

Auswärtiges Amt
Protokoll - 701-9
An Ref. 311
mit der Bitte um

Figure 14: YAR Embassy Stamps

The YAR embassy in Bonn informed the West German foreign ministry as early as 1989 of its new representation and corresponding changes in its emblems and stamps.[125]

The same 50-50 rule that regulated the merger of Yemeni embassies also applied to the fusion of its northern and southern foreign ministries, which was initially headed by two foreign ministers: Abd al-Karim al-Iryani (north) and Abd al-Aziz al-Dali (south) (Bonneyfoy, 2018). Northern heads of departments were assisted by southern deputy directors and the other way around.[126] The decision to combine the employees of two ministries drastically increased the overall size of the new foreign ministry. Several Yemeni diplomats claimed that the PDRY government, in an attempt to boost its

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[125] PAAA B36 154169, 22 August 1989.
[126] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017.

influence, had at least doubled the number of its foreign ministry employees shortly before unification.[127] Implying ongoing indignation over what was perceived as foul play, one diplomat proclaimed, "until now, we still are trying to get rid of that legacy".[128]

North-south divides within the foreign ministry were revived during the 1994 war, when several diplomats supported their former political leaders.[129] As one interviewee put it, "we had one country, one embassy, but different views among the staff".[130] Reports of open conflict between Yemeni diplomats are numerous, pointing to the UN and Syria among other places. At UN level, Yemeni diplomats from the south are said to have called for separation, while their colleagues from the north promoted unity. Their diverging claims and agendas were allegedly supported by different foreign ambassadors. [131] Likewise, open conflict reportedly erupted between Yemeni embassy employees in Damascus and elsewhere.[132]

Notwithstanding such internal divisions, institutional structures continued to evolve. Regional departments were established in the aftermath of unification, with desks covering countries, sub-regions, and/or specific topics.[133] In 1991, "Law No. 2 of 1991 Concerning the Diplomatic and Consular Service" was issued, outlining basic structures and practices within the Yemeni diplomatic service. Though having been amended over the years, it still applied at the time this research was conducted.

The ministry's re-structuring involved the establishment of a diplomatic training institute, which took on an important role in the hiring and coaching of Yemeni diplomats.[134] According to Yemeni law, newly recruited diplomats "must have passed the entrance examination conducted for that purpose by the ministry" (article 29). Before commencing their work, they were further required to spend one year at the training institute. In addition to coaching new recruits, the institute offered courses to experienced diplomats, even ambassadors, teaching them on specific topics (e.g.

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[127] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[128] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[129] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017.
[130] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017.
[131] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 21 December 2017.
[132] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 May 2019.
[133] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.
[134] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.

foreign direct investment) or preparing them for upcoming postings. Occasionally, the institute also provided training to officials from other ministries who engaged in international affairs or dealt with foreigners.[135] While a large part of diplomats' training was thereby moved "in-house," the option of external training remained. Article 66 of the ministry's diplomatic law specifically outlines the possibility of obtaining a certificate or degree (abroad) "in fields related to diplomatic work". Application of the law has been inconsistent, with one diplomat describing the early 2000s as a "period of implementation of the law", during which new recruits entered the foreign service by passing the entrance exams.[136]
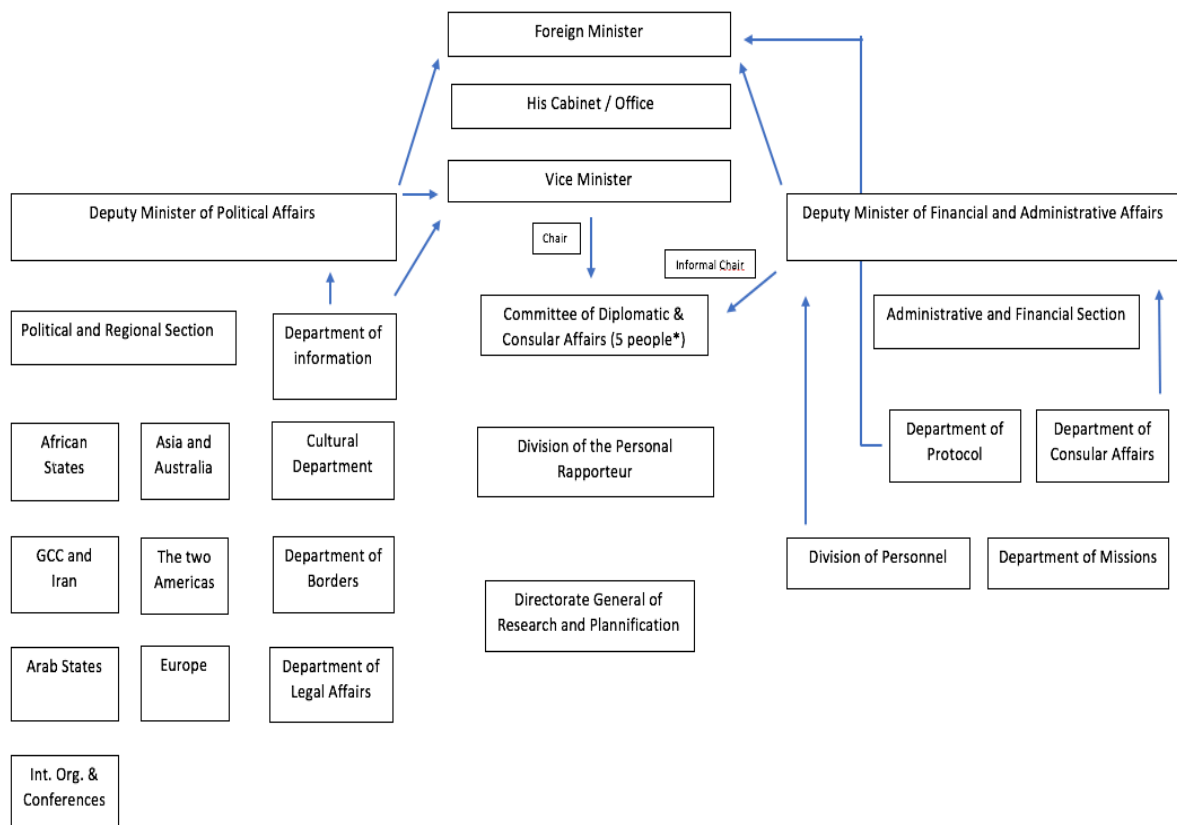
Figure 15: Structure of the Yemeni Foreign Ministry

This figure portrays the structure of the Yemeni foreign ministry (until 2002) as described by Yemeni diplomats in 2017.

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[135] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.
[136] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 May 2019.

The Yemeni foreign ministry was structurally divided into a financial and administrative section (including civil servants working on largely technical and managerial affairs) and a section of "political affairs" (employing diplomats who worked abroad). Both sides contained a range of departments and divisions, whose number, size, thematic focus, and level of activity would vary, flexibly adapting to changing political realities.[137] The Department of Borders, for instance, was created in the early 1990s, at a time when Yemen faced a range of border issues with Eritrea and Saudi Arabia. While the department was considered important between 1994 and 2000, it was described as "not very active" at the time this research was conducted.[138]

Similarly, the subdivisions within each ministry department would reflect shifting political needs. Within the GCC & Iran department, for instance, a single desk was deemed sufficient for covering Oman, while an entire section dealt with affairs related to Saudi Arabia.[139] Further reflecting the ministry's institutional fluidity was the emergence and disappearance of official positions. For a while two deputy ministers for political affairs were employed by the ministry, for instance. One covered the two Americas, Europe, and international organizations, while the other one focused on African, Asian, and Arab countries.[140] Similarly, the ministry temporarily replaced its vice minister with a prime deputy minister in 2002.[141]

Much of this fluidity is related to the personalized social dynamics that have marked the foreign ministry from the beginning. Political sway frequently rested with key figures, which meant the closer diplomats worked to the president, minister, or ambassador the more influence and material benefits they could expect to gain. In fact, important topics were often handled by those in power, not those holding relevant offices.[142] The former director of a department in Sanaa complained that particularly

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[137] Each department was commonly subdivided into smaller organizational units.

[138] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017. In 2000 the Jeddah border treaty was signed, determining the territorial border between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, which has been disputed since the 1930s (Bonnefoy, 2018).

[139] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.

[140] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

[141] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

[142] A further example of the personalized social dynamics inside the Yemeni foreign policy was reported in 1978, when Saleh appointed Yahya Gaghman as his "personal representative", or his "personal ambassador", as one German diplomat put it. Gaghman delivered numerous "special messages" between the president and other heads of states, in a process that side-lined the foreign ministry (PAAA B36 119922, 8 October 1978). In 1980, the foreign ministry received only 1.8% of the

intriguing matters never reached him and other directors. "All the issues, the important issues, we did not know about them".[143] They stayed within the minister's office, which consisted of around 15 employees, each in charge of a different topic or region. The tasks of office employees reflected the ministry's broader structure, specifically its various thematic and regional departments.

Personal and relational qualities such as loyalty and trust frequently motivated departures from codified rules within the Yemeni diplomatic service. One former ambassador admitted openly to have violated existing chains of command by reporting only to those he trusted:

> "During my time as ambassador, serving under Saleh, I sent my reports directly to the office of President Saleh. Usually ambassadors are supposed to send it to the foreign ministry, but I did not trust the foreign ministry, there is no real confidentiality there".[144]

Neo-patrimonialism also impacted appointment practices and shaped individual careers within the ministry. Notwithstanding official rules that prohibited the affiliation with any political party, membership in the General People's Congress (GPC) party was identified as a career-advancing step. It allowed diplomats to build relevant networks and showcase their political support and loyalty to Ali Abdullah Saleh.[145] Lacking the alleged advantages of GPC-membership, one diplomat complained "I am not with the political party of Ali Abdullah Saleh, I am not with the opposition, I was independent, and I am still independent until this time. So, I don't have that one [person] who will push me [i.e. support me]".[146]

Next to diplomats' GPC-membership, kinship was named as an important factor in neo-patrimonial appointment practices. President Saleh's brother-in-law, for instance, worked as cultural attaché in Washington D.C. for fifteen years, before being promoted to the rank of ambassador for another twelve years.[147] In many instances, diplomats

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government's budget (as opposed to 28.1% for the army and 13.3% for the Ministry of Education) (PAAA B36 137629, December 1980).

[143] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 September 2017.
[144] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 February 2017.
[145] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 September 2017.
[146] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 September 2017.
[147] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

openly admitted to having entered the diplomatic service with the help of their fathers and their fathers' contacts. It was no secret that the former minister of financial and administrative affairs, Ambassador Mohammed Hussain Hatem (2000-2014), for instance, had his two sons appointed to the diplomatic service. According to one interviewee, "there was a time, I would say between the 1980s until the early 2000 when the Iryani family, and people who married into the Iryani family, were very prevalent in the foreign ministry".[148] Another diplomat laughed when remarking that "all Yemenis say that the foreign ministry is a house for the Iryani family".[149] Prior to Yemen's unification, Dr. Abdul Kareem al-Iryani served as YAR minister of development, education, prime minister, and minister of foreign affairs (1984-1990). Following unification in 1990, he continued working as foreign minister (1990-1993) and as prime minister (1998-2001), later serving as Ali Abdullah Saleh's political advisor. During Abdul Kareem al-Iryani's time in government, an increasing number of Iryani family members were said to have joined the foreign ministry. Those who were ambassadors "wanted their sons to continue in the same field", which may explain the family's ongoing prevalence within the Yemeni diplomatic corps.[150]

IV Conclusion

"*While the hybrid character of modern diplomacy is universally accepted among practitioners […], there is as yet little scholarship regarding the genealogical details*"

    (Neumann, 2013, p.26).

This chapter's micro-level analysis outlined how shifting personal, material, and environmental factors have impacted the development of Yemen's foreign service. Arguing that mundane and seemingly unremarkable behavioural and material aspects can assign meaning to state institutions, it studied the role of "little things", such as stamps, letterheads, and markers of diplomats' physical appearance. It demonstrated that ideas regarding the diplomatic corps, their enactment and embodiment, have been multiple, fragmented, and at times contradictory. Historically, the (re-) learning

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[148] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 February 2017.
[149] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[150] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

of the Yemeni foreign service has been influenced by multiple external actors, being deeply embedded in global geopolitics and unequal power relations. Institutional developments have also been responsive to domestic politics and socio-political events. The ministry's social composition, for example, has reflected changes in government, and corresponding ideological and organizational shifts. In addition, personal rivalries, ambitions, loyalties, and relationships of kinship, friendship, and trust have impacted diplomatic practice, specifically appointments and promotions. By genealogically tracing the institutional plasticity and formation of the Yemeni diplomatic service, this chapter sheds light onto the heterogeneous hybridity of modern diplomacy.

It also adds historical depth to this study's argument that the Yemeni diplomatic service has to be conceptualized as a dynamic and fragmented socio-material institution to comprehend its paradoxical combination of institutional endurance and fluidity. Historically, the development of Yemen's diplomatic service has been marked by change, as reflected in its initial institutionalization, the expansion of its organizational structure and size, and shifting internal loyalties and fault lines. These transformative processes have been accompanied by various continuities. Not all political ruptures were translated into radical institutional reform. The 1962 revolution, for instance, was marked by the retaining or re-deployment of diplomats who had served and remained associated with the royal Imamate elite. As this chapter's analysis suggests, professionalism may be viewed as a source of continuity inside the Yemeni diplomatic service – an idea that will be further explored in the following analysis.

Besides professionalism, this chapter introduced a number of practices and themes relevant to this study's investigation of the Yemeni diplomatic service after 2011. For instance, it explored the political meaning and practical value of liminal diplomatic space, including reward-and-exile strategies. It also examined internal conflicts, such as the ongoing north-south divide that followed unification in 1990. Such historical background information facilitates the interpretation of later developments by shedding light on historically specific meanings and allowing for the separation between change and continuity.

5 A Revolutionary Moment of Diplomatic Voice and Exit

While much has been written about 2011 events in Yemen (Heinze, 2018; Lackner, 2017; Bonnefoy, 2018; Durac, 2012; Clausen, 2015), to date, no research has zoomed-in on the micro-level events that have occurred within Yemeni state institutions. To address this gap in the literature, and answer this project's second research question, the following analysis focuses on the country's diplomatic corps at the time of the uprising. Using narratives shared by Yemeni diplomats as a starting point for discussion, this chapter specifically focuses on diplomatic practice and diplomats' experience of 2011 events. In doing so, it broadly conceptualizes diplomats as subjects constituted by an inherently reflexive and fluid sense of self and plural conditions of identities (Sökefeld, 1999). This approach acknowledges the unique individual make-up of each state official, which might overlap with, but never be entirely replaced by standardized professional roles. Social and family contexts, as well as individual life experience, are crucial to the formation of subjects that later act and express themselves in a professional capacity. In other words, diplomats' values, emotions, and worldviews are presumed to inform their practice, both at home and at work. Agency therefore exists in and through diplomats' practical involvement in socio-material webs of relations (Sewell, 1992).

Empirically speaking, this study's holistic framing of diplomats facilitates the incorporation of its ethnographic material, much of which contains affective and highly personal registers. At a conceptual level, it allows for the development of a unique framework that captures the importance of individual agency to our understanding of diplomatic institutions and practice. Rather than emphasizing a single "diplomatic habitus" or "role" that is shared by all diplomats and underlies generally consistent patterns of diplomatic practice, this study shifts focus onto diplomats' agential qualities to better understand potentially unique, non-consistent diplomatic activities in a moment of rupture.

Tied to the study of diplomats' individual agency, this chapter elucidates how the 2011 crisis was interpreted by Yemeni diplomats as a particular professional challenge.

More specifically, it examines what viewpoints and behavioural strategies diplomats developed in response to the political uprising and regime change. To structure the multiplicity of diplomatic behaviour that emerged at a time of new political openings, radical politicization, strong emotion, and "cognitive liberation", Hirschman's (1970) conceptual trio of exit, voice, and loyalty is applied. His much-cited framework helps capture diplomats' oscillation between practices marked by diplomatic loyalty on the one hand and expressions of protest, including practices of voice and exit, on the other. At times, diplomats aimed at combining the two, by re-defining loyalty through shifting claims of representation.

In examining diplomats' behavioural choices at work, two alternative framings of diplomatic roles and responsibilities emerge, which have a long-standing history in bureaucratic state theory. On the one hand, interviewees put forth an ideal type that portrays the diplomat as "an obedient civil servant". Closely tied to the norm of loyalty, this conception acted as a powerful baseline influencing the development of diplomatic behaviour in the context of 2011. On the other hand, Yemeni respondents displayed opinions and practices that depict the diplomat as an "emotional political agent". In the midst of Yemen's "revolutionary moment", diplomats chose, and were in some cases torn, between these two ideal types, which both informed diplomatic behaviours. Their navigation of differing professional expectations, emotions, and personal opinion was frequently narrated by reference to "diplomatic professionalism", which emerged as a guiding social construct.

The remaining part of this chapter is divided into three main parts. First, Yemen's uprising and regime change in 2011 are outlined. Next, Hirschman's theoretical framework is introduced alongside relevant insights taken from bureaucratic state and diplomatic theory. The third and main part of this chapter then examines this study's empirical material. It is subdivided into four sections, beginning with diplomats' subjective experience of the 2011 events, which highlights the importance of emotions and the uncertainty and confusion that marked diplomatic responses. The following three sections then explore cases of diplomatic loyalty, voice, and exit. Hirschman's (1970) concepts of voice and exit are used as umbrella terms which help conceptualize reflective diplomatic practices in a moment of change.

I The 2011 uprising, political opportunities, and cognitive liberation

On 17 December 2010, street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in the small Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid. His self-immolation is commonly portrayed as a tragic reaction to the economic and social status quo (Seib, 2012; Mabrouk, 2011; Murphy, 2011). Unpredictably, Bouazizi's death catalysed the "Jasmine Revolution" in Tunisia, which inspired a wider pro-democracy movement in the Middle East and North Africa. In early 2011, "Arab Spring" protests spilled into Yemen, inspiring citizens of all age groups, provinces, and socio-economic backgrounds to rally against long-term president Ali Abd Allah Saleh. A day after Ben Ali stepped down as president of Tunisia, Yemeni students, civil society activists, and political opponents launched large-scale demonstrations in Sanaa, kick-starting the formation of a country-wide protest movement (Durac, 2013). Nascent demonstrations gained real momentum with the resignation of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 (Durac, 2013). His departure motivated thousands of activists to gather in front of Sana'a University, while tens of thousands took to the streets elsewhere in Yemen calling for political change (International Crisis Group, 2011). Main squares in Yemeni cities, including Hodeidah, Aden, Taiz, and Sanaa, were re-named into "change squares", filled with tents that housed not only protestors but also a variety of cultural and political events. In a colourful emotional atmosphere of excitement, anger, hope, and anticipation, poems were recited, political debates were held, passionate chants filled the air, and politicized street graffiti spread in and around urban centres. Emphasising the emotional nature of "revolutionary moments" like the Arab Spring, Bellin (2012) insists that,

> "ordinary people do not take to the street in mass numbers thanks to protracted intellectual meditation on policy alternatives or ideology. Rather, ordinary people take to the streets when they feel compelled by some strong emotion such as anger, fear, or euphoria" (p.136).

Bellin's argument is echoed in Sultany's (2017) study of the 2011 uprisings, which finds that "the Arab uprisings were brimming with emotional intensity and acts of collective creativity" (p.113).

At first, established political actors in Yemen reacted cautiously to protests. Instead of calling for Saleh's resignation, members of Yemen's parliamentary opposition coalition, called "Joint Meeting Party" (JMP),[151] opted for gradual reform and political dialogue (Phillips, 2011). Their approach witnessed a radical U-turn following March 18, when "dozens of men wearing civilian clothes" shot at least 45 protestors using military assault rifles (Human Rights Watch, 2013, para 1). Since "state security forces made no serious effort to stop the carnage", the incident was widely ascribed to Ali Abdullah Saleh – although he never publicly admitted his involvement (Finn, 2011). What became labelled as "Friday of Dignity" added fuel to public and political uproar and reconfigured the socio-political composition of Yemen's protest movement. Importantly, it triggered a large set of defections from the army and Ali Abdullah Saleh's party, the General People's Congress (GPC), which included ministers, members of parliament (Lackner, 2017), and Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, Yemen's second most powerful figure who headed the First Armoured Brigade and "swore to protect the demonstrators" (Lackner, 2017, p.37).

Giving in to rising internal and external pressure, Saleh agreed to negotiate Yemen's future with international actors and representatives of the Yemeni JMP in April 2011. Following protracted negotiations, he eventually signed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative in November 2012, which stipulated his resignation and outlined the details of a two-year transition plan, including convening a National Dialogue Conference (NDC). While losing his office as president, Ali Abd Allah Saleh was granted immunity and remained head of the powerful GPC party. He was replaced by Yemen's former vice president, Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi, whose legitimacy has been contested ever since he took office.

Groups and actors who had initiated and joined the protests were not involved in negotiations and the design of the transition plan. Thus, many perceived the GCC agreement as an inter-elite bargain that reshuffled power among existing players, rather than fundamentally changing state–society relations (Nevens, 2011). As

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[151] The JMP embraces six of Yemen's most prominent opposition parties, including the Islah party. As Phillips (2008) describes it "the JMP was built in defence against the GPC, but it also mirrors one of the GPC's main characteristics – an ideologically bereft umbrella-group for elites that exists to protect their group interests" (p.124).

Clausen (2015) suggests, the exclusion of many activists was in part "facilitated by the UN and the Gulf states, which prioritized short-term stability and dealing with established political actors" (p.19). Side-lined protestors and opposition leaders placed their hope in the National Dialogue Conference, which commenced in March 2013 and was required to include "all forces and political actors" in Yemen, specifically "the youth, the Southern Movement, the Houthis, other political parties, civil society representatives and women" (GCC cited in Lackner, 2012, n.p.).

Acknowledging that developments in Yemen did not amount to a complete reversal of existing power relations, this project suggests that the 2011 uprising and the subsequent political transition contained both "revolutionary" as well as "counter-revolutionary" elements (Sultany, 2017). As early as 2 February 2011, Ali Abdullah Saleh rendered the capital's main "Tahrir Square" inaccessible to protesters by setting up large tents for his political supporters from within the military and security sectors. "All of Saleh's backers were fed and supplied with daily rations of qat, thus ensuring that they stayed and came out on pro-Saleh counter-demonstrations during the following months" (Lackner, 2017, p.36). While this pre-emptive move did not stop protesters from claiming other public spaces, especially "change square" in front of Sanaa University, it illustrates the co-existence of change and conservatism that has marked the 2011 uprising.

As suggested in the following analysis, protests and regime change in Yemen created both "political opportunities" and subsequent cases of "cognitive liberation" (Caren, 2007), which according to political and historical sociologists, shape actors' formation of political goals, strategies, and tactics (Caren, 2007). McAdam (1982) argues that new political opportunities result from "any event or broad social process that serves to undermine the calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured" (p. 41). The emergence of new opportunities may in turn lead to individual cases of "cognitive liberation," the vague feeling "that the current political system lacks legitimacy and […that] participation could make meaningful change happen" (Caren, 2007, p. 2). These and other theoretical approaches to political action are commonly summarized as "political process theory", or simply "opportunity theory". Political process theory has traditionally been applied to social movements operating outside, and often in opposition to, state institutions. Yet, as suggested in this chapter, the

theory may also be used in examining intra-state power struggles and institutional reform. It is complemented in the following analysis by bureaucratic state theory, specifically Hirschman's conceptual trio of exit, voice, and loyalty, and literature on the theoretical framing of bureaucrats and civil servants, including diplomats.

II Hirschman's trio, behavioural "ideal types" and diplomatic practice

In the analysis below, diplomats' practices are categorized and examined with the help of Hirschman's theoretical work on bureaucrats. While Hirschman's conceptual framework is widely applied in contemporary social science research, it has not been used in diplomacy studies, where norms of loyalty are frequently taken for granted and diplomatic agency is often underplayed (e.g. Murray *et al*, 2011). By theorizing a variety of behavioural choices, Hirschman's theoretical work presupposes actors' subjectivity and allows for the study of internal institutional heterogeneity. While his much-cited framework lends itself as a useful tool in analysing the empirical data presented below, it will be shown to require a number of adjustments.

Bureaucracy scholars generally describe exit as the act of physical withdrawal, for instance when positions are no longer regarded as being fulfilling or because bureaucrats "are unwilling to compromise their sense of moral integrity" (Zacka, 2017, p.233). While exit may occur quietly through resignation or transfer (Quinlan,1993), it can also be exercised in tandem with, and as a form of, "voice", through the publication of resignation letters for example (Levinson, 2015). In the latter case, the alternative facing bureaucrats is "not so much between voice and exit as between voice from within and voice from without (after exit)" (Hirschman, 1970, p.104).

Contrary to bureaucratic exits, the option of "voice" is messier as "it can be graduated, all the way from faint grumbling to violent protest" (Hirschman, 1970, p.16). At its broadest, voice implies the articulation and enactment of critical opinions. Following Hirschman (1970), it is here defined as

> "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of

forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion" (p.30).

Choices regarding practices of voice and exit are often impacted by notions of loyalty which is described by Hirschman (1970) as the "special attachment to an organization" (p.77). As a rule, he claims, loyalty "holds exit at bay and activates voice" (p.78). According to Hirschman, loyalty does not necessarily translate into silence, obedience, and strict compliance, but can exacerbate practices of voice or lead to more subtle forms of "loyal muddling" (Levinson, 2015, p.8).

For greater conceptual clarity, the following analysis distinguishes between internal and public expressions of voice, while acknowledging that conceptual boundaries between them are blurry. Taking into account the specificities of the diplomatic profession, it also re-theorizes loyalty as a professional norm closely associated with political neutrality and emotional detachment. As will be shown throughout the following analysis, diplomats oscillated between notions of loyalty on the one hand and practices of protest, including voice and exit, on the other. At times, they aimed at combining the two, by re-defining loyalty through shifting claims of representation. In these instances, voice and exit were justified by reference to diplomats' *loyal* representation of the Yemeni people, as opposed to the regime or president.

In examining diplomats' behavioural choices at work, two alternative framings of diplomatic roles and responsibilities emerge. Both are reflected in academic writing, specifically bureaucratic state and diplomatic theory.[152] On the one hand, interviewees put forth an ideal type that portrays the diplomat as 'an obedient civil servant'. Closely tied to the norm of loyalty, this conception acted as a powerful baseline influencing the development of diplomatic behaviour in the context of 2011. On the other hand, Yemeni diplomats displayed opinions and practices that painted an image of the diplomat as an 'emotional political agent'. In the midst of Yemen's 'revolutionary moment', diplomats chose, and were in some cases torn, between these two ideal types, which both informed diplomatic practices. At a time of rupture, no course of

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[152] Diplomatic theory describes the multi-disciplinary writing on diplomats and diplomacy, including recent literature in the fields of international relations and political geography.

action seemed obvious or common-sensical. Diplomatic practice was reflective and its analysis foregrounds diplomats' creative agency (Bode, 2017).

The "obedient servant view" mentioned above, and its conceptualization of the rule-oriented, apolitical, and impersonal state actor, has been traced by scholars to the intellectual current of "civil prudential thought", which first emerged in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Perceiving the state as a structure of offices, civil prudentialists argued that its various office holders had to "learn to distinguish their responses to questions facing them in an official capacity from other commitments they might have, whether in relation to clan, kith or religious belief" (DuGay, 2007, pp.127-128). Linking political neutrality to emotional detachment, scholars following the civil prudential tradition frequently cited Max Weber, who famously argued that bureaucracy "develops the more perfectly, the more it is 'dehumanized', the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation" (Weber, 1978, p.975).[153]

These arguments presumably impacted the field of diplomacy studies, where the "ideal ambassador" has been described "as a person governed by his reason rather than by his passions" (Bull, 1977, p.169).[154] Diplomacy scholars tend to view the diplomatic service as a neutral conduit that serves the technocratic execution of normative and value-based decisions made by politicians elsewhere. In fact, as Russell (2004) notes in her survey of classical theorists, there exists a tradition advocating the ability of diplomats to "repress their emotions" (p. 394).

This conceptual approach came under criticism for its empirical inaccuracy and dubious normativity (Applbaum, 1999), especially in the aftermath of World War II. Weber's portrayal of bureaucrats was brushed aside as a bizarre sketch of an ideal type that is rarely, if ever, found in social life and that cannot be empirically proven. Decrying the horrors of impersonal Nazi bureaucracies, scholars also broadened the scope of bureaucratic responsibility to include wider notions of individual morality

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[153] To date, bureaucrats are expected to ignore personal moral preference or sentiments (Du Gay, 2007), instead working *sine ira et studio*, without anger and fondness (Albrow, 1997; Weber, 1978; Hoag, 2011).

[154] A survey conducted within the US State Department in the 1960s indicates that 70 to 80 percent of employees endorsed the idea of "acting rationally and avoiding emotional display" (Harr, 1969, p.128).

(DuGay, 2007). The ideal bureaucrat, including diplomats, was theorized to measure his or her conduct "not so much against the demands of their office, but against a wider conception of moral principle and socially beneficial outcomes" (DuGay, 2007, p.112). It was argued that bureaucratic and diplomatic actors are involved in *doing* politics and that diplomatic behaviour is necessarily emotional. The diplomatic profession in particular was acknowledged to require judgment calls and diplomats' own interpretation, emotional capacity, and situational instinct. In fact, it has been argued that diplomats, more than other state officials, need to mix the formal with the personal whilst at work. After all, diplomacy is "a system of communication between strangers" (DerDerian, 1993, p.224) and as such "rooted in relationships, not transactions" (Gould-Davies, 2013, p.1465). As Jones and Clark (2015) aptly put it:

> "Diplomats are not merely apparatchiks giving voice to a full-throated state-centered vision of power. Critically they are individuals with their own lived experiences and subjectivities that constitute the everyday of the diplomatic world" (p.3).

In contrast to the "obedient civil servant" image, these arguments portray diplomats as more than mere implementers of foreign policy; they appear as emotional political agents who play an important role in shaping international relations. Both perspectives were utilized by Yemeni diplomats in narrating their behavioural choices and practices during 2011, notably informing their varying accounts of "diplomatic professionalism".

III "Revolutionary diplomats"? Tracing experiences of the 2011 uprising

> "I was going to receptions less because it is embarrassing to go, because they gonna ask you [about the uprising]... and if you say what you are believing [in change, or the Arab Spring] it is not professional, and if you say something good about your government or Ali Abdullah Saleh, they will laugh at you. It was emotional. So, I went to receptions less. When I was meeting with my Arab diplomatic friends, like from Egypt or Tunisia, [...and] they asked, I said 'Insha'allah it will be better' and they laughed and they told me 'we used to say

the same thing, but give it a few months and you will be saying something more honest about Ali Abdullah Saleh'".[155]

As indicated by this mid-level Yemeni diplomat, the 2011 uprising impacted Yemen's diplomatic corps in multiple ways. For one, it triggered a range of emotional responses, with diplomats describing their experience of 2011 using words such as "anger",[156] "shock", [157] "relief", [158] "worry", [159] "surprise", [160] and "care". [161] Taking diplomats' expressive language seriously, this study foregrounds emotions as "a key element of human thought and behaviour" (Hall, 2015, p.7). Feeling uncomfortable at diplomatic events, the diplomat referred to above developed strategies of avoidance, indicating that strongly felt emotions may inform professional conduct. Whether "happy, tired, anxious or relaxed, we virtually always mentally operate on a background of emotions and constantly apprehend the world from a certain emotional perspective" (Roy, 2016, p.84). By paying attention to diplomats' emotional expressions and their political effects, this study hopes to add to a small body of literature, which offers insight into diplomats' use of emotions as a calculative tool (Hall, 2015; Jones, in press).[162] While the feelings conveyed in the context of this research seemed sincere, and no obvious strategic purpose could be read into them, emotional genuineness is difficult to prove. Given the blurry line between earnestly felt and strategically deployed emotions, this project focuses primarily on the emotional effects that informed diplomats' behavioural choices.

Emotions interacted closely with a strong sense of incertitude. Many diplomats experienced the 2011 events as "a period of uncertainty"[163] and confusion. "What will happen next? What will we do? What should we do? Diplomats were all confused," commented one respondent. [164] A central dilemma revolved around professional

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[155] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[156] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[157] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[158] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[159] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[160] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 September 2017.
[161] Interview with a Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.
[162] Hall's book "Emotional Diplomacy" (2015) examines "the display of mandated emotions as part of one's professional role" (p.2). Likewise, Jones (in press) explores "the calculative performance of emotions" within the United Nations Security Council (p.2).
[163] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[164] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

norms, especially those associated with loyalty and representation. In devising behavioural strategies, diplomats oscillated between 1) perceived norms of loyalty, political neutrality, and supressed personal emotions and 2) moral, emotional, political, and/or opportunistic activism. As one interviewee, who worked abroad during 2011, framed the impasse, "should you as a Yemeni diplomat do something against Ali Abdullah Saleh? […] Or do you have to be a professional and not do anything and stay with the government? It was a very big question I faced".[165] He added, "I wanted to side with the people, but I am an official, so what is the right thing to do?"[166] Ultimately, the diplomat in question followed the lead of his superior, the Yemeni ambassador, who publicly took position against Ali Abdullah Saleh. Describing the ambassador as a role model, he explained, "he had a huge impact on me; I tried to be like him".[167] As this indicates, diplomats' opinions and behaviour do not occur in a vacuum but are embedded in multiple webs of transnational relations, including professional affiliations within and across embassies.

III.1. Diplomatic loyalty as a baseline assumption and professional norm

In narrating 2011 events, Yemeni diplomats celebrated newly emergent protest activities, while also engaging in considerable (self-)criticism. Critical voices commonly emphasized diplomatic norms of loyalty, political neutrality, and the strict containment of emotions at work. In describing what a diplomat should or should not do, respondents did not commonly cite national diplomatic laws or international legal documents pertaining to diplomatic conduct, such as the Vienna Convention. Instead, expressions of diplomatic professionalism were assumed to be self-evident, acting as an unspoken baseline and threshold against which behavioural strategies were developed and judged.

Emphasizing "political neutrality" and "emotional detachment", the norms of loyalty expressed by Yemeni respondents resemble "obedient civil servant" views, which, as mentioned above, have long been promulgated within the fields of bureaucratic and diplomatic theory. Claiming that "one's own beliefs about the good are never good

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[165] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[166] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[167] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

reasons for action" (Applbaum, 1999, p.124), writers and theorists have long expected state officials to serve consecutive governments no matter their party politics. "The key to being able to do this […] is to cultivate a degree of indifference to the enthusiasms of all political parties; to display, in effect, party political impartiality" (DuGay, 2007, p.115). In this view, diplomats are considered neutral agents rather than "political architects" (Keens-Soper & Schweizer, 1983, p.33). While diplomats may share their expertise with superiors, and even raise objections, they must never turn into proactive policy-makers. If their word is disregarded, they are obliged to nevertheless execute instructions, always mindful of the fact that "the civil service, of which the diplomatic service is a branch, is supposed to possess no politics" (Nicolson, 1963, p.81).

Reflecting these normative assumptions, several Yemeni diplomats deemed the concept of a "revolutionary diplomat" to be an oxymoron. As one former ambassador put it, "you cannot criticize the head of state publicly and remain ambassador. You have to make a decision: either you stay and shut up, or you protest and leave".[168] Yemeni diplomats generally agreed that they should not voice their personal political opinion. "How can you continue your work, stay professional, if you side personally with one party?" wondered a senior Yemeni diplomat, who deemed it crucial to maintain professional distance from government positions.[169] "You might say 'my government says…' or 'the position of my government is…'. You have to make clear that it is not *your* position". Others agreed that "you should separate between politics and your work".[170] While one Yemeni ambassador admitted having had "sympathies" with demonstrators, he did not participate in any protest himself "because I thought I am a career diplomat, my sympathies should not matter".[171] In the Yemeni context, being a "*career* diplomat" was equated with professional training, experience, and a range of qualifications, such as language skills. It was contrasted with "non-career diplomats" who entered the diplomatic service through non-merit appointments. As

[168] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[169] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[170] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 July 2017.
[171] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 July 2017.

this indicates, unevenness and difference inside the Yemeni diplomatic service was structured around notions of professionalism and competent diplomatic practice.

In 2011, diplomats' (politically neutral and unemotional) loyalty emerged as a key marker of their professionalism. Pointing to two of his colleagues, one respondent maintained, "they are no real diplomats. They are personally taking sides".[172] Another respondent added, "a diplomat should be a career diplomat. He should serve the government that swore him in".[173] In reflecting on Yemen's 2011 uprising, his colleague agreed, claiming that "professional and smart diplomats never cared about it. They told themselves 'I work for the ministry, the ministry works for the government - *basta*'. You know? Professional… like in any other country".[174]

As these examples illustrate, acting as an "obedient civil servant" was in many cases tied to claims of loyalty, which in turn was considered a professional norm and requirement. While some diplomats foregrounded diplomatic loyalty in explaining their own passivity during 2011, others used the concept to criticize the political activism of their colleagues. Whether or not expressed commitments to loyalty and professionalism constituted sincere motivating factors is difficult to determine. In some cases, diplomats admitted that their "political neutrality" was born out of self-interest and opportunism. One Yemeni ambassador, who worked abroad during the 2011 uprising confessed, "I knew that Saleh would go […]. How, when, I could not have predicted it at that time. But who will take over, that was my worry; and this is why I kept quiet".[175] A further reason for staying silent was the prospect of being recalled to Yemen. "I thought if I resign, I have to go back home. And at that time, I felt that it was not safe. Because the upheaval was still ongoing, so I preferred to stay out".[176] At a time of uncertainty, political neutrality and the practice of professional loyalty appears to have constituted a safe option. "It's not really 'I am a diplomat, I should not be involved with the issues in this country'. It is [rather] some way of escaping a critical

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[172] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[173] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 July 2017.
[174] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.
[175] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[176] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

situation", one diplomat suggested.[177] His colleague agreed, saying, "I kept myself on the sidelines, just watching both [sides]".[178]

Claims of loyalty were not monopolized by diplomatic "quietists". Diplomats who chose to engage in expressions of voice frequently constructed their narratives around the very same concept. In these instances, loyalty either informed self-doubt and criticism, or was modified through shifting claims of representation. For instance, one mid-ranking Yemeni diplomat, in discussing his expressions of "voice", deemed his own practices to be "unprofessional": "This is something I think is not right, when you let your emotions and your political beliefs affect your diplomatic job". Without hesitation he added "[But] I would do the same thing [again] because I believe my country is more important than my career".[179] Here, notions of professional loyalty are contrasted with moral behavioural clues, i.e. concern for the well-being of society. Diplomats' negotiation of such inner conflict was closely tied to different interpretations of their representative function, producing diverging claims of *who* or *what* was represented. One ambassador, who himself stayed silent throughout 2011, proclaimed that all "ambassadors are supposed to represent the interest of the country. Nothing but the interest of the country".[180] When asked who defined those interests, he laughed out loud, his deep bass voice echoing through his office, "that is a very difficult question," he said, paused, and added "it should be the president, elected by the people". Lowering his voice, he later explained, "some diplomats thought it was difficult to represent the president [in 2011]". Indeed, several of his colleagues put forth alternative views, claiming to represent the country, or the Yemeni people, rather than the head of state. It appears that re-direction of one's representative duty could facilitate the maintenance of diplomats' moral integrity and justify expressions of voice.

The contestation of loyalty that marked the Yemeni diplomatic service in 2011, heightened governmental distrust and led to the increased monitoring of diplomats. Several respondents reported that high-ranking government officials, including the foreign minister, engaged in a range of measures to ensure ongoing diplomatic

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[177] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 September 2017.
[178] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[179] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[180] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 July 2017.

obedience. In Sanaa, the foreign minister was said to have gone to great lengths to convince ministry employees of the risks and danger contained in the uprising and its socio-political aftermath.[181] Moreover, diplomats claimed that in early 2011 the foreign ministry sent circulars to Yemeni ambassadors asking them to report on dissenting embassy employees[182] and to pledge their loyalty to Saleh's government in writing.[183] "All of us ignored it," claimed one Yemeni diplomat in looking back on 2011 events. "We didn't send anything, and we didn't really talk about it".[184]

While professional norms of loyalty and diplomatic ideal types of obedient civil servants were questioned and re-negotiated in the context of the uprising, they helped support strands of continuity throughout 2011, notably in personnel. For example, the ongoing work of Yemen's long-term foreign minister, Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, who remained in office until 2014, helped ensure "a semblance of continuity in policy and relations, which revolved especially around the issues of fighting terrorism and mobilising international donors" (Bonneyfoy, 2018, p.48). At lower levels, no notable changes in staff were reported in 2011, in spite of considerable internal division and the noticeable contestation of diplomats' loyalty.

III.2. From voice to exit: navigating socio-political uncertainty

At a time of crisis Yemeni diplomats tried "to draw the right trajectories through the stormy waters of [socio-political] turmoil" (Vigh, 2006, p10). Evaluating shifts in their broader context and their own possibilities for movements within it, they formulated a wide range of protest activities, including individual cases of disobedience, sit-ins, the establishment of a diplomatic labour union, and ambassadorial resignations. While all people navigate, "the intensity of our navigational efforts depends on the speed and volatility of social change" (Vigh, 2006, p.13). In 2011, Yemen's socio-political landscape changed rapidly, rendering diplomats' "social navigation" within and beyond the workplace particularly visible.[185] In an exceptional moment of protest and regime

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[181] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 July 2017.
[182] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[183] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[184] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[185] Inspired by practice theory, the concept of navigation is often used in examining practices in unstable and changing contexts (Johnson-Hanks, 2002; Mertz, 2002).

change, marked by people's increasing freedom of expression, established behavioural guidelines were questioned and deviated from. Many diplomats began voicing their opinions more unreservedly and engaged in outright political action, thereby challenging their portrayal as "obedient civil servants". Hirschman's (1970) concepts of voice and exit skilfully frame their diverse behavioural strategies, which foreground the role of emotions and diplomats' political and moral agency.[186]

III.2.1. Syndicates and sit-ins: diplomats' expression of voice

In 2011 the Yemeni diplomatic service was marked by division.[187] "There was a big split in the foreign ministry," a high-ranking official remembered, explaining that some employees were "with the revolution", while others were "with Saleh".[188] While these examples suggest that internal differences were framed in political terms, conflicts and justifications were in fact more complex. In describing the politically-laden context of 2011, one diplomat complained that professional arguments at the time were all too readily squeezed into a with-or-against Saleh binary. When he and a fellow Yemeni diplomat criticized the resignation of Yemeni ambassadors as "unprofessional", he said, others "thought we loved the president. But we defended the Constitution, rules, there should be procedures! But they misunderstood and that's why they attacked us".[189] In moving beyond simplified political binaries, the following analysis suggests that emotions, moral arguments, and professional norms all shape diplomatic behaviour. These interacting factors are studied by reference to broader material configurations, specifically diplomats' self-interested pursuit of securing advantages in the workplace.[190]

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[186] By emphasizing diplomats' emotions and agency this study contributes to a novel body of literature that shifts focus of analysis toward an individual level, exploring emotional and psychological processes taking place 'inside' the diplomat. Examples include Costas (2006), Costas and DerDerian (2010), Rathbun (2014), Liebmann (2008), Holmes (2013), Cornut (2018), and Jones and Clark (2019).
[187] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.
[188] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 July 2017.
[189] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.
[190] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 September 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.

III.2.1.1. Individual internal voice: expressing disobedience and criticism

Diplomats' expression of voice embraced a number of practices. For one, diplomats engaged in individual acts of disobedience, challenging the authority of their superiors. One respondent, who served as ambassador abroad during the uprising, remembered, laughing, that he ignored ministerial instructions in 2011:

> "I remember they [the minister's office] asked us to tell the media that what is happening [is] a revolution against the legitimacy and the Constitution and the president, which we never did. I couldn't do it".[191]

The same ambassador described other instructions that came from the foreign ministry in 2011 as "insane" and "irrational". "The foreign ministry started sending circulars saying that we have to start promoting Yemen as an attraction, a tourist attraction, and I said, 'this will look silly. Come on, I can't do that'".[192] This example suggests that Yemeni diplomats critically evaluated and selectively implemented orders, which rendered their practices highly reflective.

Besides disobeying orders, diplomats were reported to have engaged in individual acts of confrontation and overt verbal criticism of their superiors. Rather than linking such antagonism to the 2011 context, diplomats suggested that individual forms of internally expressed criticism constituted a well-established practice. It appears that diplomats have long provided their opinion, assessment, and recommendations to superiors in embassies and the ministry. "Sometimes, if you want to say your opinion, you can write it in a letter to the foreign minister," remarked one ambassador.[193] He went on emphasizing the importance of keeping differing opinions within the institutional confines of the foreign service.

III.2.1.2. Collective internal voice: joint criticism and the formation of a syndicate

In 2011, diplomats' criticism increased in fervour and was frequently expressed collectively. It centred around internal ministerial practices which were deemed to be unfair, specifically salaries, appointment and promotion procedures, nepotism, and

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[191] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[192] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[193] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 1 December 2016.

corruption. One interviewee vividly remembered a meeting in 2011 during which the minister of foreign affairs and the deputy minister of financial and administrative affairs were accused of corruption and were "verbally attacked by colleagues". He recalled:

> "At that meeting I was looking at his [the foreign minister's] face and at the face of the deputy minister of finance…--they felt so humiliated. They felt weak in front of the employees. Because we blew their cover of corruption […]. And I felt sorry that they felt this way. Really. I felt sorry".[194]

Cases of collective criticism also occurred in Yemeni embassies abroad. In one instance, a Yemeni ambassador recommended his embassy staff to refrain from voicing any public opposition, instead hosting internal get-togethers to exchange political criticism. In explaining his behaviour, he described a fatherly sense of responsibility toward "his" staff. "I felt like I should protect them, I had that obligation".

> "I said 'look, you don't have to do anything public, keep your views to yourself, we can exchange them between us, but don't make them public because you will be punished […].' They liked the idea; we used to go and sit together and criticize Saleh together".[195]

Taking their criticism one step further, diplomats in Sanaa decided to launch a more organized effort at reform by establishing the "Syndicate for Foreign Ministry Employees" (*niqaba mu'athafi wizara al-kharigiyya*). One respondent compared the syndicate's formation to an "institutional revolution", saying:

> "We were picking our battles inside the ministry. At that time, there was an institutional revolution inside Yemen - in all the ministries [people] tried to change [things] from inside".[196]

The syndicate's formation was considered "a result of the Arab Spring",[197] which acted as a catalyst, uncovering cases of long repressed resentment within the foreign ministry. In reflecting on the syndicate's formation, one diplomat singled out the role of "anger" and the professional grievances mentioned above, suggesting that many of

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[194] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[195] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[196] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 September 2017.
[197] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 15 February 2017.

his colleagues "were angry because they didn't get their promotions within a certain period. You know, sometimes, some people waited two or three years longer [than others] to get their promotion". His colleague agreed that "because of the Arab Spring, people started to talk", exchanging complaints and aspirations. "They wanted to get appointed abroad and they wanted to get their promotions".[198]

These anecdotes point to the role of emotions, suggesting they acted as "key determinants" of diplomats' behaviour. In fact, Roy (2016), who has researched the role of emotions in international relations, claims that "we most often behave the way we do because we feel a specific emotion (such as fear or anger) or in order to reach certain emotional states" (p.84). Arguably, the establishment of a syndicate was driven by heightened emotions and presumably inspired by the political activism in 2011.

In addition, social media played a facilitating role in the establishment of the Yemeni diplomatic syndicate. One of the diplomats involved in its set-up remembered, with a sense of pride, that the idea of a syndicate was initially born on Facebook:

> "One of my colleagues wrote about the idea on his Facebook page and then we grabbed the idea. […] There was no such thing as a syndicate to fight for diplomats. A syndicate, '*niqaba*' in Arabic, is almost [always] for workers, there is no such thing for diplomats. But it didn't matter to us, we liked the idea. So, we were fighting for it. We established it".[199]

A preparatory committee was established with the task of drafting a union constitution and board members were elected. Over time, diplomats decided to further specialize their union representation by distinguishing between foreign ministry employees, who were said to work on "technical" administrative and financial affairs, and diplomats who engaged more directly in international relations abroad. In 2014, a second ministerial union, "the syndicate for Yemeni diplomats" (*niqaba al-diplomaseen al-yemeneen*), was established to deal with specific questions regarding diplomats' postings and living conditions abroad, including matters such as health insurance.

As the establishment of the Yemeni syndicate demonstrates, the enactment of "collective internal voice" may have real "structural effects" (Mitchell, 1991, p.94). In

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[198] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[199] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.

Yemen, changes in diplomatic practice manifested in new institutional configurations, indicating that diplomatic institutions are more fluid and adaptive than often assumed (Styhre, 2007). As Casey (2002) aptly put it, "organizations, despite their formal adherence to bureaucratic rationalities and legitimation are really unstable, weakly coherent, fragile ensembles of compromises between constant sources of pressures, constraints and contestation" (pp.76-77). In a moment of political crisis and uncertainty, the internal re-negotiation of power relations may lead to altered institutional practices and structures.

III.2.1.3. Public voice: publicized letters and organized strikes

Besides expressing their "voice" internally, diplomats also began engaging in a broad range of "public voice", including protests, sit-ins, and the publication of a letter of complaint. Motivated by political ideals, opportunism, and emotions, a number of foreign ministry employees joined demonstrations on the streets of Sanaa. "I joined protests in the first four weeks with my friends. I was a diplomat at the time", remembered a young Yemeni respondent, specifying "I did not agree with people who called for a violent and sudden transition. I wanted a smooth, peaceful transition".[200] While diplomats who participated in demonstrations did so outside their official work hours, they also engaged in protest activities whilst at work, blending their expression of voice with their professional roles.

On 2 October 2012, diplomats organized a strike in Sanaa, which according to one interviewee, "was mostly about the dysfunctionality of the diplomatic service".[201] According to newspaper reports, a range of offices and departments of the Foreign Ministry were closed in protest against "nepotism and unfair appointments" (*Marib Press*, 2012, n.p.).[202]

Seemingly inspired by these events, diplomats in embassies outside of Yemen mimicked the idea of public protest. In 2012, Yemeni diplomats in Riyadh and Jeddah, for instance, opposed their salary cuts at the time by threatening to organize a strike (*al-Itaja*, 2012; al-Sufiyani, 2012).

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[200] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.
[201] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017.
[202] For more information read *Azzaman Pan Arab News* (2012).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

فخامة الرئيس علي عبد الله صالح رئيس الجمهورية المحترم

بعد التحية

نحن سفراء الجمهورية اليمنية الموقعون ادناه نشعر بالأسى و الحزن الشديدين و نحن نتابع ما يجري في وطننا العزيز من نزيف مستمر للدماء، ونعبر عن استنكارنا للجريمة النكراء التي حدثت يوم امس الجمعة واودت بحياة أكثر من خمسين مواطناً من المعتصمين ممن كانوا يمارسون حقهم الدستوري في التعبير عن الرأي بالوسائل السلمية أمام جامعة صنعاء، إن هذه الجريمة المروعة اظلت ضمائرنا مما حدا بنا لتوجيه هذه الرسالة لفخامتكم لنطالب بإجراء تحقيق مستقل ومحايد لكشف ملابساتها و سرعة إلقاء القبض على مرتكبيها ومحرضيها وتقديمهم للعدالة.

إننا يا فخامة الرئيس نواجه صعوبة بالغة في إستيعاب ماحدث يوم امس و الذي جاء في أعقاب حوادث مماثلة في عدن وتعز والمكلا والبيضاء، وغيرها من مدن الجمهورية بالرغم من توجيهاتكم الصريحة بحماية المتظاهرين وعدم الإعتداء عليهم، كما أن التفسير الرسمي لما حدث لن يستقيم ويصبح مقبولاً أخلاقياً أمام العالم إلا بتقديم الجناة والمحرضين لينالوا جزائهم الرادع، حيث أن عدم تقديم الجناة للعدالة يجعل من الصعب علينا الدفاع عن التفسيرات الرسمية لها.

إن موقفنا هذا لا ينطلق فقط من تفاعلنا مع الأحداث الدائرة على أرض الوطن - والتي تؤشر الى انزلاق البلاد نحو طريق مجهول لا مخرج منه الا بعملية سياسية شاملة وملزمة لضمان مشاركة اليمنيين جميعا بغض النظر عن انتماءاتهم السياسية في صياغة مستقبل افضل من خلال بناء دولة وطنية تقوم على اساس مؤسسي تلبي تطلعات شعبنا في الحرية و العدالة و الكرامة و التنمية و المساواه - و لكن أيضاً من منطلق إحساسنا بجسامة المسئولية الملقاه على عاتقنا بتمثيل الوطن و الدفاع عن مصالحه، وفقكم الله لما في خير هذه الأمة، و تقبلوا فائق التقدير،،،،،،

خالد إسماعيل الأكوع - باريس د.محمد لطف الارياني - برلين خالد بحاح - أوتاوا د. إبراهيم العدوفي- جنيف د. محمد الهلالي - موسكو د. نجيب عبيد - لاهاي

عبد الحكيم الارياني - فيينا جمال عوض - الجزائر حسين عطيفة - فرانكفورت

Figure 16: Ambassadors' Letter to President Saleh[203]

In addition to strikes, nine Yemeni ambassadors (in Canada, Germany, Algeria, France, Austria, Russia, Switzerland) drafted a public letter to the incumbent president Ali Abdullah Saleh on 19 March 2011, criticizing him and government officials for the killing of protestors which had taken place the day before, on the "Friday of Dignity" (*Sahafahnet*, 2011; *al-Masdar Online*, 2011). While apologizing for their political interference, the letters' signatories empathetically condemned the events of March 18.

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[203] Source: Private.

Deploying highly moralistic language, signing ambassadors described the death of protestors as a "horrific crime", which they declared "has weighed our conscience and led us to direct this letter to your Excellency to demand an impartial investigation." Specifically, the letter reads, "We, the ambassadors of the Republic of Yemen […] have great difficulty understanding what happened yesterday" and that the government's "official explanation of what happened will not stand and will not be accepted by the world unless the people responsible […] receive the punishment they deserve […]. Failure to hold them accountable will make it hard for us to defend the official response [internationally]".

By emphasizing their obligation to "defend" Yemeni events abroad, signing ambassadors' pointed to their liminal position, connecting "the world" and "home". Their statement was arguably informed by their "interaction with events taking place in the homeland [*'ard al-watan*]" as well as their professional "responsibility to represent the homeland and defend its interests". Prior to sending the letter, signing ambassadors allegedly tried to garner support and gain more signatories, which triggered considerable debate within the Yemeni diplomatic corps.

Resembling the normative bureaucratic ideals described by du Gay, ambassadors presented themselves as moral agents and as "representatives[s] of the people". The letter, which was covered by the Yemeni media,[204] seemed to lack political impact and remained without major internal consequences. While some high-ranking diplomats considered the letter to be "unprofessional", others did not think it went far enough. As one Yemeni ambassador critically commented, "if you send this message […] you have to resign. Because you cannot criticize the head of state publicly and remain ambassador. You have to make a decision: either you stay and shut up, or you protest and leave".[205] While none of the above-mentioned signatories resigned, other Yemeni ambassadors did step down from their office in early 2011.

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[204] While the letter in question was allegedly intended for, and sent to, the president in confidence, one of the signatories was said to have leaked it.
[205] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

IV.2.2. Exit: ambassadorial resignations and claims of moral selfhood

Following the killing of protestors on the "Friday of Dignity", several ambassadors resigned - allegedly in opposition to Ali Abdullah Saleh. Yet, it appears that only four resignations were really pushed forward. The first one to leave was Abdullah Saidi, Yemen's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York. At least three other Yemeni ambassadors promptly followed suit. One of them declared that he felt relieved after having submitted his resignation: "Because I did not sleep for the last two days, because of the shock over what I saw live on TV. People being killed in cold blood". He added,

> "I come from a family that has been fighting for the freedom of Yemeni people. I respect my ethics and professionalism. I have worked hard to secure international support for the development of my poor people. I cannot tolerate working for a government that I am in utmost disagreement with. And I cannot tolerate any questions from the media as to what happened. What should I say? That these people were killed because of what?"[206]

Another resigning ambassador claimed to regret his decision, explaining it was unprofessional and contributed to the division of his country:

> "Honestly, now I regret. Not for me, but for the state, the country. We made the wrong decision [...]. You are ambassador. You are not prime minister, you are not minister, you are not vice president, you are ambassador. We have to be practical [...]. We couldn't distinguish between power and the state, between Ali Abdullah Saleh, whether we like or dislike him, and the state".[207]

The first quotation portrays the ambassador as a person of moral integrity, who critically evaluates tasks and orders and refusing to represent a government deemed to be unethical or otherwise misled. The second argument emphasizes the ambassador's role as "neutral implementer", who *ought* to represent the state irrespective of who is heading its government.

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[206] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[207] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 September 2017.

In spite of official statements, it is not clear whether ambassadorial resignations were the sincere result of great political conviction and a strong moral compass. Commenting on the resignation of their colleagues, several Yemeni diplomats discussed the possibility of opportunism. Rumours circulated within the diplomatic service indicating that those who resigned were promised rewards by powerful opposition figures. Rather than reading exit as a singular act, this chapter looked at the plural interpretations that informed resignations and point to the importance of intentionality and emotions. Expressions of regret further indicate the temporal, contextual, and fluid nature of diplomats' behavioural strategies.

IV Conclusion: change and continuity in a "revolutionary moment"

This chapter illustrated the varying behavioural strategies deployed by diplomats in the context of the 2011 uprising. While Hirschman's much-cited framework of exit, voice, and loyalty served as a useful conceptual framework, it was adjusted to more adequately conceptualize the meaning of diplomatic behaviour. Taking into account the specificities of the diplomatic profession, the concept of loyalty was re-theorized as a professional norm closely associated with political neutrality and emotional detachment. Likewise, the notion of voice was more explicitly divided into internal and public, as well as individual and collective forms, although these conceptual boundaries are admittedly blurry.

Loyalty emerged as a central concept within diplomats' professional world in 2011. As shown above, it informed and co-existed with the emergence of voice and exit. In fact, in some cases, loyalty was modified so as to legitimize acts of protest. This involved changes in representative claims, with diplomats suggesting representing the Yemeni people or state, rather than the regime or president. In other instances, the norm of loyalty caused considerable self-doubt, if not regret, among diplomats who had engaged in practices of voice or exit. Finally, throughout the 2011 uprising, professional norms of loyalty were named as a justification for the silent continuance of routine practices.

As the above analysis has shown, the co-existence of change and continuity that had marked Yemen's "revolutionary moment" from the beginning was reflected in micro-

level developments within the Yemeni diplomatic service. Professional norms of loyalty helped maintain strands of continuity, notably in personnel and diplomatic practice. This points to possible limitations of the revolutionary process, which was not translated into the immediate replacement of staff or drastic changes in diplomatic practice. Yet, diplomats' engagement in voice and exit did trigger cases of transformation within the diplomatic setting. Close analysis of diplomats' subjective experience during 2011 suggests that practices of both voice and exit were linked to diplomats' emotions, morality, and self-interest. For example, anger and professional material grievances motivated acts of protest and the establishment of a diplomatic syndicate. As this suggests, the study of diplomatic agency is crucial to the understanding of diplomatic practice in critical moments.

Practices of voice, especially the establishment of a diplomatic syndicate, accentuated frontlines that have long run through the foreign ministry and were structured around material benefits linked to differences in age, personal relations, and diplomatic rank. Those in higher up positions were often older and/or well-connected to powerful political figures working inside as well as outside the foreign ministry. "Established consuls and ambassadors were against it [the syndicate] and said that it was not good for the image of the diplomatic service", claimed one Yemeni diplomat, adding that those in ambassadorial positions received numerous benefits and were therefore opposed to change. Younger diplomats, on the other hand, struggled financially and were eager to get promoted and posted abroad.[208]

Behavioural strategies and concomitant power struggles were informed by material, as well as psychological and emotional factors. As Coicaud (2016) put it:

> "The material character of the social dimension of international affairs is not material without also incorporating psychological aspects (including emotions and passions). Conversely, the psychological character of international relations is not psychological without being material as well. Ultimately, they are not simply intertwined. They are mutually constitutive" (p.144).

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[208] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 15 February 2017.

Rather than buying into the widespread dichotomy of hearts and minds, or emotions and thoughts, this study treats affective and cognitive processes as inherently integrated. In doing so, it follows novel strands of research in international relations which examine the role of emotions in judgement and decision making (Ariffin, 2016).

Overall, the findings of this chapter suggest that institutional boundaries are highly permeable, allowing broader socio-political changes to impact internal institutional developments. They correspond with previous studies suggesting that diplomatic practice evolves in response to changed contexts. For instance, Jones and Clark (2015) argued that diplomats negotiate, challenge, change, and/or re-affirming the worth of routine practices, thereby rendering agreed upon professional habits more social sustainable. As the Yemeni case study demonstrates, diplomats, as emotion-capable actors, who inhabit both professional and non-professional roles, carry broader societal shifts in sentiment, aspiration, and opinion into the foreign ministry. Portraying foreign policy apparatuses as microcosms of broader political and social trends emphasizes bureaucracy's fluidity and calls into question depictions of the diplomatic service as a conservative, even counter-revolutionary force (Sharp, 2009; Ross, 2007; Frey & Frey, 2004). In fact, it indicates that resistance and contestation are as common within as they are outside state institutions.

As shown throughout this chapter, diplomats varying behavioural strategies and their corresponding rationalization reflect two alternative conceptual framings of the "ideal diplomat": one portraying the diplomat as an obedient civil servant, and the other picturing the diplomat as an emotional political agent. Both approaches can be found in bureaucratic state theory as well as diplomatic theory. By demonstrating that Yemeni diplomats oscillated between these two professional ideal types in the context of uncertainty and socio-political turmoil, this research contributes to a more nuanced and "humanized" conceptualization of agents and agency in world politics. Its empirical findings show that "neither individuals nor groups are rational in the utility-maximizing, unemotional way supposed by most theories of world politics" (Crawford, 2000, p.156). Instead, it appears they are driven by "the rich assemblage of thoughts, feelings, affects, emotions, habits, principles, beliefs, and so on, which together set the stage for how we act and decide" (Saurette, 2006, p.503). In a moment of rupture, diplomats thought about and discussed alternative practices at work, carefully evaluating

professional norms, political aspirations, and moral responsibilities, among other things. As this indicates, diplomatic practice during the 2011 uprising has been highly reflective. In the context of crisis, diplomats made the conscious choice to practice voice, exit, and/or loyalty. Even the continuance of routinized activities must therefore be viewed as a deliberate decision. The development of different behavioural strategies was accompanied by conflicting narratives of justification, putting forth different conceptions of diplomatic loyalty and representation.

Finally, this chapter's findings allow for some tentative conclusions regarding the reproduction of "the Yemeni state" in a moment of division and uncertainty. The main material structures of Yemeni diplomacy were not disrupted or destroyed in 2011, thus continuing to display an image of stability. Yemeni embassies abroad maintained their regular opening hours, with diplomats following their day-to-day routines under the watchful eye of presidential portraits that continued to decorate embassy walls. Zooming-in on the micro-level developments unfolding within Yemeni foreign policy institutions, however, reveals considerable division, highlighting "the limits of a state-centred approach that takes for granted the idea of a centralised diplomacy and a single national voice" (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.51).

6 Professionals, Loyalty, and the Politics of War

Diplomats' ability to navigate unchartered waters became crucial at a time of rupture and uncertainty. Interpreting the 2011 uprising as a professional challenge, they responded with a variety of strategies shaped by various networked relations and positionalities. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, their different behavioural choices centred around the concepts of exit, voice, and loyalty and were closely tied to diverging understandings of "diplomatic professionalism".

While strategies of voluntary exit are less relevant in this chapter, the interrelated themes of professionalism, voice, and loyalty continue to inform its analysis of diplomatic agency and practice in the context of violent conflict. In 2015, Yemen's political transition, epitomised by the National Dialogue Conference, collapsed into civil war, with two self-acclaimed governments fighting for territorial control and international recognition. Where competing authorities claim to be the government of the same state, politics centre on representation, legitimacy, and sovereignty. It is a matter of who acts as the representative organ of the state, able to claim being "the depository of its sovereignty" (Talmon, 1999, p.500).

This study interprets government efforts to gain and maintain the international recognition of its legitimacy and sovereignty claims as an array of ongoing state practices, which notably involve the management and maintenance of Yemen's diplomatic service. Diplomats, after all, play a central role in the "political ordering of the state and its projection abroad" (Jones & Clark, 2015, p.3). The Yemeni civil war constituted a "critical moment" in which diplomats "who are doing things together […] and who have to co-ordinate their actions, realize that something is going wrong; that they cannot get along anymore; that something has to change" (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999, p.359). In analysing the controversy and power struggles that marked the Yemeni diplomatic service in 2016-17, this chapter considers processes of (dis)ordering, which occur "between justification and critique" (Gadinger, 2016, p. 188). Recent research has suggested that routine diplomatic practices are being "disordered" in moments of contested state legitimacy (Jones & Clark, 2015). By

focusing on the experience and practices of Yemeni diplomats, this chapter explores the micro-level dynamics of Yemen's (dis)ordered state representation during civil war. It shows that diplomatic efforts to sustain coherent geopolitical representations of the state are severely challenged in the context of civil war.

To provide historical context, this chapter first outlines the events that led to the outbreak of war in 2015. Next, it zooms in on diplomatic practices related to voice and loyalty, specifically diplomats' contested freedom of expression and appointments. Focusing on the important role of social media, it argues that the exiled Yemeni government managed the existent array of diplomatic voices more rigidly during the civil war than it did in 2011. The war posed a unique challenge to governmental authority, rendering the diplomatic presentation of a joint and favourable narrative more important. This has likely to do with shifts in governmental sovereignty claims. In Yemen, the government's claim to external, as opposed to internal sovereignty, became more important with the outbreak of civil war, when domestic political authority was severely and violently contested within state borders.

The second part of this analysis focuses on changing appointment practices within the Yemeni diplomatic service. In a moment of war, diplomatic appointments emerged as a neo-patrimonial survival strategy and as an "ordering device" used by the exiled Hadi government. Lacking access to ministry institutions in Sanaa, government officials assigned diplomatic posts to untrained and inexperienced "loyalists". This pushed the reward-function of embassy positions to new heights, triggering a "crisis of professionalism" among career-diplomats and altering the institutional meaning of the Yemeni foreign service. Discontent over appointments began to increasingly overlap with broader political and regional fault lines, including the historical north-south divide described in chapters three and four. The analysis of changing institutional forms and functions points to the fluidity of diplomatic structures and their responsiveness to broader socio-political events.

By examining the internal conflict surrounding diplomats' speech acts and appointments, this chapter sheds further light on the concept of diplomatic loyalty. As Keller (2007) highlights, loyalty can be a principle, an ideal, as well as emotions, desires, actions, or beliefs. "Behind all these ways of thinking about loyalty," he writes,

"is the idea of a certain kind of relationship between individuals and the things to which they are loyal" (p.1). In the case of diplomats, the primary object of loyalty is commonly perceived to be "the state", although various other loyalties might be interfering. As this chapter argues, diplomatic loyalty is best viewed as a normative concept (re-)produced through ritual practice. As such, it may, but does not have to overlap with loyalty as defined by Hirschman: the heartfelt personal affiliation to an organization or entity (e.g. the government or the state). By studying the emotions, inner conflicts, and motivations woven into the concept of loyalty, the following analysis adds ethnographic depth to Hirschman's framework. Moreover, its theorization of loyalty helps understand diplomats' subjectivity and action. Notably, diplomatic loyalty emerged as an important source of continuity in a situation of considerable internal division and conflict. By outlining what was legitimate to do and say, it helped to streamline and unify diplomatic practices so as to maintain the illusion of a singular "state voice" in international affairs.

This chapter's conclusion examines broader theoretical implications regarding the (re)production of the state. It elaborates in more detail how micro-level developments inside the diplomatic service reflect back on macro-level perceptions and understandings of Yemeni statehood. It suggests that practices structured around diplomatic loyalty, no matter their effectiveness, were essential to governmental claims of legitimacy and sovereignty – two concepts that emerged as crucial factors to regime survival in the Yemeni civil war.

I From uprising to civil war: conflict and disintegration in Yemen

On Sunday, 21 September 2014, members and supporters of the Houthi movement marched into Sanaa, taking over central state institutions such as the State Radio channel, the cabinet headquarters, the parliament, the Ministry of Defence, and the Central Bank of Yemen. [209] A Houthi "supervisor" (*mushrif*) was subsequently

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[209] A day prior, the Houthis had gained control of the state TV headquarters, a compound which includes the TV channels Al-Yemen, Saba News Agency, and Al-Iman (Schmitz & Burrowes, 2018, p.lxxviii).

appointed to each central ministry, including the ministry of foreign affairs. [210] According to Yemeni diplomats, the supervisor of foreign affairs was initially assigned responsibility for the ministry's financial dealings – although he later monitored political and diplomatic issues as well.

On the evening that followed the Houthis' takeover, representatives of the rebel movement signed the National Peace and Partnership Agreement with President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, UN Special Envoy to Yemen Jamal Benomar, and members of various political groups, parties, and movements. Among other things, the agreement stipulated the formation of a new government within a one-month period (Peace and National Partnership Agreement, 2014). Accordingly, in October 2014, a new cabinet was announced in agreement with, and including members of the Houthi movement. Already prior to this political reshuffle, the long-term foreign minister al-Qirbi had been replaced with the former ambassador to Iran, Jamal Abdullah al-Sallal. A few months later, Abdullah Saidi was appointed head of the foreign ministry.[211] As mentioned in chapter five, Abdullah Saidi had previously resigned as ambassador to the UN in New York in 2011.[212]

The political collaboration between Yemen's transition government and the Houthi movement was fleeting. On 17 January 2015, the Houthis kidnapped the director of the president's office Ahmad Awad Bin Mubarak in protest against the federal reform plans being devised at the time (Lackner, 2017). According to Lackner (2017),

> "They then demanded that Hadi accept Huthi nominees as vice president, deputy ministers in most ministries and more than 160 top officials in senior positions in security and other key institutions. At this point the president and the prime minister had two options: resign or openly operate as Huthi puppets.

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[210] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 May 2018. According to Lackner (2017), Houthi "supervisors" were installed in ministries and media institutions. Their "advice" was to be accepted by ministers and others (p.50). Likewise, Hill (2017) observed that "following the peace and national partnership agreement, a new government was put into place. Ever since, Houthi supervisors monitored each ministry. However, ministers soon found that Houthi 'supervisors', deployed to monitor activities in every ministry, treated them with suspicion. 'You couldn't even walk into the building, let alone get the supervisor to rubber-stamp your official documents, if the Houthis didn't trust you,' one cabinet minister said" (p.266).
[211] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 May 2018.
[212] Having studied political science in the US, first at Long Island and then at Columbia University, he had joined the foreign ministry at a young age and was generally considered a career diplomat.

They chose the first" (p.51).

On 22 January 2015, President Hadi and Prime Minister Bahah resigned and were placed under house arrest, alongside a number of other cabinet members, including the minister of foreign affairs al-Saidi. Notwithstanding his removal, ministry employees continued going to work and reported back to Saidi. "I went to his house and told him what happened, but not that often. Because they [the Houthis] didn't allow people to go. But sometimes we arranged visits for all those from the ministry who were interested in visiting him, as a sign of support", recalled one interviewee.[213] Following the government's resignation and Abdullah Saidi's house arrest, diplomats in Yemeni embassies abroad reportedly lost contact with the foreign ministry. As one chargé d'affaires at the time remarked, "we lost contact! Imagine! With the ministry! For almost one year! Only financial issues were sent to us. Any instructions about what to do, […] no policy guidelines…--nothing!".[214]

In an ongoing effort to establish themselves as rightful political leaders, the Houthis issued a "constitutional declaration" on 6 February 2015, and established the Supreme Revolutionary Committee, which was supposed to run the country for two years. They also created a presidential council of five members and dissolved the parliament, which they planned to replace with a 551-members "Transitional National Council".[215]

While members of the Houthi movement were busy consolidating their political power, President Hadi managed to escape to Aden on February 21. Upon arrival, he decreed the city as Yemen's temporary capital and aimed at establishing his government there (Lackner, 2017). Escalating Houthi attacks southwards jeopardized these plans. Most Yemeni and international commentators had begun speaking of a "Houthi-Saleh" alliance by that time, emphasizing the strategic cooperation between both parties. Air strikes on Hadi's palace in March pushed him to move to Riyadh (Lackner, 2017). Prior to his arrival in Saudi Arabia, Hadi took steps to ensure international support, attending

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[213] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[214] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 September 2017. When President Hadi appointed his cabinet in exile, al-Saidi was still under house arrest in Yemen. Hence, Hadi declared Riyadh Yassin to be foreign minister. While al-Saidi managed to flee Yemen soon afterwards, he did not gain back his previous position, allegedly because of internal power struggles and animosities (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 3 July 2019).
[215] Lackner (2017) found that none of these reforms had materialized into functional political bodies.

an Arab League meeting in Sharm al-Sheikh on 24 March 2015 to appeal for GCC military support (Lackner, 2017, p.52). Hadi also asked the UN Security Council for backing by "all means and measures to protect Yemen and deter Houthi aggression" (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2015, n.p.).

In April 2015, Hadi began appointing a cabinet, which underwent extensive reshuffling over the following years. Presenting itself as the "legitimate" Yemeni government in exile, it was operating from within the residence of the Yemeni ambassador to Saudi Arabia, which had been empty since 2011.[216] Within the first year of its establishment, the exiled foreign ministry witnessed a quick succession of ministers: Abdullah Saidi was replaced by Reyad Yassin *Abdulla*, who was replaced a few months later by Abdulmalik al-Mekhlafi. According to diplomatic accounts, al-Mekhlafi began re-establishing contact with the Yemeni embassies, instructing diplomats abroad to answer solely to Riyadh. Allegedly he told ambassadors abroad that "no political order will come from Sana'a" and that they were to adopt the views of the exiled foreign ministry.[217] One diplomat claimed that under al-Mekhlafi "everything was re-established" and that "the system itself had to be re-created".[218] In moving forward, embassies were asked to send their letters and reports to the exiled foreign ministry.

The ministries of the Hadi government were all located inside the ambassadorial residence, where according to one diplomat, "each ministry has a room".[219] The foreign ministry was located in one of the most elegant and largest saloons inside the ambassadorial residence, while the minister's staff (around four diplomats) was working in a second smaller room. While a foreign ministry "office" (*maktab*) was also established in Aden (see fig. 1), it was rarely mentioned by diplomats and seemed to be fairly inactive.

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[216] Following the previous ambassador's end of term in 2011, no replacement was hired until October 2016.
[217] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[218] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 15 February 2017.
[219] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

Figure 17: The Foreign Ministry Office in Aden
The foreign ministry "office" (*maktab*) in Aden mostly dealt with administrative issues.[220]

The confined space available to exiled government employees in Riyadh shaped social and professional dynamics. As one diplomat described it, "when you are in the middle of government, at a very intense time, and you have all ministries in one building… - it was intense. You know all the ministers".[221] Internal power struggles and personal feuds among government members were reflected in numerous changes of cabinet.

Notwithstanding its improvised character and changing social composition, Hadi's exiled government found international support in the form of UN Resolution 2216, issued on 14 April 2015. It called for the Houthis' withdrawal from Yemeni cities, the reinstatement of the government of President Hadi, and renewed efforts to implement the outcomes of the National Dialogue conference.[222] The resolution has constituted an important point of reference for members of the Hadi government and Yemeni diplomats abroad.

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[220] [Untitled illustration of the Yemeni Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Aden]. Retrieved 17 August 2019 from https://yemen-press.com/newsgfx/yp30-06-2016-937182.jpg
[221] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 February 2017.
[222] For more information on the National Dialogue Conference read chapter four.

Multilateral diplomatic efforts to resolve Yemen's political stalemate were severely challenged by the outbreak of war. According to Lackner (2017), "the transition process which started in late 2011 effectively ended in early 2015 when the Huthi movement formally took power in Sanaa and the country was overcome by a civil war" (p.52). On 26 March, Saudi Arabia formed an alliance with nine other countries and launched a military intervention called "Decisive Storm".[223] The coalition's official goal was to support the "legitimate" exiled government of Yemen in its fight against the Houthi movement. With the intervention, the military conflict in Yemen spiralled into a prolonged and brutal war, involving foreign ground troops, alliance air strikes, and a cruel and ongoing naval blockade. In 2017, the United Nations described the situation in Yemen as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises since World War II (*BBC*, 2017).

Being "cut off" from the outside world, the foreign ministry in Yemen's capital lost most of its functions. While Houthis appointed their own foreign minister, Hisham Sharaf, the management of Yemeni diplomacy shifted from Sanaa to Riyadh. In 2017, it appeared that the only two active departments inside the foreign ministry in Sanaa were the protocol and the consular department. "Because other departments are political departments, usually dealing with the outside, now there is no dealing with the outside," diplomats explained.[224] In fact, one diplomat who worked in the Houthi ministry in 2015 re-called that colleagues informed the Houthis "frankly" that "since they are not recognized internationally"[225] their work in diplomacy, and thus the foreign ministry, was limited. According to Yemeni diplomats abroad, many of their colleagues in Sanaa therefore stayed at home, waiting and hoping to be assigned an embassy post. As will be discussed below, the ministry in Sanaa has remained a pool of professionals used in appointment decisions made by Yemeni officials in Riyadh. Given the researcher's lacking access to ministry employees in Sanaa, the following analysis focuses mostly on narratives and practices by Yemeni diplomats abroad. This analytical focus should be kept in mind when assessing the diplomatic experience

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[223] Alliance members initially included the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal, and Sudan (Qatar dropped out later). While not formally part of the coalition, the UK, the US, and France have continuously provided weapons, intelligence, and training to alliance members (Lackner, 2017).

[224] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

[225] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.

discussed below.

II Contentious diplomatic practice in the context of civil war

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Yemeni diplomats chose and oscillated between exit, voice, and loyalty during the 2011 uprising and regime change. This chapter, while still studying the Yemeni diplomatic service in a moment of crisis, shifts attention to the outbreak of civil war. With the emergence of two self-acclaimed Yemeni governments, the contestation of state authority and legitimacy reached unforeseen heights. This, in turn, posed new challenges to the Yemeni diplomatic service.

"While situations of stability require continuous routine operations of ordering practice," Bueger (2014) observed that "in situations of crisis and controversy much more work is required to establish order" (p.396). The following analysis suggests that in Yemen the (dis)ordering of diplomatic practices revolved around the concept of loyalty. Specifically, it examines conflicts about internal appointment practices and diplomats' free speech. In peaceful times, the coherent representation of the state might be described as the unconscious by product of routinized diplomatic practices; a "diplomatic orchestra" that plays without a conductor (Pouliot, 2010). Yet, in the context of Yemen's civil war, government officials began to increasingly monitor and manage diplomatic voices to thereby "order" diplomatic practice and maintain the illusion of state presence. In other words, to continue playing as a single orchestra, deviant voices had to be silenced and alignment be ensured, notably through the monitoring of speech acts and the appointment of loyalists.

II.1. The (dis)ordering of diplomatic voice

Looking back at the uprising and the outbreak of war, one Yemeni diplomat declared he and his colleagues had learned from 2011 events: "we knew that you can't take a position when you have to represent a country and a government".[226] Yet, several alternative narratives suggest that diplomats continued criticizing leading government figures. This posed an additional threat to the Hadi government's claim to legitimacy

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[226] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.

and power. "Where [diplomatic] practice becomes liable to contestation and conflict, […] erosion is likely of contemporary expressions of state legitimacy" (Jones & Clark, 2015, p.10). From this perspective, the (re)ordering of dissident diplomatic voices emerges as a crucial condition for the creation of a single state narrative, the illusion of coherent state presence, and the government's international recognition as the primary custodian of state sovereignty.

With the outbreak of war, the boundaries of diplomats' "acceptable voice", both online and offline, were anything but clear. According to Yemeni diplomatic law,

> "the head of the mission and members of the corps may not write and publish books or write press articles related to the nature of their work in local and foreign newspapers and magazines without the prior approval of the Minister" (Law No. 2 of 1991 Concerning the Diplomatic and Consular Service, 1991, Article 44).

The vague reference to content "related to the nature of their work" and failure to mention online publication platforms left considerable room for diplomatic discretion. In a moment of severe political division, diplomats expressed a variety of critical political opinions, producing a "cacophony of state" that undermined one of the primary functions of the diplomatic service: the projection of coherent state presence and permanence.

Several diplomats indicated that the Hadi government responded by closely monitoring their linguistic practices following the outbreak of war. Diplomats' use of online media facilitated governmental scrutiny, which was otherwise complicated by geographical distance. As one diplomat explained, in a regretful tone, "unfortunately, yes […], if they [members of the Hadi government] see something they do not agree with on the Facebook page of any diplomat, they will take it as legal evidence [against him/her]".[227] This practice follows broader trends in national justice systems to use social media information as evidence in criminal and even legal proceedings (Burkell at al, 2014).

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[227] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

With the progression of war and hardened political fault lines, two rigorously enforced boundaries emerged to delimit diplomats' dissent. They included (1) the questioning of Hadi's legitimacy and/or acknowledgement of the Houthi authority; and (2) the criticism of important members of the war-alliance, notably the UAE and Saudi Arabia. These discursive instructions were tied to stark normative constraints on diplomats' freedom of expression: one respondent bluntly declared that questioning or opposing Hadi's legitimacy "doesn't make you a diplomat anymore".[228] Contrasting opposition to Hadi with diplomatic professionalism, he went on to say, "If you do not recognize the president, and the government, and the state, and you say 'al-Houthi is my president, or al-Sammad - a Houthi leader - is my president', this is […] a problem".

Contrary to 2011, when the expression of diplomatic voice was of little consequence, perceived transgressions were punished in 2016-17. Several respondents pointed to a Yemeni diplomat in Rome, for example, who was said to have lost his job over siding publicly with the Houthis. Other "dissenting diplomats" were temporarily removed from their official duties or denied their appointment abroad. For instance, five diplomats were removed from the ministry's short list of appointees in 2016 due to their alleged "Houthi affiliation". According to one respondent, "some of the diplomats considered had very pro-Houthi Facebook posts, but only in five cases was it clear [that they opposed Hadi] and they were excluded".[229] When asked for examples, the respondent explained, "they wrote some posts on Facebook about Saudi, about President Hadi, about recognizing President Hadi as the president of the Republic of Yemen".[230] The tightening of government control inside the diplomatic service, and the emergence of strict situation-specific guidelines, indicate that "what is legitimate and what can be done are continuously tested in action" (Nicolini, 2009, 1406 cited in Jones & Clark, 2015, p.3).

Regardless of the heavy consequences, accusations of being supportive of the Houthi-Saleh alliance were made dangerously fast at times. "Now it is very easy… - if you say anything, *anything* [you are considered pro-Houthi]. For example, if you criticize killing innocent people in Yemen, that means you are pro-Houthi, so you go

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[228] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[229] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 15 February 2017.
[230] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

back home. It happened to some diplomats, who are really in favour of the Saudi-coalition," claimed one of the interviewees.[231] Another interviewee expressed a similar opinion, worrying that his opposition to the war might be misunderstood. "I am against war everywhere, not just in Yemen," he explained. In his view, the diplomatic profession was inherently pacifist: "even if force is a means in the conduct of foreign policy, it is when diplomats failed that violence starts". As a diplomat, he went on saying, "you should be a link, a contact, between your home country and the country you are based in. I think war is not a solution. I am not taking sides, but people say 'oh, if you say this you are favouring the other side' [i.e. the Houthis]".[232] In illustrating how easily allegations of Saleh-Houthi loyalties were put forth, and undermined careers, one diplomat shared the following anecdote:

> "I will tell you a small incident that happened [in 2016]. Our Chargé d'affaires in Moscow, he was interviewed on television. And he had a slip of tongue and instead of saying the Republic of Yemen, he said the Arab Republic of Yemen. The Arab Republic of Yemen was the northern republic of Yemen. And they said, 'he is pro Ali Abdullah Saleh, he did not forget the north of Yemen'. They kicked him out of his post […]. And just two days ago, the minister who kicked him out, at the meeting of Arab ministers of foreign affairs in Cairo, he had the same slip of tongue!" He laughed and added, "I will show you the video and you'll see his face when he realized what he did. It was unfair! It was a slip of tongue. That's it".[233]

This example illustrates that affiliation with the north of Yemen was readily equated with Houthi sympathies. It also points to the narrow dichotomist framework that confined diplomatic speech acts in 2016-17. Tolerating no mistakes and leaving little room for "middle grounds", the government's management of diplomatic voices was based on zero-sum conceptions and processes of stereotyping and de-individualization (Spillman & Spillmann, 1997). Consideration for anyone in the "enemy group" was likely repressed due to perceived threat and feelings of opposition (Spillman & Spillmann, 1997). Such dualist scripts have been described as a common

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[231] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 October 2017.
[232] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[233] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.

151

"*constitutive* practice" in war, "designed to validate particular styles of intervention" (Jeffrey, 2007, p.445). In Yemen, the international recognition of the Hadi government, and the "demonization" of the Houthi-Saleh alliance, constituted an important basis for Saudi-led military interference in the country. As one Yemeni diplomat put it, "the thing is they [Saudi Arabia] need Hadi to make claims of legitimacy. And Hadi knows that".[234]

The discursive dichotomy inside the Yemeni diplomatic service led some observers to cynically remark "it was not diplomacy any more it was advocacy".[235] Indeed, many Yemeni diplomats offered a rigidly one-sided portrayal of the Yemeni conflict at academic and political events, repeatedly criminalizing "the Houthi militia" which was accused of being the instigator of war and of having boycotted its peaceful resolution ever since. In contrast, the Hadi government was officially presented as "the legitimate government" (*al-hakuma al-sharaiyya*; or "*al-sharaiyya*" in short, "the legitimate"), which relentlessly aimed at reaching peace. Where the use of dichotomist speaking points could be observed, it resembled the recitation of a numbered list, including points that had little to no relation to the situational dynamics of events. Rather than "thinking diplomatically about […] content, and especially about the sorts of arguments that people get into about the world" (Sharp, 2009, p. 10 cited in Jones & Clark, 2015, p.8), some diplomats seemed to present pre-formulated bullet points and slightly broader official scripts. Following Jones and Clark (2015), this chapter considers the use of speaking points as a crucial practice of "ordering diplomacies" (p.6). Especially in a moment of crisis, they constitute often-used "artefacts for structuring discussions, interviews and media meetings in order to get the right 'message out'" (p.6).

Accounts of strict dualistic instructions surrounding diplomats' speech are corroborated by research on Yemen's elite diaspora, which cites a Yemeni scholar, activist, and expert in saying,

> "they want to fit you in a category, but they can't figure out what that category is. Independent Yemenis are [perceived to be] a big threat because they don't know who is moving them. My greatest opposition has become my own government. They have now put me in the Houthi sympathizer box because I

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[234] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 February 2017.
[235] Interview with a former Yemeni politician, 4 November 2016.

am critical of the Hadi government and the war..." (Sama'a Hamdani cited in Aboueldahab, 2019, p.14).

A London-based Yemeni-British filmmaker agreed, saying, "your decision is to be Yemeni, but people assume you are either pro-Houthi or pro-Saudi" (Aboueldahab, 2019, p.14).

The partisanship of Yemeni diplomats is further corroborated by claims regarding their surveillance of Yemenis abroad. According to Aboueldahab (2019), "Yemeni diplomatic missions in foreign countries" followed a rigid "with-or-against-us" mentality "in their attempts to thwart the activities of Yemenis outside of Yemen" (p.14). Such partisanship was named as an official reason for establishing the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies (SCSS). One of the organisation's founders presented the SCSS as an alternative to official Yemeni diplomacy, saying,

> "I was frustrated with the very little content internationally about Yemen and the fact that, when there is content, it is rubbish. So, we [started] the Sana'a Center. A Yemeni platform by Yemenis, for Yemenis, and to do research on Yemen. We have non-resident scholars in several countries. They are our ambassadors to the world. A big part of our research takes place 'on the ground.' We take the findings and communicate them to the world. Part of our agenda is to influence decision-making on Yemen. The Yemeni government or the Saudis spend $2 million to try and influence decision-making through [public relations campaigns]. So, okay, I'll spend two megabytes on the internet to do the same. We are more powerful in D.C. than Yemeni diplomatic missions. Because we are independent. Diplomats come to *us*" (al-Muslimi cited in Aboueldahab, 2019, p.17).

Another diaspora member agreed that by providing objective research and information about the Yemeni conflict, "the Sana'a Center does what the foreign ministry failed to do" (Afrah Nasser cited in Aboueldahab, 2019, p.17).

Besides trying to suppress (in)direct challenges to the Hadi government's legitimacy, government officials regarded diplomats' disapproval of the Saudi-led alliance as a serious transgression. "You can say I represent Hadi but he did this thing in the wrong way... that's okay, that's acceptable", claimed a Yemeni diplomat, adding, "but if you

are not with the allies, which is the main point for the Yemeni government, then you are not representing us anymore".[236] A variety of personal stories, circulating in the diplomatic service, suggest that diplomats' criticism of alliance members had serious consequences. One diplomat, for instance, claimed his colleague was removed from the shortlist of appointees because he had made fun of the spokesperson of the Saudi-led coalition on Facebook. "It was not even a post, it was a comment," he complained, emphasizing the importance of such distinctions.[237]

Likewise, his colleague, who had criticized Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates on Facebook confessed that he was subsequently removed from his high-ranking position abroad. In sharing his story, he passionately declared, "I would like to tell you that it wasn't personal, but it *was* personal […]. I am a human being in the end, I am not a machine, my family members are being killed [in Yemen], including my own brother".[238] Frustrated and upset about the war and its high rate of civilian casualties, he voiced his protest online. "It was not easy for me. I tried to shut up. I did many times, many months. But I just… I can't," he sighed. "You know, these are my family members. And this is my country. You can't just keep silent".[239] Being very active on Facebook, his posts became increasingly angry, critical, and offensive. Referring to the "Kingdom of evil Arab Zionism" (Saudi Arabia) and the "United Arab Whores" (United Arab Emirates), he declared online "no one with an atom of mind or insight can accept what is happening between Yemen and its neighbours now. The Houthis [al-Houtha] made a big mistake 'internally,' but what our neighbours did was a bigger sin by any means. War crimes and genocide that the Yemenis will never forget….".

His online comments did not go unnoticed. In his own words, "the deputy minister informed me through a mutual colleague and friend that Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Emirates are not satisfied with me because I am criticizing the daily killing they are doing in Yemen […]. I don't give a shit if they like me or not. These are my people, this is my country, we are talking about!".[240] Having to choose between loyalty to his family and "his people", on the one hand, and the government and its alliances, on the other,

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[236] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[237] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 October 2017.
[238] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 28 February 2017.
[239] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 28 February 2017.
[240] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

the diplomat picked the former. This behaviour poses an obvious challenge to the government's attempted production of a coherent and carefully managed state image that would portray its rule as legitimate.

The involvement of social media complicates the analysis of diplomatic choices regarding their speech.[241] Being neither prototypically "private" nor obviously "public", Facebook has been described as a social space of "blurred edges" (Gelman, 2009). According to Burkell *et al* (2014), it occupies a liminal territory between "open" and "closed". While posted information is "generally intended for a small network of friends and family … [it] is left available to the whole world to access" (Gelman, 2009, p.1315). Diplomats might have perceived Facebook as a "private" platform, where the expression of critical voice was permissible and compatible with ongoing "diplomatic loyalty".

Several commentators have noted the tension between social media's facilitation of free speech and the negative effects it has on user privacy (Gelman, 2009). In the Yemeni case study, members of Hadi's foreign ministry treated diplomats' contentious online content as grounds for diplomats' exclusion. At the same time, diplomats' online behaviour became an important consideration in appointment strategies. As discussed in more detail below, diplomats who publicly supported the Saleh-Houthi alliance were frequently considered non-eligible candidates for promotions and posts abroad. While it was mostly the content of posts that mattered, one diplomat suggested that their frequency and wording also played a role. In commenting on the Facebook posts described above, he opposed their high number and the language used. "It should be respectful," he maintained.[242]

Facebook had already emerged as a unique medium of diplomatic expression in 2011. The idea of establishing a ministerial labour union was allegedly born on Facebook and Yemeni diplomats began to increasingly rely on a "closed" Facebook group in expressing their criticism, specifically regarding the ministry's internal regulations and

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[241] Another high-ranking diplomat had criticized Hadi's opposition to the establishment of an impartial UN committee to investigate human rights violations in Yemen on Facebook. "I expressed my views openly during the war," he recalled. "That was not very professional, but I was angry […]" (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017). Notwithstanding his critical comments online, the diplomat was later offered a high-ranking post abroad.
[242] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 July 2017.

work conditions. Occasionally, their comments took on a personal note, channelling long-held frustrations and individual rivalries. One diplomat recalled that in 2011 a colleague "wrote something about fighting corruption, and [that] we should just kick out those corrupt people...etc. and I made a comment 'does that include you?' He deleted the post and left the page".[243] Much like documents, social media constitutes a "techno-object" that connects diplomats across geographical sites and professional ranks, facilitating and carrying diplomatic practice. It thereby resembles the "basic glue by which people relate to each other and organize their activities" (Bueger, 2014, p.398). Facebook in particular emerged as a core materiality in internal power struggles and the (dis)ordering of diplomatic practice. In comparison to 2011, it appeared to be monitored more heavily by members of the Hadi government in 2016-17.

This chapter's analysis of diplomats' online posts adds to a new body of research on "digital diplomacy" (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Hocking & Melissen, 2015; Kampf *et al*, 2015), including studies on "Facebook diplomacy" (Spry, 2018).[244] For the most part, existing literature examines the goal-oriented use of social media in diplomatic communication strategies, for instance by analysing foreign ministries' official Facebook pages (Spry, 2018; Spry 2016; Manor, 2016; Kampf *et al*, 2015). Social media is largely viewed as a new tool, which, if used correctly, holds great potential in the conduct of diplomacy (Kampf *et al*, 2015; Manor, 2016). By shifting focus onto diplomats' individual online practice, this chapter adds a new perspective to the field of "digital diplomacy", which points to the challenge, not the promise, of social media in diplomatic affairs.

Yemeni diplomats' use of their individual Facebook sites constituted a double-edged sword in the Hadi government's attempted construction of a single and ordered "national voice". Existing laws, professional norms, and government instructions often failed to prevent the plurality of diplomatic voices online, which were linked to emotions, morals, and political opinions. At the same time, social media facilitated the

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[243] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 October 2017.
[244] "Facebook is the most commonly used social media platform, both generally and for diplomatic purposes, in most countries" (Spry, 2018, p.67).

government's monitoring of diplomats' expressions abroad, thereby helping its management and streamlining of diplomatic practice.

II.1.2. Refraining from criticizing political authority

While some Yemeni diplomats "spoke up", it appears that many others preferred to keep their opinions to themselves. It is difficult to determine whether their quietism was motivated by fear, opportunism, a strong commitment to "diplomatic loyalty", or any combination of these factors.

One young and mid-ranked respondent saw the possibility of expressing his critical opinion restrained by professional standards. "My work as a diplomat is limited. I am part of the embassy, the embassy is part of the ministry, and the ministry is part of the government," he explained. "I cannot say much about the bombing of cultural heritage in Yemen because technically 'we' [he indicated quotation marks] invited them [the Saudi-led alliance]".[245] While the diplomat in question did not voice disapproval himself, he admired colleagues who did express criticism for "having principles", as he put it. The omission of voice is based on perceived professional norms and underlying notions of diplomatic loyalty.

A possibly more prominent reason for diplomats to stay silent was fear: fear of losing one's job, fear of having to leave the safety of one's host country, and fear of putting family members and friends in Yemen at risk. "For those diplomats who are outside, they are afraid," claimed one respondent, adding that in the context of civil war, the prospect of returning to Sanaa was dooming to many. "It is not about them, it's about their families, their kids might get killed […in Sanaa], either by airstrikes, or by cholera, or some other diseases".[246] His colleague agreed that "everyone is trying to be quiet […]. Not just to keep the job, but also to keep their friends and families inside Yemen.".[247] In his opinion it was not uncommon for diplomats to be surrounded by friends and family members with different political outlooks: "sometimes brothers have a different point of view". By refraining from public voice, he suggested, some diplomats tried to avoid "hurt[ing] their feelings or their beliefs". Moreover, he claimed,

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[245] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.
[246] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.
[247] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

some diplomats worried that their criticism might put family members in Yemen at risk. Diplomats were silent, in his words, "not only for jobs, but also because they have friends and family inside".[248]

As this indicates, the Yemeni diplomat is entangled in a complex web of socio-material relations which shape his or her practices at work, specifically those structured around voice and loyalty. Agency, in that sense, is not individually held but materially mediated and distributed through various social networks. Concern about the safety of one's family and the risk of unemployment, for example, impacted diplomats' behavioural choices, challenging widely held conceptions of the diplomatic profession as comfortable and safe. As shown in this chapter, diplomats' decision to engage in the ordering or disordering of diplomatic practice was highly reflective, involving consideration of personal relationships that went beyond professional logics and norms. This indicates that in a moment of severe crisis, professional habitus and norms alone may not suffice to maintain the co-ordinated and smooth projection of state presence.

II.2. The reward and punishment of diplomatic appointments

Besides the practice of voice, appointment and promotion practices emerged as particularly contentious and as an important "ordering device" in 2016. In fact, this chapter suggests that the ordering and projection of macro-level representations in Yemen cannot be fully comprehended without acknowledging the role played by recruitment processes.[249] Following the completion of their official term in 2014, Yemeni ambassadors were called back to Sanaa. No new ambassadors were appointed until October 2016, with the exception of embassies in Washington D.C. and Abu Dhabi, as well as diplomatic missions to the Arab League in Cairo and to the UN in New York. For almost two years, other Yemeni missions around the world were run by their respective chargé d'affaires.[250] It is unclear why President Hadi waited for almost two years before appointing other ambassadors in October 2016. Some suggest he was focused on domestic military reforms and the political transition

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[248] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[249] A similar argument is made by Grindle (2012), who studied historical and more contemporary civil service reforms in ten different countries across Europe and America.
[250] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

process, while others claim he held back ambassadorial positions as a source of leverage.

In 2016, the exiled foreign ministry put an end to the two-year rupture of its annual rotation process, preparing the replacement of Yemeni diplomats around the globe. Office employees of the Yemeni foreign minister in Riyadh began inspecting the large pool of career diplomats that have remained inside Sanaa, contemplating whom to post abroad and in what position. In fact, once the exiled foreign ministry resumed diplomatic appointments in 2016, the assignment of embassy posts became an essential tool of regime survival and "diplomatic ordering", exiling opponents and rewarding "loyalists". As mentioned in chapter three, Yemen has long been referred to as a neo-patrimonial state, with informal patrimonial loyalties penetrating into formal political institutions. Given these state structures, "solutions to problems are [commonly] created through the dispersal of resources, benefits, and status" (Phillips, 2008, p.5). Lackner (2017) described the seeming continuance of such neo-patrimonialism under Hadi, using the military reforms he conducted in 2013 as an example:

> "Although in principle the plan was to replace Saleh cronies with individuals loyal to the state and the Constitution, in practice most new appointees were from Abyan, Hadi's own home governorate; this in turn led to accusations that he was filling the posts with his own cronies" (p.41).

As discussed in the remainder of this chapter, similar arguments have been made with regards to the diplomatic service. The first ambassadorial appointment made by Hadi in summer 2015 positioned his friend and political supporter Ahmad Awad Bin Mubarak in Washington D.C..[251] One year later, another long-term acquaintance of Hadi, Yassin Saeed Noman, became ambassador to London, while Mohammed Marem, who previously headed Hadi's presidential office, was appointed ambassador to Cairo in late 2016. Besides friends and acquaintances, Hadi and his entourage were

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[251] Mubarak's political career began in the aftermath of 2011, when he became NDC secretary general and later director of the president's office (Lackner, 2017). Born in Aden, Mubarak was "a university business administration teacher whose main qualifications appeared to be excellent English and lack of political baggage," wrote Lackner (2017) in commenting on Mubarak's (unsuccessful) nomination as prime minister in 2014 (p.50).

said to have appointed "relatives of relatives",[252] thereby continuing a long tradition of appointing family members to the Yemeni diplomatic service. "What happened lately [is that] Hadi and his advisors appointed the sons and relatives of those who are around him, or of those whose loyalty he wants to buy, to the foreign service abroad", said one Yemeni diplomat.[253] In 2016, he specified,

> "Hadi started to give [diplomatic] posts here and there, the prime minister is doing the same […]. The minister himself appointed two of his sons […]. Everybody is doing it. So, now the foreign service is filled with non-diplomats, people who […] don't even know anything about law, [or] about politics".

"It has nothing to do with your qualifications", other diplomats were keen to emphasize,[254] with one adding, "Third World thoughts, this is what I call it!"[255] In reiterating the personal nature of appointment strategies, one respondent reflected self-critically on his recent appointment abroad, explaining he was given his position by the minister and his staff "because they are my friends. They thought it would be a good place for me, because it is in a region I like and because it allows me to work with someone I know". [256] One interviewee outlined the socio-political dynamics framing diplomatic appointment strategies in 2016-17 as follows:

> "Those who jump from boat to boat, they jump from the boat of Ali Abdullah Saleh to the boat of Hadi, and they went to Riyadh. Some of them were with Ali Abdullah Saleh, some of them they were not, but they took their chances. And they are pushing hard for positions, for work. They stay there in Riyadh causing the government a lot of problems, but there is no place to put them".[257]

Next to rewarding loyalists, diplomatic appointments were also used to "exile" opponents. Ahmad Saleh, for instance, the son of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, was appointed ambassador to the UAE in a 2013 military shake-up that was aimed at solidifying loyalty to the new president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi (Gordon, 2013). Ahmad Saleh had previously held an influential military position inside Yemen, acting

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[252] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[253] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[254] Interviews with Yemeni diplomats, 12 February 2017 and 17 August 2017.
[255] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[256] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[257] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.

as the head of the elite Republican Guard. Likewise, two nephews of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had served in the Presidential Guard and the intelligence service, were appointed military attaché to Germany and Ethiopia (Gordon, 2013; *al-Jazeera*, 2013).

Following the outbreak of war, which posed Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the Hadi government against an alliance of Saleh loyalists and Houthi members, Ahmad Ali's ambassadorship was revoked in March 2015.[258] His removal from office preceded UN Resolution 2216, which designated him for sanctions. Ahmad Ali was placed under "house arrest" in his UAE residence for at least two years (Shaker, 2017; Spencer, 2017). Later, he was not allowed to leave the country[259] and lived "under close scrutiny of UAE services", as one diplomat explained in 2018, adding that "after his father's killing, he was freer to meet visitors".[260] While released from his official diplomatic positions, Ahmad Saleh was said to have played an important diplomatic role in 2017. UAE officials, unlike their Saudi colleagues, looked favourably at a possible compromise with the Saleh faction at the time and were reported to have relied on Ahmad Ali as a conduit for negotiations with his father (Spencer, 2017).

While contemporary literature on the Yemeni state describes the military and the Ministry of Finance as two institutions central to neo-patrimonial governance (Phillips, 2008), this chapter proposes that following the outbreak of war in 2015, the Yemeni diplomatic service emerged as an increasingly important institutional arena for neo-patrimonial state practice. Likely reasons for this shift were deteriorating living conditions inside Yemen and the government's move to Riyadh. Establishing its new headquarters in Saudi Arabia, the Hadi government lacked access to most of its material infrastructure, including ministry buildings, which rendered the neo-patrimonial strategy of distributing government offices and related material rewards more difficult. At the same time, employment inside the country, where life was marked by war and all its accompanying miseries, lost attraction. An increasing number of Yemenis aspired to leave the country and was seeking employment abroad. In this context, embassy posts emerged as an attractive new resource in patterns of neo-

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[258] Ahmad Saleh was replaced by Fahd Saeed al-Menhali, from the southern Hadramawt governorate, who was appointed ambassador to the UAE in December 2015.
[259] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 January 2019.
[260] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 9 January 2019.

patrimonial governance. Positions abroad offered traditional rewards, such as money and status. They also promised safety, a "resource" whose value had gained in the eyes of Yemeni diplomats since the outbreak of war.

While the Hadi cabinet had initially planned to move away from neo-patrimonial state practices (Lackner, 2017), notably including the appointment of family members and friends, analysis of Yemen's diplomatic service suggests that in a moment of crisis the opposite held true. The continuance of long-established appointment practices corroborates the established argument that "systems of patronage" are highly adaptable to changing contexts and may accomplish a multitude of tasks related to state building and governance, including the securement of loyalty to the ruler (Grindle, 2012).

II.2.2. Diplomatic appointments and the neo-patrimonial import of fault lines

Given the country's political division and the distrust among Hadi government officials, the identification of potential Houthi-allies inside the foreign ministry in Sanaa constituted an important part of the selection process of new appointees. Allegedly, the foreign minister, al-Mekhlafi, gave instruction to consider every diplomat in Sanaa a member of the Hadi government, "unless he proves the opposite". As stated above, "evidence" of working *against* the Hadi government was collected online. The effort that went into the monitoring and selection of new appointees reasserts that agency should not be reduced to resistance (Ahearn, 2001). "Supporters of the status quo are no less creative than those who contest and oppose [it]" (Cornut, 2018, p.723). To ensure the ongoing projection of state presence and capacity, high ranking ministry an government officials developed a number of ordering devices, including the strict monitoring of diplomatic speech acts and carefully devised appointments and promotions.

The 2016-17 appointment and promotion strategies inside the Yemeni diplomatic service triggered discontent that was structured along broader generational, regional, and political fault lines at the time. The 2016 re-instatement of retired ambassadors, for instance, was said to have upset younger career diplomats. Looking back, one of the ambassadors who experienced the sudden reversal of his retirement status

claimed he was asked to return, "because they [government officials] feel that I can help." He then added, "*Maybe* also as a retirement reward for what I did. Because I am already retired." As will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven, diplomats receive much higher salaries abroad than "at home". While all are entitled to retirement payments, these sums have been referred to as "peanuts" by one diplomat, who claimed that the pension for ambassadors fell at around 700 US dollars a month.[261] Discussing the re-instatement of formerly retired ambassadors, one interviewee bluntly declared it was all "for loyalties".[262] Upon further reflection he said in a more conciliatory tone, "some of them are good ambassadors, even those who are brought back to life, but still they are taking the opportunities of others, young, you know, who have been waiting". According to Grindle's historical analysis (2012), conflicts over spoils, like the ones described above, have been common in patronage systems elsewhere: traditionally, "those who benefited from extensive patronage opportunities struggled against those extolling the virtues of a merit-based civil service" (p.2).

Besides generational conflicts, a possibly more important divide emerged along geographical fault lines.[263] The appointment of non-career diplomats who were either members of Hadi's family, his personal friends, or from his home – or neighbouring – governorate(s) prompted narratives of "southern favouritism". "Most of them [new appointees] are from the south. And those from the south they are controlling the most important embassies in the world: New York, London, Geneva, Berlin, [and] Washington".[264] In many cases, it appeared that personal emotions of anger and envy became entangled with a binary discourse separating "professional diplomats" from the north, with "unprofessional diplomats" from the south. One specific point of criticism pertained to alleged acts of misrepresentation by southern diplomats. Several

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[261] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[262] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[263] The use of "north" and "south" categories in this chapter reflects the discourse deployed by Yemeni diplomats. It should be noted that they gloss over important nuances. For instance, many individuals who have "re-surfaced" in the exiled Hadi government have been described as a non-representative fraction of "the south", belonging to a small educated elite (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 January 2017). One Yemeni diaspora member highlighted the multitude of southern identities, asking, "'What are you talking about? Which south? The Hadi south? Or Hirak? The post-unification south? Or pre-unification? Pre- independence south? Or post-independence south?" (anonymous interviewee cited in Aboueldahab, 2019, p.15)
[264] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.

northern diplomats accused their southern colleagues of representing southern rather than national interests, thus lacking in "esprit d'état", as one interviewee put it.

In spinning this narrative further, one respondent claimed that Hadi attempted to co-opt and thereby silence politically active southerners by appointing them to the diplomatic service. "They appoint them *because* they are from the southern part of Yemen and they are activists in the southern movement so when you want to keep them calm, you convince him to work in an embassy and have a nice life".[265] While these claims could not be confirmed in the context of this study, one recently appointed non-career diplomat from Aden did identify with the south and the southern movement, saying that Sanaa had a "very different culture from *us* [emphasized]" and that "I have never been involved in politics before. I was more with the Southern movement, you know, which wanted [Southern] independence".[266]

Overall, the hardened political fault lines that marked the Yemeni war caused concern that "being from the north" created an "association-by-default" with the Houthi movement.[267] The latter had originated in the northern governorate of Saada and has maintained a hegemonic position in the north since the outbreak of civil war. Political conflict was translated into a professional challenge, leaving diplomats from the north worried that their regional background put them at a disadvantage in regard to diplomatic appointments and promotions.

II.2.3. Crisis of meaning: diplomatic professionalism and the "neo-patrimonial turn"

The increasing number of non-merit appointments caused a shift in the perceived function of embassy posts, which became linked to diplomatic privileges, rather than work. "People are being appointed in embassies without really having a job, just for the residency, the privileges. They will be paid salaries and be given the immunity [...]. But they will not show up at the embassy", complained one diplomat.[268] His colleague shared a similar view, saying that some appointees only "want to join because they want to go to Germany, [...] Riyadh, Paris [...]. They chose the best places".[269]

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[265] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[266] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 February 2017.
[267] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[268] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[269] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.

Allegedly, a newly appointed non-career diplomat could simply request "having his salary and his diplomatic visa". As one interviewee put it, "you can live a good life for four years in a safe shelter, you know, a good and nice life. That's all. Very few of them want to really be real diplomats".[270] He went on saying:

> "Some ambassadors told them from the beginning, 'if you do not want to come just stay at home.' Because ambassadors always worry about people who are not professionals, they will come and make problems... So, some of them stay at home, some others come to the embassy and just stay at the desk, doing nothing, but at least they show themselves at the embassy".[271]

While most diplomats interviewed for the purpose of this study were self-declared career diplomats, others admitted having joined the diplomatic service recently by non-merit appointment. They offered insight into the unique challenges they faced: "I come from outside, I have no diplomatic career," confessed one interviewee. "So, you come with all those worries and concerns, you worry about what to say, how to behave, how to hold your knife…etc.".[272] The understandable insecurity contained in this quote is corroborated by the observation of a Yemeni colleague, who described that recently appointed non-career diplomats acted shyly at diplomatic events, standing together in small groups near the door, speaking only with other Arab diplomats due to their poor English skills. As this suggests, the diplomatic environment, including the grandness of its materiality and practices shaped by Western tradition (e.g. use of cutlery at formal dinner events), can be intimidating to Yemeni newcomers.

Referring to the Yemeni diplomatic service as "a social welfare organization",[273] some diplomats joked about the purpose of adding an *assistant* military attaché to the already existing position of military attaché in Prague and Berlin, for instance.[274] "We have a cultural attaché, I heard, in London, who does not speak English," said one Yemeni diplomat who ridiculed recent appointments.[275] He went on to ask, "I am wondering about the guy here [referring to the local Yemeni ambassador]. What is he

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[270] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[271] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[272] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 February 2017.
[273] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 23 August 2017.
[274] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[275] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

doing?" When the researcher admitted "I have no idea," he responded, "*I* [emphasized] have no idea! He has no idea! Nobody knows!" He laughed and added "So that's how it looks like. It makes me sad...".

The increasing assignment of diplomatic posts to non-professionals caused bitterness, envy, and anger among career diplomats, leading some to question the functionality, value, and purpose of their work. One diplomat sounded upset when saying, "They are not from the diplomatic staff. And they give them high posts, for example minister plenipotentiary. I spent 20 years to reach this grade, I worked hard to get this grade. And someone else just comes from outside to be minister. It's not fair!".[276] He went on to say:[277]

> "When you see that someone just jumps to the same level than you are in and is getting the same or maybe a better salary than you do, but is not working and is staying home, whereas you have to work and be on time and spend money for coming to the embassy and going back…--and he is home! With what ambition will you work? What kind of attitude? And this is what most of the embassies are facing".

Diplomats discussing non-career appointments expressed concern about the Yemeni diplomatic service at large. "What do you expect from these embassies? How can they operate? How can they function? What can they achieve? Nothing […]! Zero performance and that's it!" proclaimed one interviewee.[278] His colleague confessed, "the main problem for me, as a Yemeni diplomat, is that my ministry will be led by people with no experience […]. They have no experience and […] no idea [about] diplomatic work".[279]

The increasing neo-patrimonialism within the Yemeni diplomatic service politicized the meaning of professional titles and promotions. As a consequence, the advancement of diplomatic careers was widely seen, and judged, as a political choice. "If they would tell me now 'be ambassador', I would decline. I would not like to be in that position, I

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[276] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[277] As one diplomat put it, Hadi's staffing policies "created bitterness within the foreign service" (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017).
[278] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[279] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

am not an opportunist", one diplomat explained, adding, "in principle I would like it [being ambassador], but it would be bad in the eyes of my family and friends, I would feel ashamed".[280] His colleague agreed, recounting that he was asked to become ambassador but declined. "First I did not want to see his face," he said with reference to Hadi and chuckled. "I don't like him. And it would look…," he paused, "I would look [like a] hypocrite, criticizing *all* his actions since he became [president] and then, all of a sudden, I become his ambassador. I would not be happy with myself".[281] As these examples indicate, the meaning of being a diplomat and the function of diplomatic institutions, changed in the context of civil war. An increasing number of embassy posts became a spoil that was handed to loyalists. This pushed their reward-function to new heights.

Internal debates surrounding neo-patrimonial appointment practices reached a peak in August 2017, when diplomats in Sanaa engaged in an act of public voice and issued a press release, which read,

> "the past period witnessed the appointment of a large number of staff in the diplomatic missions abroad who are not related to the diplomatic work, particularly sons and relatives of officials and close associates, and granted them high diplomatic ranks [….] at the expense of the ministry's staff" (Press Release, Sanaa, 8 August 2017).[282]

Referring to such practices as a violation of Yemeni diplomatic law, the statement ends by threatening, "employees of the ministry of foreign affairs […] retain their right of initiating a lawsuit". Rather than being a constant and binding reference, Yemen's diplomatic law emerges in this instance as a resource used by diplomats in legitimizing specific claims. News of the press release circulated in the Yemeni diplomatic corps and was discussed by several diplomats. While a photo of the document was forwarded to the researcher, it was unclear where the press release was published. In commenting on the document, one diplomat explained that its purpose was to put pressure on the minister to appoint diplomats from within the foreign ministry in

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[280] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[281] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[282] Source: private.

Sanaa.[283] The press release and its spread on social media managed to connect diplomatic sites and actors, indicating that anger over diplomatic appointments stretched across geographical space and political boundaries, motivating an act of organized public voice by diplomats in Houthi-controlled Sanaa. No lawsuit did follow the press release, which does not appear to have triggered any major changes. This suggests that the effectiveness of voice is not rooted in diplomatic law but linked to political power and intra-governmental hegemonic discourse. Diplomats' attempt to alter the appointment practices of high-ranking government officials failed to have a long-lasting effect.

With the increasing importance of diplomatic posts in neo-patrimonial governance, the Yemeni diplomatic service began growing considerably.[284]
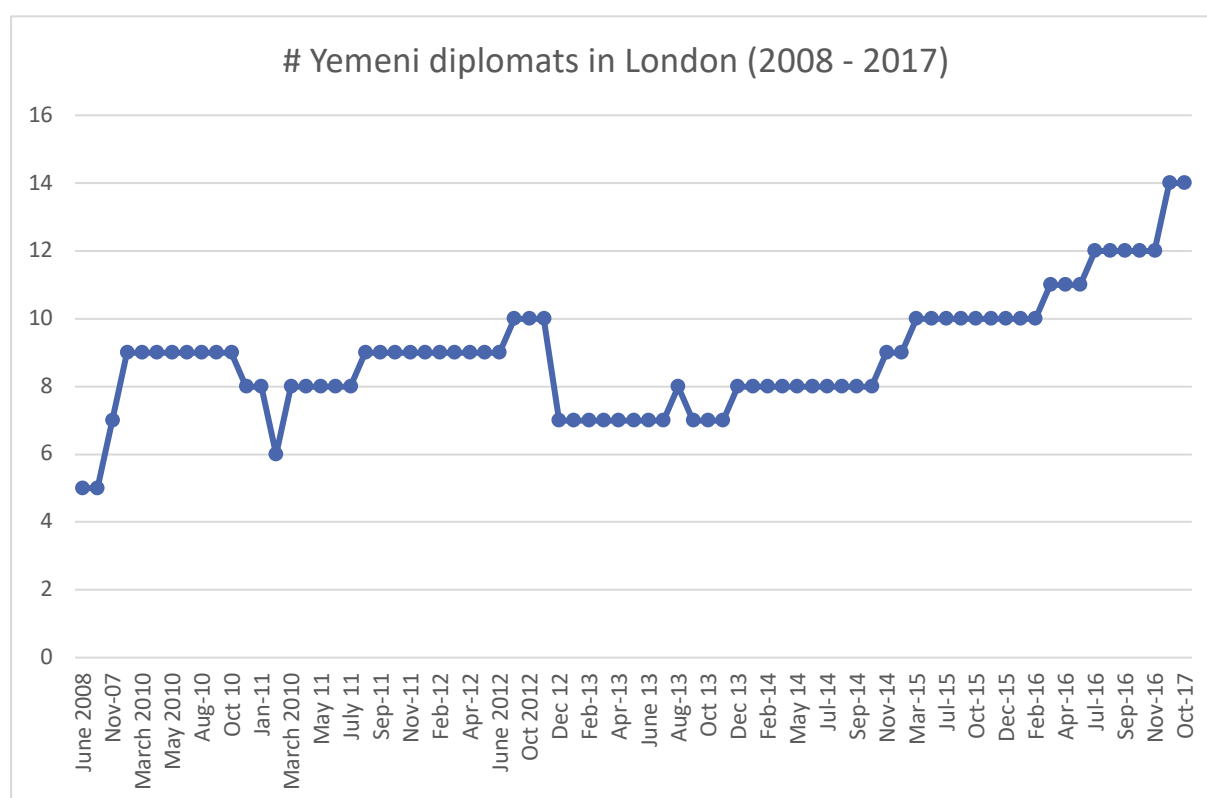
Figure 18: Listed Yemeni Diplomats in London
The graph shows the increasing number of Yemeni diplomats listed in London between 2008 and 2017. Ambassadors are not included in the count. The figure was compiled by the researcher using UK diplomatic lists available online.

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[283]While the exact number of signatories could not be determined in the context of this study, one diplomat suggested that most of his colleagues refrained from supporting the statement in fear of ruining their future chances of being posted abroad. He guessed the number of involved diplomats at 40 or 50 (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017).
[284] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 January 2017.

Given the increasing number of "extra positions" abroad, [285] the Yemeni foreign ministry in Riyadh allegedly faced difficulties getting their candidates approved by host governments. In trying to rationalize host governments' reluctance, one Yemeni diplomat suggested that foreign officials worried about Yemeni diplomats who stayed in the country after having completed their official term. Diplomatic accounts suggest that the number of diplomats returning to Sanaa has decreased since the outbreak of war. "Last year, when they finished [their term], because of the war, they did not go to Yemen. They stayed as diplomats in the embassy", explained one Yemeni diplomat. [286]

Importantly, the number of Yemeni diplomats is not growing equally in all embassies. Some places appear to be more popular than others. The UK, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Canada, and Germany were mentioned as comparatively more attractive options, for example. According to Yemeni diplomats, they each offered different benefits, including financial ones or the possibility of applying for asylum. The heterogeneous topography of Yemeni embassies and their diverging valuation by diplomats is examined in more detail in the following chapter.

III Conceptualizing Diplomatic Loyalty

As mentioned above, the (dis-)ordering of diplomatic practices revolved around the concept of loyalty. Diplomatic loyalty, as defined in chapter five, remained contested following regime change. In fact, one diplomat went as far as to describe it as an empty performance: "we use the phrase 'we are officials, we represent the country, we are not with any parties', [but] this is in front of the Yemenis," he said and laughed. In reality, he added, diplomats held different opinions regarding the Houthis and the war in Yemen and did not refrain from sharing their views.

His comment suggests that diplomatic loyalty constitutes more than a norm; it resembles a set of "hollowed out" practices whose enactment lacks conviction and sincerity. As such, diplomats' loyalty may be expressed "through the performance of or participation in rituals, or more generally in practices that are understood to

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[285] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 January 2017.
[286] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.

symbolize or express loyalty" (Keller, 2007, p.5). Diplomats routinely participate in structured ritual practices which are widely interpreted as a reflection of their loyal commitment to the state. Ritual practices may include the ceremony of being sworn in, pledges of allegiance, and the use of state symbols such as flags.

Figure 19: Diplomatic Appointment Ceremony

The photo portrays ambassadors who were sworn in by Hadi in Riyadh in 2016. The Yemeni flag to the president's right is visibly complemented by the emblem of Saudi Arabia on the wall to his left.[287]

Contrary to Keller (2007), this study questions the sincerity of loyalty expressed in these rituals. It follows Fletcher (1993), who suggests that rituals of loyalty function above all to publicly *demonstrate* "loyalty". He admits that displayed loyalties may initially be unauthentic but maintains that their repetition over time establishes and deepens sincere communal loyalties (Fletcher, 1993).

In the case of Yemen, diplomats' personal opinions and allegiances did not seem to matter, as long as they were kept private. What was more important was the ongoing

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[287] [Untitled illustration of ambassadors being sworn in by President Hadi]. Retrieved 23 July 2019 from https://www.alyemeny.com/news.php?id=9330#.XYulFy2ZPOR.

practice and visible appearance of diplomatic loyalty. The pretence of diplomatic "business as usual" was critical to the continued presentation of state capacity and permanence. The notion "as if" played an essential role in the construction of statehood through practice. As Pouliot (2010) put it, "people act as if there were a corporate state and it is precisely this performativity that makes the state look like a reified thing" (p.88). Indeed, one Yemeni diplomat explained: "nobody is thinking about [actual] diplomacy now, or about a functioning foreign ministry". In his opinion government officials were merely focused on appearances, thinking "okay we have a foreign ministry, we have ambassadors, and that's it. What will they do? That's not the problem. It's fine…- we have a flag".[288] Acting *as if* Yemen remained a coherent state with a functioning diplomatic service helped maintain the illusion of state presence, bolstered the government's portrayal of capacity, and supported its claims to legitimacy.

In the context of civil war, division and mistrust became increasingly palpable within the diplomatic service, rendering diplomatic loyalty the linchpin of careers. "It's okay to be a little bit loyal to a certain camp […]. Everybody in Yemen is loyal to a certain camp, we have a civil war, so people are divided", claimed one Yemeni diplomat.[289] What mattered more, in his opinion, was whether diverging political and personal loyalties were expressed in public. His statement exemplifies the performative nature of "diplomatic loyalty", which must not reflect sincere identification with government interests and positions. The diplomat assumed that in 2016 many appointees, who passed the government's "loyalty test", did not actually "like the government or the president. But that's a little bit normal because they were under the airstrikes in Sana'a. For sure they will be upset. But they didn't say anything, so they passed".[290]

Diplomatic loyalty continued to matter in 2017 appointments, when an increasing number of diplomats was allegedly removed from the shortlist due to their presumed Houthi affiliation in 2017. In commenting on these developments, one interviewee pointed out that "the loyalty thing is becoming more and more sensitive".[291] He went

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288 Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
289 Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
290 Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 15 February 2017.
291 Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

on arguing that questions of loyalty also impacted diplomats' promotions, which were allegedly "frozen" by the prime minister and the president "because they are not sure, 100 per cent, that all of the people on the list are loyal to the government". Linking such distrust to Yemen's civil war, he went on saying, "You have to be sure, 100 per cent, that the people who are representing you outside, will *really* represent *you*, and not other people. This is something really sensitive".[292]

Loyalty that lacks deeper conviction is brittle in moments of conflict, offering grounds for suspicion and incentivising specific ordering devices, such as the appointment of presumed loyalists and close monitoring of diplomatic voice. For Yemeni diplomats, practicing diplomatic loyalty meant sticking closely to the script, i.e. supporting the legitimacy of the Hadi government and its alliance members, specifically Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Diplomatic loyalty, which highlights compliance and struggles to accommodate cases of public voice, differs from Hirschman's (1970) conception of loyalty, mentioned in chapter five. To reiterate, Hirschman (1970) understood loyalty as a "special attachment to an organization" that tends to "activate voice". While less prominent in this study, this conception did find some empirical evidence. In some instances, permissible forms of criticism were framed by diplomats as an implicit expression of loyalty. One diplomat laughingly declared, "I was a rebel ambassador […]. I wrote [newspaper] articles […] during my time as ambassador." He remembered one specific instance involving an article "that was very critical of Hadi"[293] and a later conversation he had with the foreign minister,

> "The foreign minister asked me, 'why do you make Hadi angry?' I said, 'I don't understand'. He said, 'yeah, by your writing,' and I said, 'but I am not opposing him. I am not an opposition. I am a critic. I want him to be better. That's all".[294]

Shedding further light on the personal nature and micro-politics of diplomatic dissent, the diplomat claimed to have known the foreign minister well, saying "we are good friends, although we don't get along politically, but he is still my friend".[295] The "rebel

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[292] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[293] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 February 2017.
[294] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[295] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

ambassador" was not fired but allegedly offered a post abroad in 2016. This suggests that certain forms of voice "passed" within the Yemeni foreign ministry, while also pointing to the involvement of personal connections impacting the lines of inconsequential dissent. Notions of loyalty, both to a friend and a government, inform the expression of voice, and are used as an ex-post justification. Criticism is not equated with opposition but presented as a sign of support and well-intended advice. In this instance, loyalty and voice are both integrated in diplomatic practice.

IV Conclusion: diplomatic practice and global politics of "stateness"

The analysis above examined how the context of Yemen's civil war impacted diplomatic practice and subjectivities. In 2016-17, a key challenge to ordering the "big picture" of legitimate state governance and capacity stemmed from the fact that two self-acclaimed governments competed for political power and (inter)national recognition. Under these conditions, diplomatic loyalty was brittle and diplomatic practices, especially reflective practices of voice, became "disordered": diplomats expressed different opinions, deviated from discursive instructions, and argued with colleagues over their speech acts.

In response, a number of practices were introduced by higher-ups that may be read as "ordering devices". They included the strict monitoring of diplomatic speech acts and the increased appointment of supposed loyalists. The monitoring of voice revolved around dichotomist official scripts, which left little room for "middle grounds". The rising number of non-career loyalists, in turn, led some interviewees to question the purpose of the Yemeni diplomatic service. Indicating a shift in institutional function, they called the foreign service an inflated "welfare organization" that offered diplomatic privileges to Hadi loyalists but had little to do with the enactment of international diplomacy. Except for practices of protocol, which included the issuing of visas for example, it appears that diplomatic practices primarily aimed at maintaining a minimum of diplomatic presence and capacity. This suggests that the nature and degree of diplomatic activity is fluid and adaptive to changing socio-material contexts.

The above analysis of (dis)ordered diplomatic practices foregrounded heightened suspicion and the concept of diplomatic loyalty. Adding nuance to the definition offered

in chapter five, the above analysis explored diplomatic loyalty as a set of potentially insincere ritual practices. It also indicated that the meaning of diplomatic loyalty is unsettled by the "blurry edges" of social media and the voice of "loyalists" that is alleged to be well-intended. Overall, this chapter corroborates the argument that "diplomatic practice is […] crucial to creating the illusion of state presence and the existing status quo of international relations" (Jones & Clark, 2015, p.10).

In conclusion, this chapter sheds further light on the links between micro-level insights and macro-level politics of stateness. Its discussion informs this study's broader interest in the relationship between the Yemeni diplomatic service and the international reproduction of Yemeni statehood.

Where competing authorities claim to be the government of the same state, the question becomes one of representation, legitimacy, and sovereignty: who acts as the "representative organ" of the state and, as such, "the depository of its sovereignty"? (Talmon, 1999, p.500). Typically, questions of sovereignty are answered through international speech acts of recognition, which are described by Novogrodsky (2018) "as a complex socio-economic and diplomatic process" (p.49).[296] More specifically, acts of international recognition have been linked to 'soft' as well as 'hard power'. Only "legitimate governments" are regarded as "competent to bind their State, dispose of its assets abroad, protect its nationals, represent their State in judicial proceedings and international fora and, most importantly, consent to armed (pro-democratic or humanitarian) intervention in their State" (Talmon, 1999, p.500). The latter point is of particular relevance in the Yemeni case, where the "rightfulness" of the Saudi-led military intervention hinged on the international acknowledgment of the Hadi government's legitimacy.

Rather than trying to gain recognition, Yemeni diplomats worked to maintain the broad international support of the Hadi government: soon after Hadi withdrew his resignation and fled Yemen, the international community recognized his government as "legitimate". On 20 March 2015, the European Commission stated:

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[296] As Talmon (1999) put it "recognition in the sense of a manifestation of an opinion on legal status seems to suggest itself in cases in which the legal status of an authority is uncertain or controversial" (p.531).

> "The EU condemns the destabilising unilateral actions taken by the Houthis and military units loyal to ex-President Saleh, urges these forces to end the use of violence immediately and unconditionally and withdraw from areas they have seized, including Sana'a and Aden, and reaffirms its support to Yemen's legitimate authorities" (European Council, 2015).

Two days later, on 22 March 2015, the UN Security Council Presidential Statement read:

> "The Security Council supports the legitimacy of the President of Yemen, Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, and calls upon all parties and Member States to refrain from taking any actions that undermine the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen, and the legitimacy of the President of Yemen.
>
> The Security Council condemns the ongoing unilateral actions taken by the Houthis, which undermine the political transition process in Yemen, and jeopardize the security, stability, sovereignty and unity of Yemen" (United Nations Security Council, 2015).

The international recognition of a government is widely presumed to indicate "the readiness to enter into [or in this case maintain] 'normal', i.e. diplomatic, relations" (Talmon, 1999, p.524). Turned on its head, this means that the establishment and maintenance of diplomatic relations with a government equals "recognizing" it. Operable diplomatic institutions, no matter their output or effectiveness, are thus essential to a government's successful claim to state legitimacy and sovereignty. While the symbolic power and overall importance of operable material infrastructure will be further explored in the following chapter, focus is here placed on the role of diplomatic practice.

This chapter argues that ongoing diplomatic practice played an essential role in the government's efforts to maintain the recognition of its legitimacy and sovereignty claims. In doing so, it follows Jackson (1990), who argued that the "expression of sovereignty internationally – mutual recognition, diplomacy, international law, and the like – are works of political agents" (p.4). As suggested in this thesis, claims to external, as opposed to internal sovereignty became more important with the outbreak

of Yemen's civil war, when domestic political authority was severely and violently contested within state borders. [297] It thereby builds on recent research on state sovereignty, suggesting that in today's globalized world, external sovereignty constitutes a particularly crucial component in governmental claims of running and representing the state. In the words of Eckes (2015), "effective action at the international level […] necessarily enhances internal sovereignty. Some go as far as to claim that 'identity as a sovereign [entity] with legitimate and respected internal authority depends upon ... participation in ... international society'" (p.44). Somalia and its government, for instance, has been said to owe its ongoing existence as a singular legal-political entity "more to the perceptions of the international community than to internal political realities" (Novogrodsky, 2018, p. 42).

The brutal conflict that plagued Yemen, its economic crisis, the ongoing destruction of infrastructure, and widespread human suffering posed a challenge to the demonstration of governmental authority inside state borders. Thus, institutional spaces outside the country emerged as important platforms to claiming the rightful exercise of political authority. Ever since Hadi revoked his resignation, both his and the Houthi government have played "the game of sovereignty" (Jackson, 1990, p.35), demonstrating their ability to practice and embody statehood. One diplomat suggested that Hadi postponed the appointment of diplomats until 2016, because he only then deemed it necessary to showcase the legitimacy of his government abroad:

> "The guy was losing power […] in front of his people, in front of Yemenis, and in front of the whole world. So, he wanted to prove that 'I am still the president,

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[297] In the usual understanding of the term, sovereignty denotes "a superior and exclusive form" of state authority (Krehoff, 2008, p.288). As such, it is frequently thought to include an internal and an external component. While internal sovereignty refers to the superior authority of a state government over its territory and citizens, external sovereignty describes, broadly speaking, the independence of a state in relation to other states or the community of states (Krehoff, 2008). Historically, sovereignty was considered to come from within and did not require the recognition of other sovereigns (Crawford, 2007). Rulers could demarcate and declare a certain territory as their "kingdom", "empire", or "state". In other words, their "demonstrated capacity for self-government created credibility and respect which warranted recognition: sovereigns preceded sovereignty" (Jackson, 1990, p.34). While for a long time, the state's internal sovereignty vis-a-vis its territory and its internal affairs lay at the heart of legal-political debates regarding statehood, Besson (2011) finds that "the question of external sovereignty of the State in its international relations gradually moved centre stage during the 19th century" (para 26). By now, both notions of sovereignty are considered to be closely intertwined (Eckes, 2015).

the legitimate president of the republic of Yemen'. What he did, 'okay I am going to appoint the ambassadors'".[298]

Likewise, his colleague deemed the exiled foreign ministry as "the most important ministry – because this is the one that is dealing with the international community". He added, "if there is no one dealing with the international community some countries may withdraw their recognition for the legitimate government [i.e. the Hadi government]".[299]

According to Jones and Clark (2015), it is especially in crisis situations that diplomats play a crucial role in the "geopolitical knowledge production and circulation" (Jones & Clark, 2015, p.2). Among other things, it is "their capacity to retain legitimacy among publics" that are critical (Jones & Clark, 2015, p.2). Echoing these arguments, this chapter suggests that the practice of diplomatic loyalty was crucial to the maintenance of state sovereignty and concomitant notions of state legitimacy and capacity.

Running a diplomatic service allowed the Hadi government to demonstrate internationally its ongoing ability to "play the game of sovereignty," whereby "playing" involved the surface-level imitation of mainstream international state demeanour, or, as Jackson (1990) put it, "doing what a sovereign does in relation to other sovereigns" (p.36). The literature on diplomacy has long acknowledged that "one of the major functions of diplomats remains to safeguard sovereignty" (Kurbalija, 1999, p.173). Yet, little research has focused on the micro-processes underlying the diplomatic safeguarding and promotion of state sovereignty.[300] To address this gap in the literature, this chapter explored the relationship between the (dis)ordering of diplomatic practice and state sovereignty in crisis.

In the words of Crawford (2007), "the point about 'government' is that it has two aspects: the actual exercise of authority, and the right or title to exercise that authority" (p.57). As argued in this chapter, the Yemeni diplomatic service played an important role in both cases. It emerged as a global stage for showcasing the Hadi government's

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[298] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.
[299] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 October 2017.
[300] One exception is an article on Icelandic diplomatic practice by Jones and Clark (2015).

ongoing exercise of authority, while thereby also contributing to its international recognition.

These observations add empirical insights to new research on civil war diplomacy (Huang, 2016; Salehyan, 2009). While existing studies show that internal conflicts often have significant international dimensions, for instance in Syria, Libya, and Iraq, most focus on the decision calculus of external states, especially those who choose to intervene in civil wars (Balch-Lindsay *et al*, 2008; Cunningham, 2010). Huang (2016) challenges this status-quo by studying "rebel diplomacy" across history and continents. Likewise, Salehyan *et al* (2011) explore the linkages between rebels and foreign countries in explaining external support for insurgent groups. Building on their work, this chapter focused on the diplomatic activity by civil war actors. It differs from and complements the existing literature by studying the diplomacy of government officials in exile, rather than "rebels".

7 The Hustle of State Diplomacy: A Tale of Passports, Material Constraint, and Austerity

This chapter assesses the interplay of diplomatic agency and institutional forms and functions, by examining in more detail the role of "the material". In doing so, it follows a relational ontology (Jeffrey, 2017) that highlights the close interconnection between material resources, social relations, and professional practice. To uncover the scarcity of material resources and the uneven topology of diplomatic capacity within the Yemeni diplomatic service, Bourdieu's concept of capital is applied. It helps analyse how economic resources interact with the value assigned to other, non-material attributes.

Given its focus on the materiality of the Yemeni diplomatic service, this chapter emphasizes "economic capital", which is defined as material properties that include, or are directly convertible to, money (Bourdieu, 1986). It is argued that the outbreak of civil war in Yemen in 2015 placed a limit on the economic capital provided by the government, including diplomatic salaries. This forced diplomats to rely increasingly on "side-hustles", private savings, corruption, and the financial support of family members and friends. As a consequence, their network-based resources, or "social capital" (Bourdieu 1986), gained in importance.[301] Being a relational and dynamic asset, diplomats' social capital is closely tied to notions of family, friendship, trust, emotion, and patronage. To account for such complexity, this chapter draws on Ziersch (2005) in utilizing the following two sub-components: social capital infrastructure and social capital resources. Diplomats' social capital infrastructure contains relational and affective elements, notably trust, as well as structural aspects, such as (overlapping) formal and informal professional and personal networks. Their social capital resources describe the social support that may result from these

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[301] Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p.247).

infrastructures, including for example material assets (i.e. economic capital) or diplomatic appointments to "valued" diplomatic missions.[302]

Far from being equally popular, Yemeni embassies in various countries are commonly assigned different values by diplomats. The study of these "valuation processes" offers unique insight into the interaction between economic properties and other resources, such as cultural capital. Cultural capital denotes diplomats' educational background, specifically their language skills, which is shown to play a mediating role in diplomats' embassy preferences. The study of individual embassy valuations also highlights the significance of geographic location and spatial distance. The different values assigned to embassy posts do not equate a GDP map of the world but emerge from and through the interaction of multiple capitals and their relation to geographic space. A post in Paris, for instance, may offer the prestige and lifestyle of a "global city" (Sassen, 2005) to Yemeni diplomats with French language skills and the private funds to afford living there.

A final asset that emerges in close reference to diplomats' economic capital and plays a crucial role in the analysis of Yemen's civil war, is "symbolic capital". Encompassing abstract notions such as prestige, recognition, reputation, and authority, symbolic capital is frequently tied to the contested notion of statehood. Indeed, Bourdieu suggests that the construction of "the state" involves the gradual accumulation and centralization of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2014). By this logic, symbolic capital holds special relevance for diplomats and other high officials who claim to speak on behalf of the state. Since symbolic capital can only be enjoyed by virtue of already existing properties – provided these are deemed legitimate – it is often seen as a mechanism through which the value of other capitals is increased or undermined. In Yemen, symbolic capital emerged as a particularly contested asset in the aftermath of 2011, possibly due to its close relation with "the state" and legitimacy.

To set the scene, the first part of this chapter outlines the general limitation of economic capital within the Yemeni diplomatic service, painting a picture that challenges widespread stereotypes of diplomatic luxury. It suggests that the limited provision of material benefits by the Yemeni government boosted the relative

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[302] Ziersch (2005) names additional examples for social capital resource, such as social cohesion.

importance of social capital resources. It also indicates that the fluid constellation(s) of unevenly distributed and scarce resources within the Yemeni diplomatic service impacted diplomatic practice. This insight provokes a set of reflections that is termed "poor state diplomacy" in this study. At its core, the concept of "poor state diplomacy" addresses the difficult reconciliation of resource scarcity with materially embedded diplomatic functions. Using empirical data from the "geopolitical margin", it serves as a critical intervention in the Euro-centric field of diplomacy studies and its imaginations of global diplomatic uniformity. It challenges the idea of homogeneity that frequently underlies conceptions of diplomatic practice between and within national diplomatic services.

To further elaborate on the fluid heterogeneity of diplomatic practice, the second and third parts of this chapter discuss two examples that illustrate the various ways in which economic capital, in interaction with other resources, shape diplomatic behaviours. The first example refers to the above-mentioned valuation of embassy posts, while the second example discusses diplomats' engagement in financial corruption. Next, this chapter shifts focus onto Yemen's crisis, examining how the outbreak of civil war has impacted the existing interplay of different capitals within the Yemeni diplomatic service. Again, given its interest in "the material", particular attention is paid to economic capital, specifically the implementation of various austerity measures in 2015.

The final part of this chapter examines the material and symbolic co-constitution of the Yemeni diplomatic apparatus by focusing on the changing functions of the passport. Building on a multidisciplinary body of literature that emphasizes the importance of "things" in the making of policies (Weisser, 2014; Dittmer, 2016; Barry, 2001, 2013; Neumann, 2007; Nicolini, 2009; Salter, 2003), it studies contestation of passports in the context of civil war. Traditionally the object of routine bureaucratic processes within the consular branch of Yemen's diplomatic apparatus, the passport took on an important role in competing state claims and the militarized conflict for territorial control in 2015. Close analysis of the Yemeni passport suggests that certain ways of handling things may be inscribed into an artefact (Bueger, 2014), which can "authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on" (Latour, 2005, p.72).

I Countering stereotypes: the diplomacy of poor states

"You think that diplomatic life is luxurious... – No, it is not!"[303]

"You know that people here say that diplomats live the life of the Rocher advertisement?" asked one interviewee and laughed, pointing at a box of Rocher standing on the table between him and the researcher. He seemed amused by the discrepancy between his own life and the images broadcasted in a 1990s Rocher advertisement. Touting its world-famous pralines, the TV-ad showcased a glamorous diplomatic event inside a luxurious villa (Crowther, 2011).

Figure 20: The Rocher Advert

An ambassador summons a waiter to serve a pyramid of gold-wrapped chocolates.[304]

[303] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 February 2017.
[304] [untitled illustration of the Rocher advert]. Retrieved 26 November 2018 from https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1379948/Youre-spoiling-Mr-Ambassador-And-making-chocolates-laughing-stock-That-Ferrero-Rocher-advert-wasnt-joke--Italians-idea-style-class.html.

As the remainder of this chapter illustrates, the lavish lifestyle portrayed by Rocher was not self-evident in the case of Yemeni diplomats. Its realization depended on the multi-layered combination of their social and economic capital. "We have this reputation among people in Yemen: that we spend a lot of money, that we are rich, that we don't work", said one Yemeni diplomat, adding "well, in part that is true. But not always".[305] Whether or not Yemen's state representatives could afford a life of luxury depended, among other things, on their rank, the embassy they worked in, their connections, and their families' economic background.

Highlighting the importance of diplomats' individual economic and social capital, several interviewees distinguished between "rich" colleagues from well-off families and colleagues with a more modest family background. For those with limited personal funds it could be "a challenge […] to meet the diplomatic requirements," as one diplomat put it, who went on to explain that the monthly salary of 150 US dollars in Yemen was "really, really modest".[306] His colleague agreed, saying, "those people that come from, let's say, modest families, they struggle a lot".[307] Others, with access to considerable private funds, could meet the material standards and practices involved in diplomacy more readily.[308]

Elaborating on these economic differences, one respondent used the example of clothing, saying that some diplomats struggled to pay for a simple suit, while others walked the ministry's corridors wearing three to five thousand-dollar outfits.[309] His colleague, presumably stemming from a better-off family, mocked the low income he received in Sanaa, saying "I used to take my salary, and on my way home I stopped by the shop and bought perfume for my wife".[310] Another diplomat openly admitted coming "from a wealthy family," adding that he therefore "did not *need* [emphasized] to work".[311] Diplomats with considerable private funds were alleged to have joined the foreign service for non-material reasons, ranging from patriotism to their love of

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[305] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017

[306] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

[307] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

[308] One diplomat confessed to ask his father for financial support whenever he found his income "was too low" (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017).

[309] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

[310] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

[311] Interview with a Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.

adventure or wish to live abroad.[312] These allegations were at least in part confirmed by a diplomat who described one posting as "a tourist attraction"[313] and another as an invitation to "go and have fun". After all, he explained, "there is no Yemeni company or community [in country xx], and vice versa. There is nothing to do".[314]

Apart from discussing material differences inside the Yemeni diplomatic service, diplomats compared their financial situation and lifestyle with that of other state representative. "Yemeni diplomats are the poorest in the world",[315] proclaimed one interviewee with fervour, while another postulated that his salary was lower than an Egyptian diplomat's housing allowance.[316] Contrary to the glamorous images portrayed by Rocher and the popular media, Yemeni diplomats frequently live in small apartments in peripheral neighbourhoods, far away from the embassy and city centre. Those working in New York, for instance, were reported to live in New Jersey, having to drive an hour to work every morning.[317] Next to their modest housing, some diplomats struggled to pay for basic living expenses, which importantly included school fees for their children.[318] International private schools were unaffordable for many diplomats, charging several thousand euros a year.[319] Thus, children were sent to attend public state schools, where they were taught in the native language of their respective host country, which posed an obvious long-term challenge in their education.[320] Given these difficulties, some diplomats decided to leave their families behind in Yemen.[321] "You have to compromise", explained a respondent, pointing to colleagues whose salary abroad was too low to cover the living expenses of their spouses and children.[322]

Besides the drastic step of separating from one's family, diplomats engaged in more banal acts of saving money. Trying to come up with an example, one respondent

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[312] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017
[313] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[314] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 February 2017.
[315] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017
[316] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.
[317] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[318] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 July 2017. "The education of our children is our biggest problem," explained one Yemeni diplomat (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017).
[319] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017
[320] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017
[321] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.
[322] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

explained, "they ask themselves, do we need to go to this Café, for example, to spend money, while I can also have it at home".[323]

I.1. Reconciling limited economic capital and diplomatic practice?

Limited economic capital, notably reflected in low salaries and embassy budgets, did not only impact diplomats' lifestyle, but also impeded their professional activity. As one diplomat put it, "diplomacy is relations, is activities, is moving around and making invitations. When you cannot do that because of the financial situation, of course it will freeze you, you cannot work".[324] His colleague agreed, "I am a diplomat, I am appointed […] not to stay at home but to meet people, to invite them, to discuss with them...".[325] The inability to pay for restaurants and the reluctance to invite guests into small apartments,[326] reduced the (net)working strategies available to diplomats. This insight supports an argument made by former career diplomat Carne Ross (2007), who found that "contemporary diplomacy is deeply unbalanced and unfair […]. Big, rich and established countries have large cadres of experienced, well-trained and well-resourced diplomats who are able to dominate negotiations" (p.24).

The global heterogeneity of inter-state diplomatic practice can be traced to past colonialism, when diplomacy "stood in the service of empire building, rather than a means to communicate with, understand and mediate 'the Other'" (Constantinou & DerDerian, 2010, p.11). As illustrated in chapter four, colonized "non-sovereign" states were subjugated to European rulers and excluded from the global diplomatic system. As Constantinou and DerDerian (2010) put it, they "were often found lacking in Western civility and denied the diplomatic identity" (p.10).

Importantly, material limitations did not equally apply to all Yemeni embassies and diplomats, pointing to the important role of both social capital and geographic location in diplomatic practice:

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[323] Since diplomats' salary abroad, no matter how low, still exceeded Yemeni standards, motivation was high to save money whilst outside the country, which could then be spent on a house, a car, or school fees once back in Yemen (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.).
[324] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[325] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.
[326] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

"There are rich embassies around the world, in Riyadh or London. If you want to make an invitation to your home, you will do everything and then you give the bill to the embassy and they will give you the money. But if you want to do that in Warsaw, or in Budapest, or Vienna, they don't have this budget, they cannot do that. It depends on the embassy".[327]

Notwithstanding such rare material wealth, official diplomatic events have reportedly declined across all Yemeni embassies since the outbreak of war. Cultural happenings, such as photo exhibitions, were described as "rare": "because it costs money and the ambassadors fear... – they don't want to spend money on these things because [they think that] maybe they have to pay the locals, the rent, the bills".[328] Accordingly, Yemeni embassies were said to have engaged in "minimum work" in 2016/17, involving little more than administrative necessities, such as consular procedures.[329] This observation resonates with an argument made in the previous chapter, indicating that the degree of diplomatic activity is fluid, always dependent on shifting and uneven socio-material contexts. It also corresponds with the notion of "minimum diplomacy" expressed elsewhere. Wojciech (2020), for instance, reports that European diplomats in North Korea describe their practices there as "diplomacy at its minimum": "purposefully short-staffed, faced with no real demand for consular services or performing traditional diplomatic duties" (n.p.).

Low salaries also undermined diplomats' representative practices, including diplomats' own appearance. In the words of one respondent, "you cannot meet the requirements to be the image of the good diplomat".[330] He went on to elaborate,

"I think a good diplomat has, not a fancy, but a good-looking suit. Or formal suit. Even this – I know [it] is something very small – but even this is difficult for our friends. It is not easy for them. With 150 dollars a month you have to pay the rent, the monthly expenses".[331]

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[327] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[328] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[329] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[330] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[331] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

His colleague agreed that diplomats "have to have" a lifestyle that was unaffordable to many Yemeni representatives – especially those working on "domestic incomes" in Sanaa. "You have to have nice suits, nice tie, you have to have a nice car, you have to have a nice house. So, with the salary we get when we are inside you cannot do any of that".[332] Diplomats, he claimed, have to look representative, "in every way […] even when you go to the gym. I cannot just have any clothes". His colleague agreed, saying, "diplomacy is all about images", which cost money. "We cannot portray nice images" he concluded. "Our diplomats live in poor neighbourhoods […], they live a life like the Roma and Sinti", he said and laughed.[333]

As these examples suggest, diplomatic practice differs not only between diplomatic services of rich and poor states, but also between rich and poor embassies and diplomats of a single country. The degree to which Yemeni diplomats could comply with perceived diplomatic requirements, both in terms of specific practices and images, reflected an uneven topology of diplomatic capacity. Some of the interviewed ambassadors owned houses in expensive European capitals and could afford wearing costly brands, while other diplomats admitted their financial struggle. In particular, limited material resources impeded the conduct of material diplomatic practices, such as the hosting of dinner parties.[334]

To highlight the heterogeneity of diplomatic practice and its fluid interaction with scarce and unevenly distributed resources, this chapter develops and foregrounds the concept of "poor state diplomacy". As the Yemeni case study suggests, the global diplomatic playing field is marked by unequal capitals, material and otherwise, which in turn leads to differences in diplomats' subjectivity and practice, both between and within national foreign services. Notwithstanding such disparity, as of yet, little has been written about the impact of limited government funds on diplomatic lifestyles and the form and effectiveness of diplomatic practice. By describing diplomatic practices

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[332] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

[333] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017.

[334] While scarce economic capital limited some diplomatic activities, they nurtured others, for example fund-raising (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 February 2017). Several Yemeni diplomats reported to have fallen into the graces of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh by securing aid and investment abroad. "Our diplomats are like beggars when they meet diplomats from Gulf countries," remarked one respondent, who accused some of his colleagues of sharing tragic, heart-warming stories to obtain donations at diplomatic events. "They always have a paper or something with them that they want others to sign, asking for money" (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017).

and institutional forms marked by material scarcity, the notion of "poor state diplomacy" addresses this scholarly gap. It challenges predominant ideal- and stereotypes in both public discourse and diplomatic theory, specifically notions of uniformity and luxury.

To further illustrate the various ways in which economic (and other) capital shapes diplomats' subjectivity and practice, two specific examples are discussed in the following: the valuation of embassies and unofficial payments within the Yemeni diplomatic service.

II The geographical valuation of embassies

The distinction between working "at home" and working "abroad" had direct material implications, with diplomats in Yemen earning a fraction of what their colleagues abroad would receive. While this rendered foreign posts attractive, specific embassy preferences depended on the location-specific interplay of diplomats' cultural, social, and economic resources. The combination and relative weight of these factors differed on an individual basis, and there was no uniform popularity ranking. Yemen's foreign ministry never formally graded its embassy locations, which set it apart from Arab counterparts like Egypt, where embassy-hosting countries were grouped into A, B, C, and D clusters. "A"-countries were typically powerful and rich, offering a pleasant lifestyle and more impactful professional tasks, while "D"-countries were more challenging to live in and arguably of lesser political and economic relevance.

In Yemen, diplomats' valuation of foreign posts was comparatively more fluid, including aspects such as language skills, local salaries, as well as living expenses. Cities like Paris were considered prestigious, offering a historical and picturesque place to live in, but were also known to be costly.[335] When asked, one Yemeni diplomat smiled and responded, "the reputation of France is that it is *really* expensive. So, they run away from France".[336] His colleague agreed, adding that Paris was unattractive to most diplomats due to its high prices and French language requirements.[337] Two further disadvantages included the small number of Yemeni diplomats in Paris, which

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[335] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017.
[336] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[337] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017.

led to a comparatively heavy workload for each, and the fact that legal regulations for foreign diplomats were claimed to be "less favourable" in France than elsewhere, denying tax exemptions, for example. "For the high [Yemeni] bourgeoisie it is nice to go to Paris", one diplomat summed it up, "but not for others".[338] As the example of Paris illustrates, different forms of capital, often in interaction with geo-political specificities, inform embassies' perceived popularity.

The outbreak of civil war in 2015 changed the relative value and constellation of sought-after resources. Refuge and access to economic capital emerged as particularly crucial factors. When asked about popular embassies in 2017, diplomats pointed to Riyadh, Cairo, Amman, London, Ottawa, and Berlin. While this list is not exhaustive, it offers insight into the value ascribed to different embassy locations at the time. "In the United Kingdom, London, in Cairo, in Saudi Arabia […], these are the countries that people are willing to go to, and to get posted to […] maybe for financial benefits or to ask for asylum," claimed one diplomat.[339] In his view, the embassies in Germany and the UK had emerged as particularly attractive choices since the outbreak of war, a development he linked to the prospect of gaining asylum. "[My colleagues want] to stay a few years [in the embassy in Germany] and then ask for asylum. Even in the UK. And the government knows, everybody knows".[340]

A similar line of reasoning was offered by reference to Canada,[341] with one interviewee suggesting that it was comparatively easy for Yemeni diplomats there to stay in the country after completion of their official term, either requesting asylum [342] or citizenship. [343] These statements suggest a shift in diplomats' narratives that foregrounds notions of refuge. Next to Germany, the UK, and Canada, Egypt and Jordan were named as potential safe shelters for diplomats and their families, arguably offering favourable immigration laws and a "facilitating" Arabic-speaking environment.

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[338] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 January 2017.
[339] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[340] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[341] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017.
[342] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[343] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017

In addition to notions of safety, access to economic capital constituted an important motivating factor in individual embassy preferences. At a time in which the exiled government was unable to reliably provide a budget to diplomatic missions abroad, embassy funds depended primarily on the selling of documentation, such as visas and trade licenses. As discussed in more detail below, these funds were frequently used to raise staff salaries. Being among the few countries that received incoming flights from Yemen, Egypt and Jordan emerged as particularly important points of transit, witnessing a quickly growing Yemeni diaspora. This, again, turned Yemeni embassies there into central bureaucratic hubs that issued an increasing number of relevant papers and documentation and produced considerable revenue. As one interviewee put it, "thousands and thousands of Yemenis [are in Cairo], who all need stamps to get their stuff done".[344]

Next to Egypt and Jordan, Saudi Arabia was named as a particularly lucrative post, not least because of its proximity to Yemen. "There are over a million Yemenis living in Saudi Arabia, they are issuing them new passports," explained one diplomat.[345] His colleague agreed that "in Riyadh or in Jeddah, we have a million Yemenis […]. So, this money [gained through the issuance of travel documentation] is around millions in the Gulf countries".[346] Moreover, living in a neighbouring state allegedly allowed diplomats to pursue commercial interests in Yemen. "You can be an attaché, for example, and run your own business on the side", one diplomat claimed.[347] "It is like home" said another respondent, pointing to cultural similarities, shared language, and the large Yemeni diaspora in Saudi Arabia, especially in Jeddah. While not everyone agreed on the supposed advantage of living in Saudi Arabia, [348] discussion surrounding the differences in embassy-specific meanings illuminates the interplay of different capitals at work. To further examine the role of economic resources in the reproduction of diplomatic practice, the following section analyses ways in which Yemeni diplomats resorted to, and made sense of, corruption.

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[344] Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016.
[345] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[346] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[347] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 11 January 2017.
[348] One diplomat complained that it was difficult for Yemenis who lived in Saudi Arabia to bring their families with them (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017).

III Corruption: "to survive as a diplomat you have to be rich or corrupt"

"The root cause of corruption [is] the passion for luxurious living within the ruling group"

(Rahman Ibn Kaldun cited in Klitgaard, 1988, p.7).

As indicated above, official budgets and salaries have traditionally been limited within the Yemeni foreign service, causing adaptations in lifestyle and practice that challenge mainstream images of diplomatic luxury. In response, Yemen's foreign policy professionals unlocked alternative sources of income. One diplomat reported to have had a side job while being posted abroad,[349] while many others relied on their families' financial support. Informal revenues and payments inside embassies constituted a further important means of circumventing existing material constraints. Diplomats variously referred to these benefits as "additional income" and corruption.[350] By analysing the creation and distribution of informal economical capital, this section shows how closely the performance of state power is connected to individual material benefits and how blurred the lines between official and unofficial diplomatic practice can be. These findings corroborate existing research on bureaucracies that operate under conditions of limited accountability, contested administrative norms, and scarce material resources (Jeffrey, 2002; Khan, 1996, 2000; Tidey, 2016; Bersch *et al*, 2017).

Following diplomatic accounts, corruption is understood in this chapter as the allocation of material rewards that is neither merit-based nor legally regulated. This conceptualization of corruption is not limited to the transgression of Weberian distinctions between public office and private gain. Instead, it suggests that the "forms of desire that fuel corruption are […] profoundly social, shaped by larger sociocultural notions of power, privilege, and responsibility" (Hasty, 2005, p.271). As such, so-called corruption is deeply embedded in institutional history, as has been shown in chapter three and four. In Yemen, the distribution of benefits among diplomats has long foregrounded notions of neo-patrimonialism, nepotism, and clientelism, which linked rewards to notions of loyalty, trust, and kinship, to name just a few examples.

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[349] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017.
[350] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.

Diplomatic accounts of corruption were often clouded in humour and insinuation. Yet, corruption persistently emerged as a topic closely tied to diplomats' emotions, ethical selfhood, and professional ideals. In a few instances, respondents openly criticized corruption and expressed their wish for change, probably motivated by the context of Yemen's crisis (Grindle, 2012).

As indicated above, a popular way of generating unaccounted economic capital, or "additional income", was consular work, specifically the certification and issuing of legal documents.[351] According to Yemeni diplomats, it was common to charge prices that exceeded official fees. Embassy employees thereby generated cash that was not sent back to the ministry but stayed inside the embassy, or rather "in the hands of the ambassador".[352] Alternative practises of enrichment were said to include payments for made-up employees, including drivers and gardeners,[353] and rents that exceeded real costs.[354] "Some Yemeni embassies," one diplomat claimed, "can make ambassadors really rich".[355]

Confirming broad scholarly consensus (Gupta, 1995; Klitgaard, 1988; Karklins, 2002), diplomats linked corruption within the Yemeni foreign service to the lack of accountability. "Let's say I took some money, and it is being discovered. Nothing will happen when discovered, especially if I am well connected," claimed one interviewee.[356] This highlights a close connection between economic and social capital. While foreign ministry employees would, in theory, check ambassadors' expense claims, they were accused of condoning ambassadors' corruption, in return for receiving a share of the profit thereby produced.[357] In fact, it appears that a network of influential figures, including a number of ambassadors, financial attachés, and high-

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[351] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[352] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[353] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017. These practices resemble the corrupt practice of claiming salaries for "ghost employees" elsewhere in the Yemeni public service. "Ghost employees" are workers who receive government salaries but either do not exist or who do not report to work. "There are few reliable statistics as to their prevalence, but anecdotal evidence suggests they number in the tens of thousands" (Rageh *et al*, 2016).
[354] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[355] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[356] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017.
[357] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.

ranking ministry employees, benefitted from existing corruption practices.[358] "They play with it," one diplomat said in a bitter tone.[359]

It is not uncommon for actors knowledgeable of corruption to also profit by its continuance. As Klitgaard (1988) put it, "corruption has self-serving aspects to those in power, not only as a means for lining one's pockets but as a mechanism for political dealing, forging linkages, and even inducing political participation" (p.3). In the context of this study, corruption emerged as an important alternative funding scheme for embassies.

While Yemeni ambassadors and high-ranking ministry officials benefitted most from corrupt practices, the fruits of corruption were sometimes distributed downwards. As one Yemeni diplomat described the corruption habits in Yemen's foreign service, "the ambassador takes the biggest share of it [the "additional income"], then the financial attaché, then the counsellor. The other diplomats, *if* [emphasized] it's a huge amount of money, they give them a monthly support".[360] Allegedly, some diplomats relied on their "additional salary" in covering basic expenses, such as insurance costs, rent, or school fees.[361] In fact, one respondent described existing corruption practices, specifically the distribution of "additional income" in embassies, as a customary law. Once in place, he claimed, unwritten distribution practices were verbally passed on to new embassy employees, including new ambassadors. Although the latter were not formally obliged to follow the distribution habits of their predecessors, most of them did.[362] The allocation of "additional income" inside Yemen's foreign service corresponds with existing research on corrupt government systems. Karklins (2002), for instance, finds that "quite often the salaries of state officials and civil servants are supplemented with hidden second salaries and bonuses […] paid at the discretion of supervisors, which gives them extensive leverage" (pp.25&27).

Further illustrating the "institutionalization" of corrupt practices, one respondent shared a narrative describing a phone call received by a Yemeni ambassador from within the ministry's department for administrative and financial affairs. Allegedly, the

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[358] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[359] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[360] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[361] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017.
[362] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017.

ambassador was instructed to complement official salaries of diplomats in his embassy by allocating a specific monthly stipend to each. Said request was supposedly given by reference to local living expenses, which were deemed too high to be covered by official means.[363] With the customization of "corrupt" practices, public institutions, such as embassies, start resembling "private fiefdoms serving the whims of entrenched lords" (Karklins, 2002, p.25). In these instances, ambassadors, consuls, or financial attachés emerge as patrons, or brokers, who routinely disburse state resources.[364] Such brokerage is not regulated by formal legal codes but by custom and social relations. It increases the resources that may potentially be extracted through diplomats' social capital infrastructures.

The outbreak of war in 2015 impacted the amount and geographic availability of "additional income". Diplomatic missions that had previously benefitted from trade-based corruption, for instance, experienced a sudden decline in their income.[365] Given Yemen's plummeting trade relations and a subsequent drop of funds, some ambassadors decided to stop, or at least lessen, the "additional income" paid to lower-ranked diplomats. "Because there is less money now. It is not enough to split and to give to the other diplomats," remarked one interviewee.[366] While this example points to the financial suffering of embassies, not all Yemeni missions were negatively affected by the outbreak of war. As already mentioned, some benefitted from increased consular work, especially the issuance of travel documentation, such as visa or passports.[367] One diplomat described such inter-institutional discrepancy, saying:

> "In London they have a consular income, from consular fees, so they keep managing. But there are embassies, like the one in Prague, they don't have

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[363] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017.
[364] In his research on low-ranking officials in India, Jeffrey (2002) establishes "malfeasance" that involves "low-ranking officials who act as patrons or brokers in the disbursement of state resources" (p.21).
[365] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 September 2017.
[366] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[367] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017. Next to London, other "lucrative" embassy locations included Riyadh and Jeddah. Yemeni embassies in these countries were said to "have a lot of income, locally generated, which has always been stolen and distributed within the embassy" (Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016).

students, they don't have expats, they don't have anything, so they don't have an income, so these ones *really* suffer. Spain is the same".[368]

Reflecting upon his own explanation, the diplomat paused for a moment, to then sum up the situation, saying: "So that's how it works. Some embassies can survive, others suffer".[369] Notwithstanding singular cases of material wealth, the Yemeni diplomatic service as a whole was negatively affected by the outbreak of war. As a consequence, a series of austerity measures was developed at the institutional and individual level, which will be discussed in the following section.

IV Austerity in the diplomatic service: "our team around the world is being paid by Qatar"

Besides triggering a decline in official embassy budgets, the outbreak of war led to the cut, suspension, and delay of diplomatic salaries. As a rule, Yemeni diplomats are paid quarterly, in US dollars, through the Central Bank in Sanaa, specifically its foreign reserves.[370] Each quarter, foreign ministry officials would send their payroll – a list of employees and salaries – to the Central Bank, which would then transfer payments to Yemeni diplomats across the world. Allegedly, this routine was challenged following the Houthi takeover. Members of the Houthi movement were said to have tried "to stop the payment of [diplomatic] salaries," arguably being "upset about how the conflict was being represented abroad".[371] Notwithstanding such contestation, diplomats continued receiving their wages through the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) until 2016. The continuous provision of economic capital was linked to the work of diplomats within the foreign ministry in Sanaa, who were said to have "defended" their colleagues abroad.[372] More importantly, Central Bank representatives emphasized the technocratic and apolitical nature of their work.[373] Throughout the 2011 uprising, the political transition, and the outbreak of war, Central Bank officials insisted on following ministerial payment instructions, no matter who was listed on payrolls or in charge of

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[368] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[369] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[370] Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016.
[371] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.
[372] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.
[373] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2017.

ministries (Browning, 2016).[374] In fact, Rageh *et al* (2016) reported a "tacit agreement" between representatives of the Hadi and the Houthi government in 2015, assenting "to respect the neutrality of the CBY and not to interfere in Central Bank operations".

In spite of the CBY's ongoing operations, diplomats' salaries were reportedly cut in half in the last two quarters of 2015.[375] In trying to elucidate such cuts, respondents put forth different reasons. It was unclear whether the plurality and divergence of presented "explanations" reflected a politically-inspired blame game or resulted from honest confusion. Studies and a number of diplomatic reports[376] suggest that cuts were induced by the Central Bank's limited foreign reserves. "With the general decrease in government revenues due to the war, the CBY's cash distributions were reduced in 2015 to cover only basic operating expenses" (Rageh *et al*, 2016).

Diplomats' cut in salary points to the material challenge of maintaining Yemen's diplomatic service at a time of division and conflict. To address the difficulty of procuring sufficient economic capital, the exiled Hadi government began launching a number of austerity measures, including the outsourcing and delay of diplomats' payments.

In December 2015, Yemen's exiled government was promised 40 million US dollar by Qatari authorities in support of its diplomatic service (Khatib, 2015; *Mosnad*, 2015).[377] Throughout the subsequent year, full diplomatic salaries were paid by Qatari funds, provided in four quarterly instalments of 10 million each.[378] As a Yemeni diplomat observed in late 2016, "now the foreign service relies on Qatari donations".[379] Qatar's role in the financial sustenance of Yemeni diplomats constitutes an example of "outsourced" services that is rarely discussed in the context of diplomacy.[380] In fact,

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[374] In June 2016 the IMF Mission Chief for Yemen, Albert Jaeger, publicly stated: "The central bank is certainly serious about being neutral in a very difficult political and security setting" (cited in Rageh *et al*, 2016).

[375] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.

[376] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017; Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016.

[377] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

[378] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017; Interview with a Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.

[379] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.

[380] To date, only Rijks and Whitman (2007) speculate whether certain diplomatic services of the European External Action Service, such as consular-type work, might be more effectively conducted by outsourcing it to other organisations.

diplomatic and security institutions are among the few government branches that have remained relatively closed to non-nationals, supposedly due to the risk of foreign meddling and sabotage. Against this backdrop, the payment of a country's diplomatic service by a foreign power constitutes a novelty that falls within this chapter's concept of "poor state diplomacy".

The involvement of Qatar came at a time in which members of the Hadi cabinet broke official ties with the CBY. In the second half of 2016, Hadi officials publicly labelled ministerial payrolls as "partisan" and announced they would no longer cooperate with the Central Bank (Rageh *et al*, 2016). In September 2016, they accused the acting CBY governor of being a Houthi supporter, replaced him, and proclaimed the CBY's relocation to Aden, which lied outside the Houthi sphere of influence. This decision was implemented in spite of its known negative impact on Yemeni citizens, including civil servants whose payment was put on hold for months on end (Rageh *et al*, 2016). A Western diplomat commented at the time: "The concern is that the Yemeni government, and implicitly the Saudi-led coalition behind them, are trying to weaponize the economy" (cited in Rageh *et al* 2016).

Besides paying diplomats with money provided by Qatar, members of the exiled Hadi cabinet engaged in a range of austerity measures, allegedly cutting payments toward diplomats' international health insurance and the tuition fees of their children.[381] In addition, diplomatic salaries were delayed throughout 2016 and 2017. Having to wait for up to six months for his payment,[382] one diplomat complained, "no salary, no insurance, no money for the education of your children, no tickets to visit family members… all of this is missing".[383] Lacking state support and unable to get a loan, diplomats increasingly relied on the financial support of family networks and friends.[384] One diplomat explained, "I have some savings" and "I have my relatives".[385] His colleague admitted with laughter that he as well had asked his family for help:

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[381] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[382] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[383] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017
[384] Interview with Yemeni diplomatic staff member, 7 December 2016; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 January 2017
[385] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

"The embassies support [you] sometimes, because a lot of them […] they have cash from, ehm, certain things, so they can support the diplomats for one, two, three months. Then the diplomats have to see if they can find any support from their families, from friends...something like that".[386]

The unpredictability of payments made it difficult for diplomats to plan ahead, which caused stress. "If they told us, 'see we will gonna give you your salary in January', then you are gonna prepare yourself […]. But they said, 'we have no idea when we are going to send the salary'".[387] His colleague added that diplomats "suffered": "each ambassador I talk to is angry, not angry, but like stuck".[388] Diplomats showed mixed emotions in discussing their delayed payments. While some seemed understanding,[389] others were upset:

"I am a diplomat I am not supposed to ask my family to spend on me […]. Even if my family wants to help. How much would it be? You know with countries like Switzerland, the UK, and then I am not the only son they have".[390]

Austerity within the Yemeni diplomatic service also manifested itself in the materiality of diplomatic institutions. In some cases, expensive rented real estate was given up for cheaper options, causing the move of embassies and ambassadors.[391] In Berlin, for instance, the Yemeni embassy moved from a rented property into the ambassador's villa, which was owned by the Yemeni government. The ambassador, in turn, had to move to a smaller apartment.[392] In London, limited funding was visibly reflected in the appearance of the Yemeni embassy, whose white walls had turned grey in late 2016, marked by large areas of crumbling paint. Likewise, the boiler inside the Yemeni embassy building broke down in winter 2016-17, leaving the entire Victorian townhouse without heating. With apparently no money available for repairs, employees had to work for months in cold offices, wearing winter jackets and relying

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[386] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[387] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 August 2017.
[388] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[389] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[390] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 31 March 2017.
[391] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 13 February 2017.
[392] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

on provisional electric heaters.[393] The image was anything but glorious, providing yet another counter-example to mainstream narratives of diplomatic luxury.

Clearly, the appearance of diplomatic buildings impacts the production of "big picture" representations. Historically speaking, their pomp and lavishness were thought to represent the respective wealth and power of aristocratic heads of state (Nicolson, 1936; Harr, 1969). Till this day, the architecture of embassy buildings is marked by considerable symbolism (Gournay & Loeffler, 2002). In a rare study of diplomatic architecture, Loeffler (1998) argues that "embassies are symbolically charged buildings uniquely defined by domestic politics, foreign affairs, and a complex set of representational requirements" (p.3). While run-down facades and interiors might taint the image of state grandness and capacity, this chapter suggests that the material endurance of diplomatic institutions is essential to the illusion of state permanence and legitimacy. Unlike other state buildings, whose material manifestation and effectiveness were impacted by institutional moves or duplications, Yemeni embassies' existence and operations have remained fairly untouched by domestic turmoil. Displaying an image of stability, their main structures persisted, and highly symbolic objects, such as stamps and flags, continued to facilitate day-to-day diplomatic practices.

So far, this chapter's analysis examined the changing availability and distribution of economic capital within the Yemeni diplomatic service, paying particular attention to its interaction with a variety of other resources. It highlighted the material struggle faced by many Yemeni diplomats and outlined the coping strategies they developed. In the process of analysing how material constraints impacted diplomatic practice, this chapter has developed the notion of "poor state diplomacy". Simply put, it describes diplomatic practice and institutional form marked by material scarcity. While foreign policy institutions might share the same symbolic markers, such as flags, portraits of state leaders, and formal dress codes, a look beyond the surface uncovers considerable differences, revealing the uneven distribution of resources and capacity between and within them.

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[393] Interview with Yemeni diplomatic staff member, 7 December 2016.

The following and last part of this chapter focuses on a specific object which holds great symbolic capital and has long played a central role in the day-to-day work of diplomats: the passport. Changes in its usage and perceived value are linked to broader theorisations of the Yemeni state. Being crucial to competing state-claims in Yemen, the passport is treated as a material "surface into which the state's symbolic capital can be inscribed" (Dittmer, 2017, p.8). In fact, this chapter follows previous research in suggesting that "the passport – that little paper booklet with the power to open international doors – seemed the perfect vehicle through which to explore some of the most important features of modern nation-states" (Torpey, 2018, p.xi). In Yemen, passports were closely tied to state sovereignty, playing a central role in its contested (re)-production during war.

V The materiality of state sovereignty: a struggle for data and passports

As suggested above, the international projection of state sovereignty hinges on the continuance of Yemen's existing diplomatic infrastructure. In the following analysis, the micro-level contestation underlying such material continuity is exemplified by zooming-in on the technical modalities of passport production systems. Passports are viewed as objects of "sovereign power and as a documentary attempt to project the power of the sovereign state toward other states" (Salter, 2003, p.12). In Yemen, passports emerged as an important tool in competing state-claims, not only at an international but also at a national level. In fact, the study of Yemeni passports collapses the alleged separation between external and internal sovereignty. It shows that the provision of *internationally* recognized passports constituted an important means in *national* claims to territorial control and state power.

Conditioning global movement and refuge, passports, especially diplomatic passports, became increasingly valuable to Yemenis with the outbreak of war. [394] Ordinary passports have traditionally been provided by the interior ministry's "department of immigration, passports, and nationality" (*maslaha al-hijrah wa al-jawazaat wa al-jinsiyyah*) in Sanaa, as well as its branches in various Yemeni governorates and

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[394] Issued in 1990, the Yemeni passport law distinguishes between diplomatic, special, service, and ordinary passports (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2014).

Yemeni embassies abroad (Yemeni Passport Law No.63, 1991).[395] Being sold at a profit, passports were widely referred to as "documents with value",[396] according to one Yemeni diplomat.

While the passport can be considered a "national object", it is subject to a world of international visa restrictions. The regular Yemeni passport is listed at the bottom of global "passport power" rankings, only followed by passports issued in Somalia, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan, in that order. This means that Yemeni passport holders can only enter a few countries without an initial access visa, including Dominica, Ecuador, Haiti, Malaysia, Micronesia, Palestinian territories, St. Vincent and the Grandines, Sudan, and Syria (Passport Index, 2019).

Contrary to ordinary Yemeni passports, diplomatic passports offer the advantage of circumventing at least some, if not all, of the visa requirements abroad and are issued by the foreign ministry's protocol department (Yemeni Passport Law No.63, 1991). Given the global mobility 'inscribed' in them, "everyone wants a diplomatic passport," according to a senior Yemeni diplomat, who used to work in the ministry's protocol department. Allegedly, the demand for diplomatic passports used to be so high that Ali Abdullah Saleh himself had a hand-written note framed and placed over the desk of the department's director: "No one gets a diplomatic passport unless he deserves it".[397]

While the international diplomatic passport system is heavily regulated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations specialized agency,[398] national governments remain responsible for central tasks involved in the production, distribution, and management of their national passports. For example, Yemeni government authorities must secure the validity of passports and avoid identity fraud. To do so, they typically run background checks, using basic information

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[395] In conversation with Yemeni diplomats, the interior ministry's department of immigration, passports, and nationality was more loosely referred to as the "passport agency" (*Maslaha al-Jawazat*) (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017). Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 1 December 2016
[396] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[397] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 12 July 2017.
[398] The contemporary system of passports bears witness to considerable inter-state cooperation marked by "an overarching set of norms and prescriptions to which individual states must respond" (Torpey, 2018, p.4).

stored locally on large data servers in Sanaa.[399] Given the importance of these servers, passport-related processes were described as "centralized" by Yemeni diplomats, with passports or information requests being sent from embassies and consulates around the world to Yemen's capital (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2014).[400] As will be shown in the remaining part of this chapter, the geo-material centralization of the Yemeni passport system became problematic following the Hadi government's re-location to Riyadh in 2015.

The production and management of passports emerged as an important source of revenue with the outbreak of war, not only in embassies, as discussed above, but also inside the ministry in Sanaa. Once Houthis took control of government buildings in Yemen's capital in late 2014, they gained access to empty passport booklets that were stored in the interior and foreign ministries. The process of printing and distributing (diplomatic) passports subsequently fell into their hands. Rumours circulated among Yemeni diplomats abroad, suggesting that diplomatic passports were sold by Houthis for at least 5000 US dollars each – in complete defiance of official eligibility criteria.[401] "A lot of people wanted diplomatic passports so if you paid high enough then you would get it," claimed several interviewees.[402] One diplomat specified, "because when you have a diplomatic passport you can go to Cairo or Jordan without a previous visa".[403] While the number of stockpiled booklets in Sanaa could not be established with any certainty, it became clear that the Houthis would not be able to import any new booklets, which were produced abroad. "They can't! A militia asking for passports?! It won't go," said one Yemeni diplomat and laughed loudly.[404] Another explained that the

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[399] Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016.
[400] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[401] Yemen's passport law contains a list of candidates eligible to request and carry diplomatic passports. It includes members of parliament who travel in an official capacity, members of the diplomatic and consular corps, including their wives and underaged children, and high-ranking cabinet members, such as the prime minister, or the advisor to the prime minister (Yemeni Passport Law No.63, 1991).
[402] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 10 July 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017; Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016.
[403] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[404] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.

company producing passport booklets "does not deal with anyone, if there is any question of legitimacy or whatever, then they would not produce new passports".[405]

These findings support an argument made by Torpey (2018), who found that passports "may indicate acceptance by one state of the existence of another state, a matter of paramount importance to those wishing to be so recognized" (p.204). In Yemen, the Houthis' lacking international recognition was translated into lacking access to globally circulating symbolic capital (inscribed in passport booklets). This, in turn, undermined their ability to provide basic state services and related claims to internal sovereignty. According to Eckes (2015), the link between external recognition and internal sovereignty is not uncommon,

> "effective action at the international level […] also necessarily enhances internal sovereignty. Some go as far as stating that the 'identity as a sovereign [entity] with legitimate and respected internal authority depends upon ... participation in **...** international society'" (p.44).

Notably, Houthis were excluded from the international production of passport booklets, which in the Yemeni case were reportedly obtained from Germany.[406] The most known provider of passport booklets in Germany is "Veridos", a public-private venture that was founded in 2015. It claims to provide "sophisticated identity solutions for governments and their citizens" (Veridos, 2018). In addition to its headquarters in Berlin and operating facility in Munich, the company is represented in Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Singapore, the USA, and the UAE (*Wallstreet Online*, 2018). In fact, Veridos started a joint venture with the UAE's interior ministry's "Privatization Group for Resource Development L.L.C". Based in Abu Dhabi, the "Emirates German Security Printing" claims to "serve markets in the United Arab Emirates and the Middle East region with state-of-the-art identity solutions in accordance with German quality and security standards" (Emirates German Security Printing L.L.C., 2019). Close examination of the Veridos website offers insight into the policies of a booklet-

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[405] Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016. One diplomat suggested, Houthis ran short in booklets and began to reserve the issuance of passports for emergencies, or for particularly well-known individuals (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017).
[406] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

producing company, exemplifying the material and normative embeddedness of Yemen's passport production.
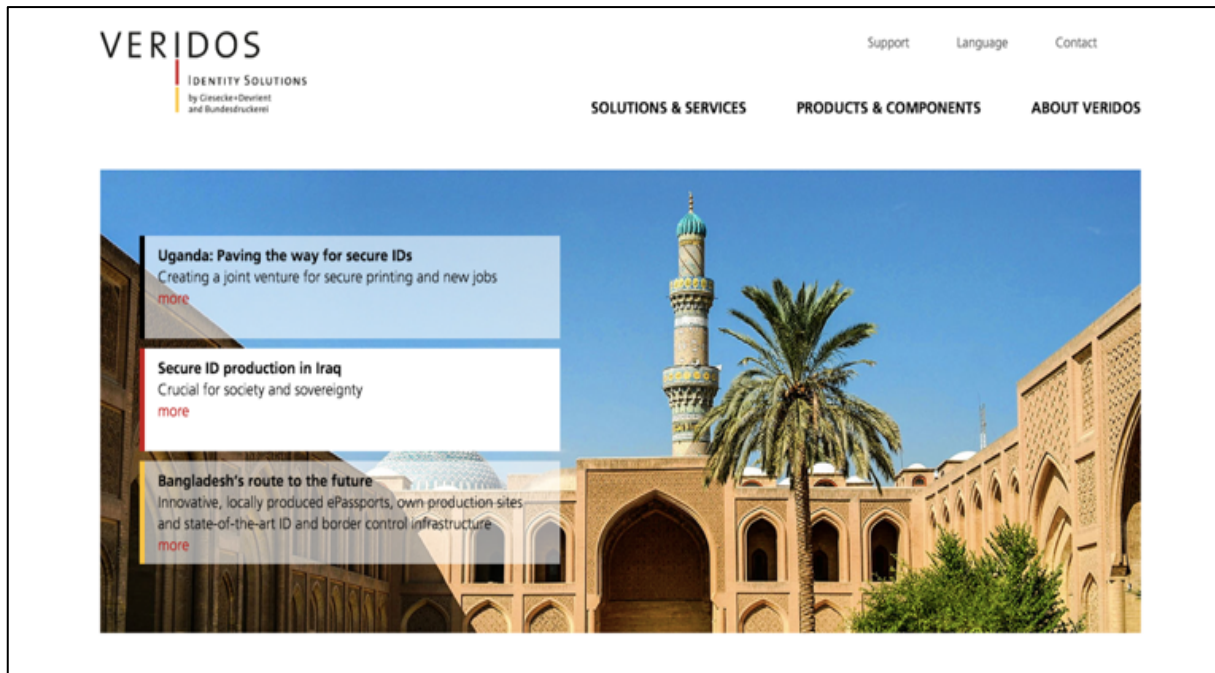
Figure 21: Veridos Company Website

The website of Veridos company emphasizes its contribution to Iraqi sovereignty.[407]

Using political vocabulary, Veridos highlights the influence it has on state sovereignty. In December 2018, for instance, the company's website described its own contribution to the "secure ID production in Iraq" as "crucial for [Iraqi] society and sovereignty" (Veridos, 2019). The company's "code of conduct" is compared to a "constitution", emphasizing that "trust is the basis of our commercial success" (Code of Conduct of Veridos GmbH, 2015).

As this indicates, the global passport production infrastructure is closely interwoven with aspects of soft power, such as credibility and legitimacy, codified in formal international recognition. Companies like Veridos seem to only deliver passport booklets to internationally recognized state actors, such as the Hadi government in Riyadh.[408] Non-recognized contenders like the Houthi government in Sanaa are side-lined and excluded. While international recognition thus facilitates obtaining globally

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[407] [untitled screenshot of Veridos website taken by the author in December 2018]. Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.veridos.com/

[408] Members of Veridos did not respond to, or declined, the researcher's multiple interview requests.

produced objects conducive to state sovereignty, it does not help retrieve domestically rooted material, such as data stored in servers in Sanaa. In 2016-17, Yemeni consuls responsible for issuing travel documentation could no longer obtain the required "approval from headquarters in Sanaa" (Mahdi, 2018).[409]

Houthis, after taking control of Yemen's capital in late 2014, stopped issuing passports in governorates controlled by the Hadi government. Temporarily, they also disabled the issuance of passports in Yemeni embassies abroad (Mahdi, 2018). Attempts by Hadi officials to present the provision of passports as a politically neutral act remained unsuccessful (Mahdi, 2018). Hence, the issuance of passports was provisionally put on hold in Yemeni embassies and in "passport authority"-branches located in territory controlled by coalition forces.[410] "Even diplomats, Yemeni diplomats, who wanted to have new passports, they couldn't. I remember my passport expired, I could not get a new one, there was a problem with that".[411]

Subsequent efforts on part of the Hadi government to take over Yemen's passport production hinged on access to data stored in Sanaa. As mentioned above, it is difficult to run background checks and ensure the validity of travel documentation without sufficient data. Hence, the issuance of passports by exiled government authorities in 2015 and related questions of data access emerged as a sensitive political issue that was shrouded in secrecy and proved difficult to investigate.[412]

> "For the same reasons that the counterfeiting of currency is not publicised, so the falsification of passports is hushed up. One must do everything to retain public faith. If it becomes widely known that your country's passport is easily forged and has been used to unentitled persons then the genuine holders of such passports will possibly find themselves subject to undue scrutiny at border crossings and the prestige of the country will suffer" (Lloyd, 2008, p.176).

In Yemen, the circulation of fraudulent travel documents would not only impact the prestige of the Hadi government but undermine its sovereignty claims. Since the

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[409] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[410] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[411] Interview with a Yemeni diplomat, 24 October 2017.
[412] The question regarding passports and access to data was described as "a big issue" that was, however, "not much publicized" (Interview with former Yemeni politician, 23 November 2016).

issuance of passports constitutes a core governmental function that is essential to the performance of stateness and the international recognition of state actors, failure to ensure a smooth-functioning passport production threatens to undermine perceptions of state competency. While the latter remains contested and is easily shaped by powerful Western politicians (Jeffrey, 2007), it is crucial to the creation of trust that underlies the global passports system. Foreign identifying documents are commonly accepted on the premise that capable "state others" can ensure their validity. Here again, the passport sits at the nexus of both internal and external sovereignty, collapsing the scalar geographical distinction of national and international. Internationally bestowed authority to govern one's own territory is linked to the portrayed ability to do so (Eckes, 2015, p.43). Given the close ties of passports to notions of state competence as well as state sovereignty, government officials have an interest in shielding passport-related crimes and security issues from the public eye (Torpey, 2018). Thus, "passport forgery is not a subject easily researched" (Lloyd, 2008, p.176).

In Yemen, it was not until early 2016 that the passport issue was reported to have received attention by Hadi officials.[413] Several diplomats claimed that a special committee was established at the time, tasked with initiating the passport production outside of Yemen.[414] Allegedly, the committee, which was headed by the deputy foreign minister for financial and administrative affairs, brought in the head of the "passport authority" and other experts from Sanaa to help set up a new passport issuance centre in the Yemeni consulate in Jeddah (Mahdi, 2018).[415] According to one diplomat, they were contacted over the phone and asked, "to come in a secret way".[416]

These experts allegedly brought relevant data from Sanaa to Saudi Arabia. Diplomats put forth different narratives regarding the supposed smuggling of data. One interviewee suggested that "following the Houthi revolt, the director of the passport agency left to Riyadh. From what I heard he was able to get a disc with necessary

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[413] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[414] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 15 February 2017.
[415] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[416] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.

data with him".[417] His colleague confirmed that when the experts from the passport authority in Sanaa were summoned to secretly leave for Saudi Arabia, "they came with the system and the data, with everything".[418] "It is just software. Very soft soft-thing. You can put a whole department in your pocket", remarked a third diplomat and laughed.[419] Ever since the establishment of the new passport authority in Jeddah, consuls in passport-issuing embassies would turn to experts in Saudi Arabia with passport related questions.[420]

In addition to setting up a new passport issuance centre in Jeddah in 2016, the Hadi government also established issuing branches in Yemeni governorates under its control, most notably Marib, Hadramawt, and Aden (Mahdi, 2018).[421] It simultaneously sent a circular to Yemeni embassies asking them to decline Yemeni passports issued since the beginning of 2015 in areas under Houthi control (Mahdi, 2018).[422] Likewise, airport authorities in Aden were instructed not to accept passports issued in Houthi-controlled territory (see Figure 22).

At the time this research was completed (2019), the international acceptance of Houthi-issued passports remained difficult to determine. While it appeared that Yemenis could still travel via land into neighbouring Oman (Mahdi, 2018), Egyptian authorities had been asked by Hadi officials to refuse Houthi-issued travel documents (Mahdi 2018).[423] On 1 December 2018, the Egyptian news website "Al-Khobar" reported that the Yemeni embassy issued an alert informing the bearers of Yemeni diplomatic and special passports that as long as certain provisions were met, "the passport issued prior to 2015 is allowed to enter Egypt, as well as passports issued by the legitimate government" (Al-Khobar, 2018).

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[417] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 14 February 2017.
[418] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017.
[419] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[420] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 1 December 2016; Interview with Yemeni diplomatic staff member, 7 December 2016; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[421] interview with Yemeni diplomat, 17 August 2017; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.
[422] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2019; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 8 January 2019.
[423] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2019; Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 8 January 2019.Besides Egypt, one diplomat suggested that other countries receiving direct flights from Yemen were asked to decline Houthi-issued passports, including Jordan and Sudan (Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 4 January 2019).
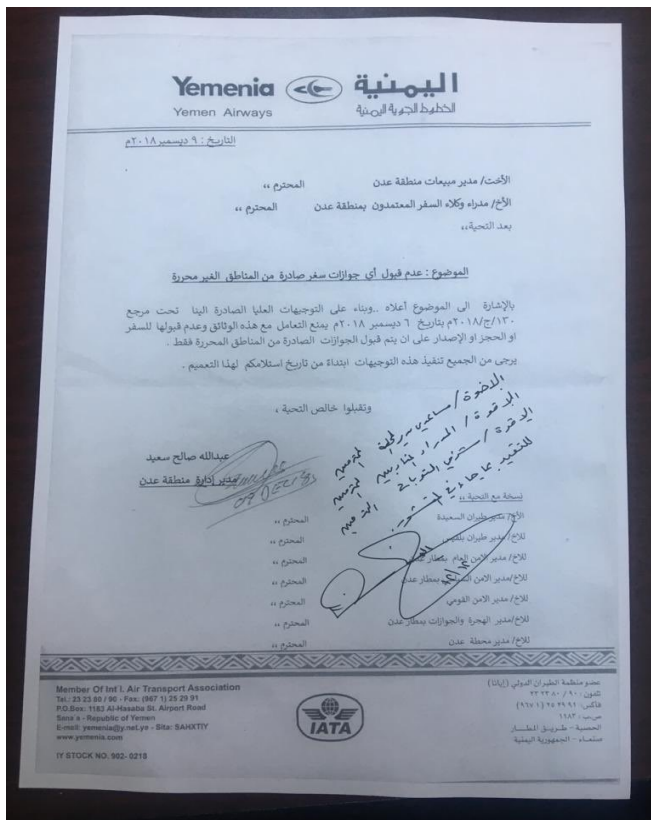
Figure 22: Changing Passport Regulations II

Left: This document was sent by the Yemeni Airways sales manager in the Aden region (*mintaqah*) to managers of travel agencies. Following the subject line "not accepting passports issued in occupied areas", it reads: "it is forbidden to deal with the referred to documents and to accept them for travel, reservations, or issuance. Only passports issued in freed areas should be accepted"[424]

Right: The letter was sent by the Ministry of Interior's "Immigration and Passport Control Department" and is addressed to the "Chairman of the board of directors of Yemen Airways". It asks the chairman to "kindly inform your offices and the airline companies dealing with you not to deal with passports issued by the coup militias…"[425]

Apparently, the Yemeni embassy in Cairo sent a memo to Egyptian authorities, including a list of passport serial numbers that should be considered illegitimate. Ironically, this step led to confusion when Hadi's own minister of agriculture, Othman Mujali, was denied entry to Egypt. "They wrote wrong serial numbers", explained one diplomat.[426] Whether or not Houthi-issued passports were accepted by foreign state

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[424] Twitter, 2018.
[425] Twitter, 2018.
[426] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 9 January 2019.

actors amounted to a political decision, closely related but not equal to the formal recognition of the Houthi government.

The ability to provide internationally recognized passports emerged as an essential tool in legitimizing broader claims to territorial control and state power. "Any citizen can get a new passport", said one diplomat, adding with emphasis, "*outside* the control of the Houthis, you will have a new passport. A *recognized* new passport!".[427] Pointing to the political power and leverage that is tied to the management of monopolised passport production processes, he went on saying, "we told them [the Houthis] if you want we can send you new passports [booklets], but you are a branch you are not the headquarters". The provision of passport booklets was thereby made dependent on Houthis' acceptance of the Hadi government as Yemen's superior political authority. Unsurprisingly, Houthis opposed such "offers", instead continuing their independent issuance of passports in Sanaa (Mahdi, 2018). The ongoing distribution of Houthi-passports, boycotted by Hadi officials, led to a patchy landscape of contested legitimacy. Notably, Yemenis living in Houthi-controlled territory had to travel to areas ruled by Hadi-authorities to obtain internationally recognized travel documents - a journey that was never convenient and often unsafe. Alternatively, they could send a "passport broker", a newly emergent profession in Yemen, who would travel the country to obtain requested travel documentation (Mahdi, 2018). In May 2019, a social media campaign was launched by Yemeni activists, journalists, and writers under the hashtag "where are the passports" (#wean al-jawazaat), criticizing the lack of passport availability and the suffering it caused Yemeni citizens, including patients who needed to travel abroad for medical treatment or students wishing to study outside of Yemen (Tahrir, 2019). "It is not a problem to get sick and die [...]; the important thing is to support the legitimacy [i.e. the Hadi government]," complained one activist ironically (Tahrir, 2019).

As the example of passports illustrates, "a multiplicity of state projects may be simultaneously performed by various actors in the same territory, each trying to deploy various state institutions, heritages, and infrastructures to their own advantage" (Dittmer, 2017, p.7). Political power struggles surrounding the issuance of passports

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[427] Interview with Yemeni diplomat, 16 September 2017.

have treated the body of Yemeni citizens as a canvas on which sovereignty-claims were painted with broad, brutal brush. Where the suffering of people follows territorial parameters, human mobility becomes a matter of life and death. In that sense, Yemen's passport must be viewed as a weapon in the fight for territorial control, (inter)national recognition, and legitimacy.

VI Conclusion: economic capital and the study of diplomatic heterogeneity

The above analysis adds to the previous two chapters by focusing more explicitly on the material components involved in diplomats' professional practice, their agency, and their perception of the Yemeni crisis. A number of diplomatic actors experienced Yemen's socio-political upheaval as a time of economic hardship, notably marked by a cut in material benefits and the delay of salaries. Rather than escaping Yemen's economic turmoil, diplomats abroad suffered from various austerity measures at work. To make ends meet, they relied increasingly on social capital resources, i.e. money provided by family members and friends.

Changes in material context also impacted materially embedded diplomatic practice at work, leading to the decrease of cultural events and dinner parties, for instance, and the reconfiguration of diplomats' "additional income". In the process, "being a diplomat" became associated with humble benefits of safety and employment (as opposed to unemployment). Existing research on European diplomats mentions low entertainment allowances and discusses their complication of pricy dinner invitations (e.g. "two dozen oysters") (Jones & Clark, 2015). This study's focus on Yemeni diplomats, who lacked entertainment allowances altogether, points to the material differences that lie between diplomatic services.

As illustrated in this chapter, diplomats' material struggle did not suddenly emerge in the aftermath of 2011 but has a long history. Presumably, this sets the Yemeni diplomatic corps apart from other, richer foreign services. The apparent heterogeneity in resources and diplomatic capacity applies to both the international and national level. A single diplomatic service, such as the Yemeni one, may contain considerable material differences, none of which are formally institutionalized. In Yemen, diplomats of the same rank and age might possess very different sets of capital and resources,

which in turn may impact their subjectivity and professional practice. For example, diplomats with access to considerable private funds may choose to work abroad for fun, anecdotally spending their low state salary on perfume.

To emphasize resource scarcity and the uneven topology of diplomatic capacity both within and between diplomatic services, this chapter developed the concept of "poor state diplomacy". Based on data gathered from the "geopolitical margin", the concept challenges Euro-centric imaginations of global diplomatic uniformity, which assume universally shared professional codes, norms, structures and experiences.[428] It calls for greater scholarly focus onto the not-so-luxurious specificities of diplomacy and the different material resources and practices outside (as well as within) the Euro-American orbit.

This chapter's focus on "the material" also sheds insight on crisis-induced changes in institutional form and function. With the outbreak of war, access to refuge, for example, emerged as an important asset that reconfigured the relative value of embassy posts. Likewise, geographical shifts in consular revenues impacted embassies' provision of economic capital. The "selling" of consular documents depended on a large Yemeni diaspora, whose presence, in turn, was influenced by multiple factors, ranging from visa and airline policies to shared Arabic language. In conceptualizing the multitude of elements underlying shifting diplomatic forms and function, Bourdieu's concept of "capital" was applied. It highlighted the interplay of diplomats' economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital with geographic space.

The micro-level analysis of passports further contributed to the understanding of changing institutional forms and functions. It treated the passport as an artefact that can make possible, authorize, allow, influence, and hinder a range of state-making practices. While its key function has long been the regulation of individual travel, frequently managed within the consular section of Yemen's diplomatic service, it became a "weapon" in the context of civil war. In particular, it was used to further competing claims to state sovereignty. By treating passports as an essential tool in

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[428] Melissen (2016) for instance, speaks of a "global diplomatic system" (p.xxi), marked by "shared values and diplomatic norms" (p.xiv). Likewise, Cohen (2016) suggests that "diplomatic relationships" are "grounded in a commonly accepted system of procedure, protocol and law; a *lingua franca;* and permanent diplomatic missions" (p.13).

building, maintaining, and organising stateness, this chapter contributes to a small and multidisciplinary body of literature (Torpey, 2018; Lloyd, 2008; Salter, 2003; Mongia, 1999). It shows that governments' sovereignty claims are *materially* embedded in the global and corporate production of passports, or, as Torpey (2018) put it, "in an [international] environment not of their own making" (p.4).

8 Negotiating Regime Change in the Egyptian and Tunisian Diplomatic Service

An unprecedented wave of protests swept through the Middle East in 2011, posing a serious threat to the reign of established autocrats. As mentioned in previous chapters, the regionwide movement began with the "Jasmin Revolution" in Tunisia, where protesters refused to continue trading dubious economic "growth" and "stability" for an absence of political and civil rights (Murphy, 2011). Disillusioned with what they saw as the government's self-serving neoliberalism, they called for the removal of president Ben Ali, who had ruled the country for 23 consecutive years. On 14 January 2011, Tunisia's long-term president gave in to rising political pressure by resigning and fleeing to Saudi Arabia. The power vacuum he left behind was initially filled by the Islamist Ennahda movement, which won a landslide victory in subsequent elections (Wolf, 2013). However, their governmental power was short-lived. Following a consensus model of shifting coalitions, Tunisian politicians formed eight different governments over the following eight years (Yerkes & Yahmad, 2019). While compromise helped protect the fragile political transition that followed the uprising, it arguably failed "to move the country forward at the legislative level" (Yerkes & Yahmad, 2019, n.p.).

A few days after Ben Ali's resignation, large-scale protests erupted in Egypt, on 25 January 2011. Inspired by the perceived success of the Tunisian uprising, Egyptians launched a nationwide protest movement and occupied Cairo's Tahrir Square. Diverse calls for change were epitomized in opposition against Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled as president for nearly 30 years (Sallam, 2013). Following Mubarak's resignation on 11 February 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took control. It was chaired by the minister of defence and composed of the country's most senior military leaders (Sallam, 2013). The leadership of the SCAF ended in summer 2012, when the Muslim Brotherhood figure Mohammed Morsi was elected president in a nationwide democratic vote. Ever since he took office, Morsi's political leadership and presidency had been contested. Following mass protests against his rule on 30 June

2013, the military removed Morsi from power and took back control, quickly declaring army general Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi as Egypt's new president (al-Anani, 2015).

The unforeseen developments in Egypt and Tunisia led political scientists back to the drawing board, revisiting their understandings of regime change and stability (Sallam, 2013).[429] While ensuing discussion on state institutions in political transitions looked toward the military (Albrecht & Bishara, 2011; Kandil, 2012; Grewal, 2016), less work has focused on foreign policy bodies. To address this gap in the literature, this chapter explores developments inside the Egyptian and Tunisian diplomatic service at a time of sudden socio-political change. Its findings reveal similarities and differences that help assess the uniqueness of the Yemeni experience. While this chapter is not comparative *per se*, its outline of Egyptian and Tunisian developments provides empirical snapshots which can be productively juxtaposed with the Yemeni case study.

To better draw out comparative insights, this chapter maintains the conceptual categories applied in its previous analysis of the Yemeni diplomatic service. Using Hirschman's (1970) trio of exit, voice, and loyalty, it focuses on diplomats' viewpoints and various behavioural strategies after 2011. The analysis of Tunisian and Egyptian diplomatic practice helps foreground and further illuminate the concept of diplomatic agency. Similar to developments in Yemen, a number of diplomatic actors in Egypt and Tunisia saw the uprising as an "opening" and engaged in unprecedented political activism. A look at Tunisia and Egypt also lends support to the argument that diplomatic institutions are fragmented, shaped by unique institutional histories, and responsive to environmental change. While a range of new viewpoints and practices were shared by diplomats of all three countries, change and continuity were expressed differently among the Egyptian, Tunisian, and Yemeni foreign services.

The remaining part of this chapter is divided into five main parts. First, it discusses the uprisings' politicizing effect on both Tunisian and Egyptian diplomats and outlines emerging practices of internal voice, which ranged from individual complaints to the formation of a diplomatic syndicate. In a second step, it discusses various forms of

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[429] Examples include Albrecht and Bishara (2011), Bellin (2012), Blaydes and Lo (2012), Brownlee and Stacher (2011), Goldstone (2011), and Stacher (2012).

public voice, which turned out to be more pronounced in the Egyptian than the Tunisian case. Similar to Yemen, diplomatic practices of voice triggered considerable internal debate, which foregrounded notions of professionalism and loyalty, and is outlined in the third section of this chapter. The fourth section examines the occurrence of exit, both in form of ambassadorial resignations and the involuntary removal of diplomats. The chapter ends by discussing ongoing shifts in staffing policies that followed the 2011 uprisings and subsequent regime changes. Although neither Egypt nor Tunisia experienced a civil war after 2011, the political power struggles that followed the uprisings did impact internal staffing policies and led to the increased governmental monitoring of diplomatic practice, especially in the Egyptian case.

By shedding light on the diverse institutional responses to similar moments of rupture, this chapter further underlines the heterogeneity that marks global state diplomacy. It also helps avoid assigning "false uniqueness" (Rose, 1991) to the Yemeni case study. Area studies have been described as particularly prone to such claims, with researchers emphasizing the distinctiveness of their country of analysis without considering developments and research done elsewhere (Halperin & Health, 2017). By zooming out of Yemen and into the diplomatic services of Egypt and Tunisia, this chapter produces comparative insights that help assess and better understand the Yemeni experience.

I "Politicians on steroids" and the practice of internal voice

The events of 2011 had a considerable impact on both the Tunisian and the Egyptian diplomatic service. One Egyptian diplomat described the uprising as "a hurricane that took the ministry"[430] and as a hugely "politicizing moment".[431] In both countries, diplomats seemed eager, empowered, and free to express their (political) views. "Egyptians, after so many years of not being politicized, became politicians on steroids. *Everybody* had an opinion," declared one senior Egyptian diplomat.[432] His colleague agreed that following the collapse of "old controls" in 2011, "everybody felt

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[430] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[431] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.
[432] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.

free, literally everybody, felt free to express her or himself the way they wanted to".[433] According to one respondent, being both a diplomat and an Egyptian citizen was "challenging" at a time of historical political change. He and other diplomats struggled to neutrally represent the government, while also "being Egyptian citizens and having our own preferences regarding the transition".[434] Tunisian diplomats also confessed that they felt at greater liberty to voice their opinions during the regime-change. "During the Ben Ali era we were not allowed to express our views", remembered one interviewee, who went on linking his professional quietism to diplomats' general "*obligation de réserve*". [435] In 2011, he said and laughed, there was "*aucune obligation*". "We did not feel that there was a real administration at the time".

It appears that the removal of autocratic regimes and the accompanying push toward a more democratic system had a liberating effect on Egyptian and Tunisian diplomats, who increasingly engaged in expressions of internal voice. This corresponds with findings in the field of social psychology, which suggests the occurrence of "excess testimony" in post-authoritarian moments. In examining the transition from dictatorship toward democratic rule in Argentina, Suarez-Orozco (1990) detected the rise of "a new consciousness of events and images previously denied, forbidden and only half-known" (p.366). In fact, she observed "a flood of the unspeakable into public discourse" (p.369) – a phenomenon she interpreted as the healing from past injustice. In Egypt and Tunisia, feelings of frustration had seemingly accumulated among diplomats over the years. Tunisian career-diplomats were said in interviews to feel "neglected and marginalized by the political men [non-career appointees] who were affiliated to the regime".[436] In this context, the political opening in early 2011 was seen as a chance to change unpopular bureaucratic procedures and practices.[437] Similarly, in Egypt, events of 2011 acted as a catalyst by uncovering cases of long repressed resentment within the foreign ministry.[438] "It became a mess and a little bitter as well, there was a lot of bitterness", commented a former Egyptian diplomat.[439]

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[433] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[434] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 7 February 2017.
[435] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[436] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[437] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[438] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 3 February 2017.
[439] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

The sentiments of street protests in Cairo and Tunis eventually spilled into foreign ministries, with an increasing number of employees engaging in practices of internal voice. Diplomats began exchanging predictions, best-case scenarios, and political preferences,[440] while also calling for changes inside the ministry. In Egypt, claims for reforms were mostly filed internally, although minor cases of open confrontation were reported as well, such as entering the minister's office and refusing to leave.[441] In Tunisia, diplomats' internal voice was notably expressed through the formation of a diplomatic syndicate, as discussed in greater detail below. "There was this push for reform of the ministry," remembered one Egyptian diplomat.[442] "Because the idea was that there are demands for change all over Egypt, so why not also the foreign ministry".[443] The amplification of voice and its spread through various discourses and spaces during and after the uprising further evidences the "liberating" or "disordering" effect that regime change can have on diplomatic practice. Following the removal of authoritarian rulers, diplomats' proactive voice travelled across the streets of Cairo and Tunis, presumably their homes, and the professional realm of foreign policy institutions. As further discussed below, motivations to engage in practices of internal voice were rooted in diplomats' wishes to improve their own work conditions and/or defend the professional ethos of the diplomatic service.

At its broadest, it appears that the sudden spread of voice created room for diplomats' reflection on a range of professional practices, with diplomatic actors in both countries calling for greater meritocracy within the Egyptian and Tunisian diplomatic service.[444] Protest against political circumstances was thereby translated into articulate criticism of diplomats' professional status-quo. In Egypt, explicit complaints concerned, among other things, the education of diplomats' children, health insurance, opportunities for young diplomats,[445] and the return of files to the ministry, specifically those on Egyptian relations with the US and Israel, which had been taken by security institutions during the turmoil of 2011.[446] In Tunisia, a specific point of complaint regarded

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[440] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 7 February 2017.
[441] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[442] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[443] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[444] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 3 February 2017.
[445] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[446] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 3 February 2017.

promotions, which did not occur automatically after a certain amount of time, as they did in Egypt. "There is no guarantee that after five years you are going to be promoted," one diplomat explained.[447] "Sometimes you can wait for up to 15 years […]. When you have to wait too long, the minister could decide to give you the promotion, [but] it is like a favour for people he knows".[448]

A major request made by both Egyptian and Tunisian diplomats regarded the reform of diplomatic appointment procedures.[449] "A lot of people began to challenge existing practices […]. Why do you get posted to the US and I get posted to Denmark? Based on what?" recalled one Egyptian diplomat.[450] In the past, diplomats just "sucked it up," he went on saying; yet in 2011, they "began to organize protests".[451] In Tunisia as well, diplomats began criticizing non-merit appointment practices inside the ministry, especially the appointment of non-career diplomats from outside the foreign ministry. Tunisian diplomats reported that the foreign minister did not typically follow standardized appointment procedures, but considered individual profiles, expertise, and personal relations in allocating posts abroad.[452] "Sometimes it is a bit like a lottery," remarked one Tunisian ambassador and laughed.[453] The push for internal reform in both the Egyptian and the Tunisian diplomatic service confirms the historic argument by Grindle (2012), who found that "new ideas about how the public sector was to be staffed found political traction at particular moments—a political or economic crisis, a regime change, an electoral draw among parties, a scandal. These moments provided reformers with opportunities to advance their projects" (p.2).

I.1. The establishment of Tunisian syndicates

Besides singular requests for change, Tunisian diplomats established the "*Syndicat de Fonctionnaires du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères*" in the aftermath of public protests. Representing the interests of all ministry employees, the syndicate formed part of Tunisia's general trade union, the "Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail"

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447 Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
448 Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
449 Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
450 Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
451 Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
452 Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
453 Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.

(UGTT). A few years later, in February 2015, diplomats established a second syndicate, the "syndicat du corps diplomatique," arguably to circumvent political partisanship with the UGGT and to further specialize their union representation.[454] "As diplomats, we have different tasks and characteristics than people who do administrative and technical things", explained one interviewee. "So, we thought it was not a very good idea to have one body for all. Now we have two unions".[455] The first syndicate (i.e. "*Syndicat de Fonctionnaires du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères*") represents employees who work within the ministry's administrative and financial sectors, while the other one (i.e. the "syndicat du corps diplomatique") deals with the specific problems of diplomats, including their appointment, payment, and issues related to their living conditions abroad, such as health insurance.[456] "It is like our spokesperson," one Tunisian diplomat remarked, adding in a regretful tone that the "syndicat du corps diplomatique" was not as efficient as it could be.[457] In his opinion, diplomats' geographical distance and global movement posed a challenge to the syndicate's organisation and impact.[458] Emphasizing the importance of face-to-face interaction and geographical proximity, this argument points to the limitation of social media, which is discussed as a means of organisation and the expression of voice in the next section.

II Public voice: "a collective action moment"

Besides the internal expression of voice, diplomats engaged in various forms of public protest during and after 2011. Both Tunisian and Egyptian diplomats were reported to have participated in street demonstrations, for instance, openly expressing their opposition to the incumbent government.[459] "There is no statistic available, but a lot of diplomats were in the square" recalled one Egyptian diplomat. "I was there every day, and I met a lot of colleagues," he said and laughed.[460]

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[454] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[455] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[456] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017; Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[457] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[458] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[459] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.
[460] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

While in Egypt, diplomats' complaints, opposition, and calls for reform never institutionalized into a labour union, Egyptian diplomats engaged in forms of public voice that went beyond their participation in the 2011-protests. For instance, they created a Facebook group called "Lotus". The Lotus flower has a long symbolic history in Egypt, going all the way back to pharaonic times, when it was considered a symbol of rebirth and life (Hawass, 2009, p.110). According to one Egyptian diplomat, the name also referred to the foreign ministry, [461] which operated from within a tall white tower whose architectural design was "based on various configurations of a stylised bouquet of Pharaonic lotuses" (Hassan, 1999, n.p.). In fact, the Lotus design of the ministry, constitutes a rare attempt of actively linking the professional self-image of Egypt's foreign service to its ancient history, and broader historical-nationalist narratives.

Figure 23: Egyptian Foreign Ministry Building

The architectural design of the Egyptian foreign ministry building was based on the pharaonic image of the Lotus.[462]

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[461] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 3 February 2017.
[462] [Untitled illustration of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry Building in Cairo]. Retrieved 21 June 2018 from http://www.nileinternational.net/en/?p=15196.
[Untitled illustration of ancient Egyptian fractals]. Retrieved 21 June 2018 from https://users.math.yale.edu/public_html/People/frame/Fractals/Panorama/Art/AfricanArt/EgyptianColumn.html
[Untitled illustration of the pharaonic image of the Lotus flower]. Retrieved 5 August 2019 from https://www.amandamarcucci.com/blogs/news/meaning-of-the-lotus-flower-in-ancient-egypt

While the exact number of Lotus group members could not be determined, one Egyptian diplomat, who was part of the group, said that hundreds of his colleagues had joined.[463] Another Egyptian diplomat remarked that "being a [Lotus] member doesn't mean that you are actively engaged or that you approve what they [other members] said. They did some stupid stuff on this group".[464] When asked for examples, he responded, "like some people putting copies of coded cables [online]. You can't do this!".[465] He also deemed it inappropriate to carry out personal fights on Facebook, "slandering each other". "It wasn't all heroic, it was just a Facebook group", he concluded.[466]

In Tunisia as well, diplomats created a Facebook group in 2011, which was supposed "to link all diplomats all over the world", as one diplomat explained.[467] Contrary to their American colleagues, he said, Tunisian diplomats never had an intranet that would have allowed them to communicate globally. The creation and use of an online platform therefore constituted a novelty within the Tunisian diplomatic community. While it was intended to facilitate the exchange of news and opinions regarding political developments and diplomats' professional day-to-day life, some (mis-)used the platform for their personal vendettas and acts of public shaming.[468] As was the case in Egypt and Yemen, shifting power constellations were thus played out online on a personal micro-level. For instance, some diplomats who were known to have benefitted from their relationship with Ben Ali were singled out and attacked by colleagues online. "People used the opportunity to express themselves frankly", admitted one Tunisian diplomat, adding that online discussions had become less and slightly more moderate over time.[469]

Tile Frieze Representing Lotus and Grape, Wikipedia Loves Art at the Brooklyn Museum. [Digital Image]. (2009). Retrieved 13 August 2019 from
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WLA_brooklynmuseum_Tile_Frieze_Representing_Lotus_and_Grape.jpg
[463] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 3 February 2017.
[464] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[465] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[466] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[467] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[468] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[469] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.

In Egypt, diplomats' online activity was occasionally transformed into real-life action. Toward the end of the uprising, for instance, diplomats collected signatures online, calling for Mubarak to step down. While this step did not receive much attention by the media at the time, it constituted an early example of public voice and active diplomatic opposition in Egypt.[470] A year later, diplomats engaged in a more drastic and widely covered move against the Morsi government, when publicly boycotting the constitutional referendum in 2012.

Prior to Mohamed Morsi's election as president in June 2012, the legislature had appointed a constitutional assembly tasked with re-writing the Egyptian Constitution. After having been dissolved by an administrative court in April 2012, a new assembly was quickly established. Weakened by severe internal disagreement, the second constitutional assembly eventually lost most of its secular members and representatives of the Coptic Church, "costing it up to a quarter of its 100 members and much of its legitimacy" (Kirkpatrick & El Sheikh, 2012, para 8). In addition to these internal challenges, the assembly faced a number of external threats, most notably the possibility of another shutdown by the Supreme Constitutional Court, which "Mr. Mubarak had tried to stack with loyalists" (Kirkpatrick & El Sheikh, 2012, para 9). In the midst, and possibly because, of this polarized political context, Morsi issued a decree in November 2012 that stripped the judiciary of any power to challenge his decisions. He also rushed through a draft Constitution, which he hastily opened up to a public referendum (*BBC*, 2012). The draft Constitution and Morsi's decree prompted widespread protest in Egypt. While Morsi advisors portrayed the decree as "an attempt to cut through the deadlock that has stalled Egypt's convoluted political transition", many Egyptians viewed it as a first step toward "an absolute presidential tyranny" (Kirkpatrick & El Sheikh, 2012, para 3).

At the time, a number of diplomats seemed to share such fears and scepticism, openly boycotting the referendum's implementation. "More than 200 diplomats signed a statement […] that was made public, refusing to participate in organizing the referendum abroad", remembered one respondent.[471] "I signed it – and I never sign

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[470] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 7 February 2017.
[471] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

petitions! It's the only time in my life that I did it. A lot of us felt that even if we were putting our career in danger – because no one at the time knew what's going to happen with the Muslim Brothers – this was the right thing to do". The referendum went ahead, but those diplomats who had signed the petition allegedly "refused to organize it in embassies and so on. This was our biggest collective action moment I would say".[472] Another Egyptian diplomat described the event, which received considerable media attention, as a symbolically strong step that challenged the wide-spread assumption that diplomats would not express their political opinion.[473] While some diplomats viewed such activism positively, others were more sceptical. In fact, 2011 events sparked considerable debate concerning diplomats' professionalism, especially their neutrality and (lacking) freedom of expression.

While Tunisian diplomats exchanged information among each other and engaged in internal voice, no cases of outright public opposition against Ben Ali could be detected. In explaining this difference, Tunisian diplomats did not emphasize their loyalty and professionalism, but pointed to the uprising's short time frame and their pragmatic caution. One diplomat explained that at the time of the revolution his colleagues "were waiting and seeing. Because it started on 17 December and it stopped on 14 January. More of less 27 days".[474] Another interviewee agreed that the "revolution's" short time span lessened the severity of diplomatic opposition: "The revolution was very sudden. It took a few days. […Diplomats] did not even have the opportunity to resign […]", he explained. Plus, "the assumption was that it's an uprising and that it's manageable. That the regime could manage it and control the situation".[475] One of the respondents, who was working abroad during the uprising, confirmed that he followed a "wait-and-see strategy" during 2011. Confessing to have had "mixed feelings" at the time, he said, "we never knew how things would turn out. There was some hope because people were fed up with the autocratic regime. There was hope that change would occur, but at the same time we were scared that events would go the wrong way and that there would be violence and confrontation".[476]

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[472] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[473] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 7 February 2017.
[474] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.
[475] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[476] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.

The occurrence of "wait-and-see" strategies, which may be associated with opportunism or diplomats' lingering but silent dissatisfaction, complicates Hirschman's (1970) conceptual trio, which focuses on the active expression of unfavourable views. As the insight provided in this study suggests, diplomats' silent compliance and ongoing practice of "diplomatic loyalty"[477] is better attributed to a sense of self-preservation than attachment and care for one's organization. The extent to which regime change acted as a catalyst, motivating the sudden public expression of discontent, varied from diplomat to diplomat and, as the Tunisian case study suggests, might be linked to notions of temporality. Even in a moment of rupture, advantages of pubic voice may not immediately outweigh perceived risks. Diplomats might require time to assess change and decide whether the expression of public voice was "safe" and "productive". As indicated above, some Tunisian diplomats let events play out, without engaging in any articulate expressions of support or discontent. Others, especially political appointees, were allegedly more "invested", fearing to lose their job over regime change in Tunisia. For instance, one interviewee pointed to the Tunisian ambassador in Brussels at the time, claiming that as a political appointee, he "knew that his position was at stake". A few days prior to Tunisia's actual regime change, he thus appeared on television and wholly defended Ben Ali. In doing so, he allegedly disregarded the advice of others who had told him "to wait and see how things would evolve".[478] These examples re-confirm that diplomatic practice in a moment of rupture is highly reflective and that conscious behavioural choices are informed by an array of social and material factors that go beyond the professional realm of the diplomatic service.

III The contestation of voice: a question of loyalty and professionalism

The practice of diplomats' voice, especially public forms thereof, triggered considerable debate inside the Tunisian and Egyptian foreign ministry. A number of respondents deemed public voice incompatible with diplomats' professionalism, a concept that was not clearly defined but seemed to require the "silent" representation

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[477] "Diplomatic loyalty" was defined as a ritual performance in chapter six.
[478] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.

of government. By examining norms and contradicting ideal types expressed in arguments about diplomats' voice, this chapter has shed further light on the ambiguity of diplomatic professionalism.

In Tunisia, some long-established ambassadors were said to have opposed diplomats' Facebook group, which they claimed was only "causing trouble".[479] Other diplomats supported the online exchange but felt that serious problems should not be discussed so publicly.[480] One high-ranking interviewee promoted internal over public voice, insisting "if you have any reservations, you have to express it to the minister, or through diplomatic channels in the ministry".[481] In Egypt as well, diplomats' public voice was deemed to be "unprofessional" by several interviewees. This highlights the normative element contained in internal power struggles and points to the importance of competing narratives of justification (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999). One Egyptian diplomat complained that developments "got to a point" at which diplomats, who were going to defend a certain policy at a foreign embassy in Cairo, would express their opposition to it on Facebook a day prior.[482] A more specific criticism regarded the content of diplomats' opinions, which was considered disrespectful and offensive at times. One Egyptian diplomat complained that some of his colleagues were "not just opposing the government", but were "even, I would say, disrespectful of the government".[483] He added, "my view is that even if it is the Muslim Brotherhood government, even if it's Morsi's government, you shouldn't go on Facebook and […] disrespect it, and say bad words, cursing, and what not. Even from a manners point of view, I wouldn't do this to a person that I don't like".[484] He linked diplomats' "misconception" to flaws in their training. Those who engaged in public voice simply "assumed" their practice was adequate, he alleged, "but there should have been coaching on this".[485]

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[479] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[480] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 21 October 2017; Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 21 October 2017.
[481] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[482] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.
[483] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[484] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[485] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.

"No one told them from the beginning that 'you are a civil servant. You are not a private citizen anymore'. Once you decided to enter the service you are no longer free to express yourself... we don't send you abroad to express yourself, but to express a government, to take a position according to what the government says, not according to what *you* believe".[486]

Others confirmed that as a diplomat "you literally agreed that you would defend the government's position for the next 35 years, and you don't know what the government is going to be".[487] Thus, "if you join the foreign ministry, you've given up part of your freedom of expression".[488]

As these examples indicate, the criticism of diplomats' voice was closely tied to the idea of neutral representation of the government. In some instances, diplomats claimed to represent a country, or a people instead of the regime – an argument that was used to support both diplomatic loyalty and opposition to the government. For instance, a senior Egyptian ambassador, who strongly supported the idea of diplomatic neutrality and condemned the activism of some of his (younger) colleagues, declared that "as a diplomat, if you want to play politics? Go out. Professional diplomats may not defend the regime, but they defend the country. If somebody asked me to defend Mubarak, I never did […] and I never did […] defend Sisi or Morsi".[489] He later added, "I represent a country, not the President. My loyalty is with whatever the people of Egypt will decide". In another instance, diplomats' alleged duty to represent the Egyptian people was used to justify their opposition to the Egyptian government. The former Egyptian foreign minister, Mohamed al-Orabi, defended diplomats' anti-Morsi activism, saying that "the Egyptian foreign ministry is a national ministry and works for the benefit of the Egyptian people and is in an advanced trench to defend the Egyptian interests" (Hamed Allah, 2013). These insights indicate that, similar to the Yemeni case, diplomats in Egypt and Tunisia seemed to variously perceive themselves and colleagues as "obedient servants" or "political agents".[490] As

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[486] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[487] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.
[488] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.
[489] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 25 September 2017.
[490] In chapter five, these two notions are discussed and defined by reference to bureaucracy studies and diplomatic theory.

in Yemen, the concept of representation was used to justify both political quietism and activism.

IV On voluntary and involuntary exits

In Egypt, palpable chasms and differences within the diplomatic service were not immediately translated into notable changes of staff. Importantly, no Egyptian ambassador resigned or was removed during or after 2011, and no significant political appointments were made. Likewise, in Tunisia, diplomats' cautious approach and lacking public antagonism was reflected in a low number of ambassadorial resignations. It appears that only Mezri Haddad, who worked as Tunisian ambassador to UNESCO, stepped down in opposition to the regime. On 14 January 2011, a few hours prior to Ben Ali's departure, he submitted his resignation letter, which he had allegedly drafted the night before. In his letter, Haddad cited his past complaints to Ben Ali regarding the police crackdown on demonstrators as a reason for his resignation: "I told you that the protestors are not against you but against the oligarchy to which you have fallen hostage and which has plundered the country's riches without cease" (cited in *Agence France-Presse*, 2011).

While the number of Tunisian resignations is not comparable to Yemen, ambassadors who had once been appointed from outside the ministry and who were known to be close to Ben Ali, were forced out in 2011. "The majority of them was marginalized", or "frozen", claimed one interviewee.[491] His colleague specified, "most ambassadors, especially those who were not career diplomats, those who had political exposure, such as foreign ministers, or those who had worked with Ben Ali or the party, left […]. We had a revolution, so of course they had to leave".[492] Since new appointments were commonly made in the summer, it was only a couple of months *after* the regime-change in January, that some Tunisian ambassadors were called back pre-term, due to their assumed association with Ben Ali.[493] Others retired at the end of their official term. "They were ambassadors who were politicians, from outside the Foreign

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[491] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[492] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[493] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.

Ministry," one diplomat explained.[494] "Lawyers, doctors, ministers, they were often 60 or 65 and they just retired".[495] Since diplomats who came from outside the ministry were usually contracted, their let-go, or 'retirement', was easily achieved through the non-renewal of their contracts.[496]

In explaining the limited number of resignations and political appointments in 2011, Tunisian and Egyptian diplomats pointed to the strength of their institutions and diplomats' professionalism. One interviewee maintained that Egyptian diplomats did not even contemplate resignation "because their perception of Egypt was that even if Mubarak has been there for 30 years […], they do represent a country, a service, contrary to political appointees who were protegees of the regime".[497] He contrasted the Egyptian foreign service with that of Iran and Libya, where he said diplomats were often appointed due to their close alignment to the ruling regime. "When the Iranian revolution happened, everybody [in the diplomatic service] changed because there were [close ties] between […] the ambassadors and the Shah himself […]. The same thing, I think, […] happened in Libya".[498] Indeed, it appears that numerous high-ranking diplomats at multiple Libyan embassies resigned in 2011, criticizing Ghaddafi in public statements (*al-Jazeera*, 2011). Another respondent agreed that the Egyptian foreign service was less prone to resignations than some of its regional counterparts: "My impression is [that] all of us have a deep sense of belonging to the service and respect for it and for its tradition. So, even when we have misgivings, either we voice those differently, informally, or even in writing, but in a less aggressive way than resigning".[499]

Tunisian respondents put forth similar reasons, pointing to the strength of their state institutions when explaining diplomats' lacking public opposition and limited structural changes inside the foreign ministry. One interviewee offered a historical explanation, saying "Bourguiba had created great institutions. Which means that the public administration and institutions and the ministry continued to work [during 2011]".[500]

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[494] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.
[495] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.
[496] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[497] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[498] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 10 October 2017.
[499] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[500] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.

Contrary to Yemen and Libya, which were described as "tribal",[501] interviewees also ascribed a stronger professional identity to Tunisian diplomats. In Tunisia, one interviewee declared, "the civil servants, they belong to the system".[502] His colleague agreed, "we don't have tribes [or] ethnic groups", adding that the regional origin of a Tunisian diplomat therefore did not matter. "It just matters whether you pass the exam or not, but the exam itself is anonymous. It does not matter where you are from".[503] While these statements offer interesting insight into the self-perception of Egyptian and Tunisian diplomats, they have to be treated with caution, given the opposition and/or political appointments that *did* occur in both foreign ministries.

V Following 2011: political turmoil and contested staffing policies

Neither Egypt nor Tunisia experienced a civil war in the aftermath of 2011. Yet, the political transition and power struggles that followed the uprising did (dis)ordered internal practices, which was reflected in staffing policies and the increased governmental monitoring of diplomatic behaviour, especially in the Egyptian case.

In Tunisia, one interviewee found that career diplomats found their prospects within the foreign ministry improved in the immediate aftermath of 2011.[504] "Some of those who were left behind had an opportunity now. One of them is the brother of Marzouki [Moncef Marzouki, interim Tunisian president, 2011-2014]. He was like frozen before, because his brother was a political opponent", explained one Tunisian diplomat.[505] To ensure merit-based appointments in the long-run, a committee was allegedly established inside the Tunisian foreign ministry, tasked to develop a list with objective criteria, on the basis of which a more transparent appointment procedure could be developed. These criteria were said to include diplomats' "academic qualification, language, career, or field of experience".[506] One interviewee claimed that for the first time in the history of the Tunisian diplomatic service, all ambassadors appointed in summer 2011 were in fact career diplomats. He contrasted this development with past

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[501] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.
[502] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 23 October 2017.
[503] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[504] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[505] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[506] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.

appointment practices, remembering that "under Ben Ali it [being appointed ambassador] was more like a reward for people who served him in the party".[507] While power in the foreign ministry was centralized under Ben Ali, subsequent Tunisian presidents were said to have largely delegated diplomatic (including ambassadorial) appointments to the foreign minister, limiting their own involvement to confirming the minister's selection.[508]

The committee's newly developed appointment criteria remained of a suggestive nature, leaving it up to the minister whether or not to consider and follow them. In discussing the 2014 and subsequent appointments, two Tunisian diplomats admitted that the overall number of political appointments had gone down but has not fully ceased.[509] Another diplomat claimed that the clearing of Ben Ali's *alleged* political appointments lasted for about three years, and that counter-revolutionary figures had started re-emerging since, pushing for their re-integration into the foreign ministry.[510] By 2017, it appeared that the committee and its work had lost respect and influence within the ministry, which, according to one interviewee, has witnessed a resurgence of political appointments.[511] In explaining this relapse, he pointed out that political parties in Tunisia have always had a great interest in having their members appointed ambassador. "They are very keen to have a voice to represent their political party," he said, adding, "but when you have the state, you have to take the *raison d'état* into consideration. At the end of the day, the logic of the state is not the logic of the political parties, or of civil society".[512]

In Egypt, the quick succession of presidents and changing power dynamics inside the foreign ministry led to considerable internal division and was reflected in staffing policies, especially under President al-Sisi. The foreign ministry witnessed a first institutional shake-up with the election of Muslim Brotherhood figure Mohammed Morsi in 2012, while a second one followed with the take-over of army general al-Sisi in 2013. Morsi's rise to power was described as a challenge to the Egyptian foreign

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[507] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[508] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017.
[509] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 16 November 2017; Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[510] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.
[511] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.
[512] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 7 November 2017.

ministry, which had traditionally harboured upper-middle or middle-class Egyptians. According to one diplomat, they "were mostly Westernized […], would drink alcohol, etc.".[513] Notwithstanding the notable influence of Islamization trends in Egypt, the ministry was said to have maintained a secular reputation in the late 20th and early 21st century. In 2017, Nael Shama, an Egyptian researcher, described the predominant political orientation within the foreign ministry as "liberal centrist" (Soliman, 2017).

Given the allegedly secular outlook of the Egyptian diplomatic corps, one diplomat claimed that "the Muslim Brothers viewed the foreign service as a kind of hostile entity".[514] Morsi's election caused political division within the ministry and "disordered" diplomatic practices by motivating some employees to openly express their sympathy for the Muslim Brotherhood and to emphasize their religiosity at work. Respondents accused some of their colleagues to have gone "beyond their call of duty" in order to help Morsi's entourage. Allegedly, Morsi supporters comprised diplomats who have long been "conservative religious practicing" as well as opportunists "who wanted to climb the ladder no matter how".[515] Notably, they came into conflict with diplomats who considered Islamism to be "backward",[516] refused to implement orders by the Muslim Brotherhood leadership, [517] and engaged in collective acts of opposition, as exemplified by the aforementioned petition.

These divisions mattered, as they informed a radical change in staffing policies under army general Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi, who was named president in July 2013 (Roll, 2016). Following his rise to power, the foreign ministry experienced a "kind of purge", as one diplomat phrased it.[518] "Some of the old regime supporters came back with the military - with vengeance. And those who were upset by the [post-2011] chaos [inside the ministry] also joined because they wanted some sense of hierarchy and organization and stability in the service itself".[519] Under al-Sisi, the Egyptian foreign service experienced the forceful "ordering" of diplomatic practice, presumably to

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[513] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 20 September 2017.
[514] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[515] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[516] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 25 September 2017.
[517] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 25 September 2017.
[518] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 20 September 2017.
[519] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

ensure loyalty and secure the concordant presentation of favourable and carefully devised messages. The military and Egypt's security services began to increasingly control the ministry, all the way down to individual hiring and firing decisions (Soliman, 2017).[520] As one diplomat put it, "the military brought a heavy-handed security approach to the service, which means they unleashed the security agencies on the service itself to vet it".[521]

The presidency of al-Sisi gave a real boost to the country's military and security apparatus, whose members had already began occupying influential political and economic positions since the uprising (Roll, 2016). Having experienced "the disruptive power" of protests and the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's new rulers practiced increased governmental control, which in many cases amounted to the brutal repression of societal elements deemed to be unruly (Roll, 2016). Inside the foreign ministry as well, Egypt's military and security apparatus "have been eliminating people" from their positions – a phenomenon that "has not happened since Nasser's time in the '50s", according one respondent.[522] Primary targets have been diplomats who were alleged to be pro-Brotherhood, or pro-Morsi, and diplomats who were politically active and outspoken during and after 2011 (Soliman, 2017). **"Those who volunteered to help the Islamists were crushed",**[523] said one Egyptian diplomat. Likewise, the founders of the Lotus Facebook group, which has long been an anathema to the military,[524] were "blacklisted".[525] One diplomat summarized the various stages of the purge, saying: "first it was those who were close to the Islamists, then it included people who were active politically on the liberal side, and then people who were just annoying in one way or another".[526]

A key criterium in the assessment and treatment of diplomats was their "loyalty to the regime", although that assessment was described as inherently unfair by one of the

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[520] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017. In the words of another diplomat, "the security agencies began to interfere in postings, who goes where" (Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017).

[521] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

[522] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

[523] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

[524] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.

[525] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 3 February 2017.

[526] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017; Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.

respondents, who had experienced the government's cleansing processes first-hand. He argued that the evaluation of diplomats was not based on objective investigations, but on vague impressions that were assembled on the basis of a diplomat's social media presence and social network.[527] If diplomats were active on the Facebook Lotus group, for instance, or could be associated with critical public figures or the opposition, they were likely to be blacklisted (Soliman, 2017).[528] "One of them came from a family that was close to the Brotherhood, but he had been a diplomat for 25 years. It doesn't mean just because his family was [a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood], that he is one", maintained one former Egyptian diplomat.[529] Similar to the Yemeni context of civil war, it appears that narrow dichotomist frameworks confined diplomatic practice in Egypt under al-Sisi. This suggests that diplomatic discretion is narrowed down when the incumbent regime deems its political legitimacy and stability to be fragile and contested. Tolerating no mistakes and leaving little room for any "middle ground", new boundaries of diplomatic activity were based on zero-sum conceptions and processes of stereotyping and de-individualization (Spillman & Spillmann, 1997).

Since it was difficult to legally fire diplomats, creative bureaucratic "alternatives" were developed. In some cases, "blacklisted" diplomats were posted to insignificant positions abroad, while in others they were either asked to stay at home (while still receiving a salary) or sent to work in local municipalities. According to the Egyptian diplomatic law, the president has the right to transfer diplomats to other jobs in the administrative state apparatus (Soliman, 2017). Yet, the "removal practices" under al-Sisi were described as a legal "grey zone" by Egyptian diplomats. "They can't fire you, but they don't want you to be working, so they ask you to stay home [politely claiming that] there isn't something [i.e. a position] good enough for you".[530] When asked to describe the experience of colleagues who were "close to being fired", one diplomat laughed and said "there isn't real rule of law, but there isn't a complete absence of it either. So, you get caught in the middle".[531]

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[527] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.
[528] Allegedly, recordings of telephone and/or personal conversations held inside the ministry or Egyptian diplomatic missions abroad were also used in assessing diplomats' loyalty (Soliman, 2017).
[529] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.
[530] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[531] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 20 September 2017.

Over the course of 2015 and 2016, around 40 diplomats were reported to have been removed from their diplomatic positions (Soliman, 2017). In 2017, the process was still ongoing, with Egyptian diplomats having been transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Administrative Development, the Ministry of Transport, and local state offices in various Egyptian provinces (Soliman, 2017). In all cases, diplomats were essentially removed from the foreign service, which motivated many to hand in their resignation. "The climate now is one of fear, repression, and frustration", said one diplomat in commenting on the control of security institutions over the foreign ministry.[532] "Almost everybody in the service is unhappy today".[533]

An anecdote used by several respondents to illustrate the changing power relations and practices within the Egyptian foreign ministry surrounded the figure of career diplomat Nabil Fahmy, who was appointed foreign minister following al-Sisi's rise to power in 2013. Soon after he took office, Nabil Fahmy allegedly received a communiqué, either from state security or from the military intelligence, with a list of ambassadors abroad whom he was asked to call back.[534] Since these ambassadors had taken up their positions shortly after Morsi's election, they were assumed to be Morsi-followers, who had been appointed directly by him. These assumptions were described as false by several diplomats, who explained that the ambassadors in question had already been appointed in spring 2012, under the reign of the SCAF. When Mohamed Morsi was elected in June that year, he merely signed their formal "agrément". It further appeared that concerned ambassadors were not Morsi-loyalists, appointed from outside the ministry, but career diplomats.[535] Presumably aware of these circumstances, Nabil Fahmy declined to hold ambassadors accountable for political charges that could not be proven (Soliman, 2017). His continued refusal to follow orders and call back ambassadors ultimately cost him his position as foreign minister in June 2014. As one diplomat sarcastically summed it up, he had "a fall out with Sisi" and "was duly sacked".[536] Fahmy was replaced by Sameh Shoukry, under

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[532] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017.
[533] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 29 September 2017; Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 20 September 2017.
[534] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 20 September 2017.
[535] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 24 September 2017.
[536] Interview with Egyptian diplomat, 3 February 2017.

whose rule Egyptian security services have increasingly interfered in the ministry's internal affairs (Soliman, 2017).

VI Conclusion

The insights provided in this chapter point to a number of similarities and differences between the Yemeni case study and developments inside the Tunisian and Egyptian diplomatic service. In all three cases, the uprising was experienced as an emotional and politicizing moment that acted as a catalyst for long-held grievances and triggered diplomats' expressions of voice. At the same time, the occurrence of exit, the form and institutional effect of voice, and shifts in internal staffing policies were marked by considerable difference. Such diversity supports this study's argument for diplomatic heterogeneity, indicating that institutional responses to similar moments of rupture may differ. It also challenges the explanatory power of Hirschman's conceptual trio. While exit, voice, and loyalty did occur and helped explain developments inside the Yemeni, Egyptian, and Tunisian diplomatic service, no regionwide blueprint of "revolutionary (re)action" could be formulated on the basis of Hirschman's theory.

While voice was amplified and seemed to travel across various discourses and spaces in all three cases, it did not seem to be public in the Tunisian example. Yet, the internal voice of Tunisian diplomats reveals striking similarities with the Yemeni experience. In both cases, diplomats established a ministerial syndicate in 2011 as a means to improve their labour conditions and career prospects. Later, both Yemeni and Tunisian diplomats founded a second syndicate to better reflect the differences between ministry employees who worked abroad and those working in the ministry's financial, legal, and administrative sectors. While causal relations could not be empirically investigated in the context of this study, it seems plausible to assume that Arab diplomats discussed their experience and learned from each other in the aftermath of 2011. As one Tunisian interviewee explained, a lot of exchange took place among diplomats from Arab countries at the time. He remembered speaking to a Libyan colleague, for instance, who asked him about the syndicate and wanted to know what

Tunisian diplomats did during and after "the revolution". "There was an experience sharing between those [Arab Spring] countries", he explained.[537]

Notwithstanding such shared experience and knowledge transfer, no homogeneous positionality can be ascribed to Arab diplomats which behaved differently, both within and between countries. Contrary to Yemen and Tunisia, diplomatic voice never translated into the formation of a trade union in Egypt, for instance. Yet, some Egyptian diplomats began engaging in public and collective expressions of voice that stood out and were widely covered in the media. In all three cases, the role of social media, especially Facebook, emerged as a crucial aspect in the practice and discussion of voice. Diplomats variously criticized the secret content shared on Facebook, the rude language that was used, and the personal vendettas that were fought. In general, it emerged that in all cases, diplomats' freedom of expression and appointment practices constituted particularly contentious issues, closely linked to questions of professionalism and related concepts of diplomatic loyalty and representation. In Egypt and Tunisia, ideas of silent, loyal, and neutral obedience to shifting governments seemed to constitute a normative baseline. Yet, diplomats put forth different ideas of "ideal diplomatic behaviour" and did not clearly define their professionalism.

A notable difference between the Yemeni diplomatic service and its Egyptian and Tunisian counterpart regards the number of ambassadorial resignations. In trying to make sense of these differences, Egyptian and Tunisian diplomats both emphasized the strength of their institutions – an asset that seemingly included diplomatic loyalty. A number of respondents emphasized the fragmented, if not "tribal", nature of Yemeni society and politics, claiming that divided loyalties and personalized ties between diplomats and political leaders weakened the Yemeni foreign service. Such claims paint a rough picture that cannot be taken at face value. However, it provides insight into the narrative construction of "institutional identities" in the Middle East and supposed sources of institutional stability.

Notwithstanding diplomats' claims of "resilience", all three foreign ministries have shown to be malleable. The establishment of syndicates and committees in the Tunisian case suggest "material effects", while in Egypt collective public voice and

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[537] Interview with Tunisian diplomat, 5 September 2017.

shifting staffing policies stood out as a notable change. By regionally zooming out of Yemen, this chapter contextualized and qualified the Yemeni experience, producing findings that add to a picture of heterogeneity between and within diplomatic services. A look at Tunisia and Egypt lends support to the argument that diplomatic institutions are fragmented, ambiguous, highly responsive to environmental change and marked by unique institutional histories. Further research is required to explain the occurrence of singular commonalities, such as the formation of syndicates, which cannot be treated as self-evident but may variously be related to inter-system exchange, processes of emulation, human socio-psychological (re)actions, and similar institutional set-ups, among other things.

9 Conclusion: Navigating Uncertainty Inside Yemen's Diplomatic Service

This study focused on Yemeni diplomats and diplomatic practice to examining how political conflict in Yemen has played out within the country's diplomatic corps since 2011. Drawing on ethnographic data produced during nine months of multi-site fieldwork, it analysed the complex interplay of socio-political, personal, and material forces that informed the contested maintenance and partial reworking of Yemeni foreign policy institutions at a time of crisis. It argues that since 2011, Yemen's diplomatic corps has experienced simultaneous continuity and change – a paradox that can only be grasped by conceptualizing the Yemeni foreign service as a dynamic, fragmented and internally uneven socio-material institution.

Rather than approaching this investigation through a single theoretical and methodological framework, a wide range of methods, sources, and concepts were combined to effectively obtain and analyse data. The adoption of an opportunity-driven and flexible multi-method approach helped overcome barriers of access during fieldwork. Likewise, a postfoundational perspective suited this project's inductive and question-driven content analysis. No *a priori* commitment was made to a particular theory or disciplinary tradition. Instead, concepts and theoretical tools were chosen and selectively applied for their relevance and explanatory value.

This study adopted an actor- and practice-based approach that offered unique insight into the micro-level dynamics of change and continuity. In fact, practice theory has long been described as a uniquely suited tool in the analysis of social reproduction and transformation (Bueger, 2014). Crucially, the practice idiom moved this project's analytic glance beyond the macro-level façade of a single continuously operable diplomatic service, facilitating the analysis of underlying conflict, unevenness, and change. Like Jones and Clark (2015), this project found that "big pictures" produced through diplomatic practice "had a particularly grubby microcontext: the practices of diplomacy are frequently not the epitome of etiquette or realms of detached high-standing, but rather worlds of everyday activities, personal animosities and individual

frustrations." (p.4). The study of micro-level diplomatic practices facilitated the in-depth analysis of (re)produced geopolitical representations at the macro-level, notably including statehood and concomitant notions of state legitimacy and sovereignty.

The practice theorem also managed to conceptually span the social and material aspects that informed this project's analysis of the Yemeni diplomatic service. In fact, the conceptualization of diplomatic practice as a meeting point of agency and structure offered a more dynamic perspective than "classical" approaches such as Gidden's structuration theory (Bode, 2015). This made it particularly useful in studying social phenomena of fluidity, change, and reproduction.

This project defined diplomatic practice as the "doings and sayings" of diplomats. As such, it comprised singular and short-lived as well as collective and temporally extended activities (Rouse, 2007). This broad theoretic approach facilitated the analysis of diplomatic behaviour in a moment of crisis, when routine practices were interrupted and new practices emerged, both long- and short-term.

Numerous scholars have called for more empirical research of practices, which may put complex theoretical elaborations to the test (Bueger & Gadinger, 2018). This project contributes to ongoing debates on international and diplomatic practice by pointing to challenges in the conduct of empirical practice research, while simultaneously offering a theoretical approach that moves away from the focus on background, or implicit, knowledge. Rather than perceiving diplomats as thoughtless implementers and carriers of routinized patterns of practice, this project focuses on their creative agency. It finds that in "critical moments" (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999), diplomatic practice is reflective and informed by socio-material factors that transcend the boundaries of diplomats' professional environment. Interested in diplomats' behavioural choices and strategies, this study followed Bode (2018) in arguing that the portrayal of practices "as reflective rather than as only based on tacit knowledge highlights how actors may creatively adapt their practices to social situations" (Bode, 2018, p. 293).

I Comprehending change: a study of crisis, reform, and agency

This thesis argued that the Yemeni diplomatic service is marked by considerable fluency and internal difference, reproduced over time through changes in materiality, power relations, and embodied diplomatic practices. It indicated that institutional boundaries are highly permeable, allowing broader socio-political change to impact internal institutional dynamics. Yemeni diplomats, as emotion-capable actors who inhabit both professional and non-professional roles, carried broader societal shifts in sentiment, aspiration, and opinion into the foreign ministry. Regime change and war thereby translated into a particular professional challenge, marked by shifting and diversifying diplomatic practices and attitudes.

These insights challenge mainstream portrayals of bureaucratic state institutions as impersonal, stable, and "sealed-off" realms filled with "neutral" and emotionless civil servants. They also highlight the need to question existing depictions of the foreign service as a conservative, even counter-revolutionary force (Sharp, 2009; Ross, 2007; Frey & Frey, 2004). By conceptualizing the Yemeni diplomatic corps as a microcosm shaped by broader political and social trends, this study suggested that resistance and contestation are as common within as they are outside state institutions.

In the context of the 2011 uprising, Yemeni diplomats developed a variety of new behavioural strategies, including both voice and exit, that sparked controversy within the diplomatic corps. The expression of public voice in particular triggered disputes about diplomats' freedom of expression, moral integrity, and political activism. At the core of unfolding debates stood the concept of diplomatic loyalty and related questions of professionalism. Following the outbreak of war in 2015, these two notions continued to act as cornerstones around which shifts in diplomatic practice and institutional functions were negotiated. Questions of diplomatic loyalty and professionalism were closely tied to diplomats' ongoing expression of voice as well as the increased appointment of untrained "loyalists". Career-diplomats complained about what they viewed as blatant favouritism and began questioning the meaning of their positions and day-to-day work. Some perceived the foreign service as an emerging "welfare organisation" that provided safe shelter for Hadi loyalists, who were given diplomatic privileges without engaging in significant diplomatic work.

At a time of loosened control and instructions, diplomats' behaviour became less routinized and predictable, leading to new expressions of diplomatic agency. In the face of destabilized systems of power and sudden political uncertainty, an increasing number of diplomats began to engage in individual and collective forms of opposition. Many experienced the 2011 uprising as a moment of opportunity, vocalizing long-held grievances regarding internal ministerial practices, specifically with regard to unofficial payments and appointments. In these instances, the uprising acted as a catalyst for an accumulated sense of frustration and bitterness. Some of the reform efforts that arose from these developments had "structural effects" (Mitchell,1991) that altered the form of Yemen's diplomatic service. This is most notably reflected in the establishment of "diplomatic syndicates" (i.e. trade unions), which have been widely viewed as a result of the uprising.

The study of diplomats' shifting reproduction of socio-material institutions draws attention to the relationship between crisis, reform, and agency. By suggesting that both agency and reform were amplified in a moment of crisis, this project corroborates a rare historical cross-country analysis of civil service appointments (Grindle, 2012), which argues that,

> "new ideas about how the public sector was to be staffed found political traction at particular moments — a political or economic crisis, a regime change, an electoral draw among parties, a scandal. These moments provided reformers with opportunities to advance their projects" (p.2).

As shown in this study, diplomatic agency was structured around multiple networked relations and positionalities, including family and regional affiliations. Diplomats' agency was also materially mediated, closely interacting with financial resources, rewards, and risks. Concern about the safety of one's family or the threat of unemployment could impact diplomats' behavioural choices, challenging widely held conceptions of the diplomatic profession as stable and safe. Material anxieties arguably became more pressing following the outbreak of war, which placed further constraint on already scarce institutional resources, such as salaries and embassy budgets.

Studying the behaviour and motivation of Yemeni diplomats adds analytical depth to the concept of diplomatic agency. This thesis suggested that diplomats' varying behavioural strategies reflect two alternative conceptual framings of the "ideal diplomat": one that portrays the diplomat as an obedient civil servant, and the other that pictures the diplomat as an emotional political agent. Both approaches can be found in bureaucratic state theory as well as diplomatic theory. By arguing that Yemeni diplomats oscillated between these two professional ideal types in the context of uncertainty and socio-political turmoil, this research contributes to a more nuanced and "humanized" conceptualization of agents and agency in world politics. Its empirical findings show that "neither individuals nor groups are rational in the utility-maximizing, emotionless way supposed by most theories of world politics" (Crawford, 2000, p.156). Instead, diplomatic agency is shown to arise from a complex blend of thoughts, feelings, principles, loyalties, ethics, beliefs, and ambition, which are (re)formed in interrelation with diplomats' broader material and social settings.

II Continuity in the face of change

While this study highlighted various processes of change and discussed the *out-of-the-ordinary*, it also revealed numerous indications of continuity. In fact, it argued that the coexistence of institutional endurance and transformation constitutes a paradox that has historically shaped the development of Yemen's foreign policy institutions. In some instances, continuity found obvious expression in the institutional status quo, including material structures and practices that seemed untouched by crisis. In other instances, continuity was the result of purposive human effort, rooted in notions of professionalism, pragmatism, norms of diplomatic loyalty, and ethical selfhoods. Rather than portraying agency as a romanticized revolutionary idea that implies change, this thesis conceptualised agency as an essential part of both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes.

An obvious and important expression of continuity has been the ongoing institutional existence and operation of the Yemeni diplomatic service. Unlike other state institutions, whose material manifestation and effectiveness were impacted by institutional moves or duplications, Yemeni embassies' existence and operations have

remained fairly untouched by domestic turmoil. While material constraints affected the outward appearance of some buildings and required others to be moved as a cost-saving measure, by and large, Yemeni diplomatic structures and basic socio-material practices, were shielded from the conflict inside the country. Scattered at a safe distance around the globe, the Yemeni flag continued flying in front of embassies, official stamps and letterheads continued being used, and portraits, albeit replaced, continued decorating embassy walls.

While these observations suggest a link between institutional continuity and material (infra)structures, they do not fully explain the operational endurance of the Yemeni diplomatic service, which was rooted in staffing policies, professional norms, and a range of personal thoughts and emotions. In the course and immediate aftermath of the uprising, Yemeni diplomats abroad were not replaced. Although resignations did occur in the context of the uprising, their number was low and limited to ambassadors. Similarly, the increasing appointment of non-career loyalists during Yemen's civil war did not imply the replacement of experienced career-diplomats, who remained in existing posts and continued to constitute a significant faction of new appointees. The foreign ministry in Sanaa, albeit under Houthi control, continued to act as an important source of new embassy recruits. Members of the exiled foreign ministry treated diplomats in Sanaa as Hadi representatives, unless their loyalties were "proven" to lie elsewhere.

Besides staffing policies, this study argued that the principle of diplomatic loyalty, and related understandings of professionalism, contributed to the ongoing operation of the diplomatic service. Diplomatic loyalty, as practiced and described by Yemeni diplomats, was theorized as a ritual performance. Closely associated with political neutrality and emotional detachment, it encouraged the silent observance of established routines. At a time of crisis, diplomatic loyalty seemed tied to the notion of professionalism, which emerged as an implicit baseline and threshold against which behavioural strategies were developed and judged.

Notwithstanding considerable material challenges and personal inner conflict, a large number of Yemeni diplomats decided to stay in their profession. In the midst of turmoil, uncertainty, financial disadvantages, and widespread opposition against the

government, their diplomatic loyalty was anything but self-evident. In fact, the choice to continue working as a diplomat became politicized after 2011. In several instances, diplomats had to justify their professional behaviour to family members, friends, and colleagues. In doing so, they developed narratives that foregrounded their professionalism or their representation of the Yemeni people and country, rather than the regime. A large number of diplomats appeared to engage in acts of "loyal muddling", trying to strike a balance between "muddling along" and quiet acts of subversion (Levinson, 2015). Most worked hard to combine their performance of diplomatic loyalty with a variety of other, sometimes opposing commitments. These findings indicate that agency was as much linked to continuity as it was to change.

III Studying diplomacy from the "geopolitical margin"

This study challenges the Western-centric bias in contemporary diplomacy research. Recent ethnographic studies on diplomats and diplomatic practice have mostly analysed diplomats in Brussels (Jones & Clark, 2015; Kuus, 2014), European foreign ministries (Neumann, 2005, 2007), or international organizations, such as NATO (Pouliot, 2010) and the UN (Jones & Clark, 2019). To date, no research has focused on Middle Eastern diplomats, although much has been said about diplomacy in the Middle East, and some scholars have ascribed a distinctive diplomatic culture to the region (Brown, 2003).

The analysis of the Yemeni diplomatic service sheds light onto a range of practices and dynamics rarely discussed in diplomacy research. For instance, this thesis revealed a degree of economic constraint and unevenness that challenges widespread assumptions of diplomatic luxury. To emphasize the resource scarcity found within the Yemeni diplomatic corps and to highlight the uneven topology of diplomatic capacity – both within and between foreign services – this study put forth the concept of "poor state diplomacy". At its core, "poor state diplomacy" addresses the difficult reconciliation of scarce resources with materially embedded diplomatic functions. In the Yemeni case, material constraint led to the development of specific practices and institutional dynamics. Diplomats could not afford certain diplomatic activities, such as dinner parties, instead taking on side jobs or relying on "additional

income" to ramp up their salaries. Besides such "diplomatic hustle", some diplomats reported to live in less than privileged urban peripheries and several Yemeni embassies were in bad shape. These examples portray the Yemeni diplomatic service as a *counter*-stereotype that challenges standardized pictures of diplomatic lifestyles and materiality.

More generally, this study problematizes Euro-centric imaginations of global diplomatic uniformity, which assume universally shared professional codes, norms, structures and experiences. Its insights underline the diversity of diplomatic practice around the world as much as within specific diplomatic services. Relatedly, its historical analysis complicates narratives of diplomacy's linear and "progressive" global diffusion from the imagined European centre. This thesis argued that the Yemeni foreign service constitutes a socio-material hybrid that has been learned and relearned since the early 20th century, flexibly interacting with changing environments and individual demands. It is marked by a unique combination of "institutional registers", including personalized power structures, fragmented loyalties, merit-based appointments, a conceptual private-official divide, and the importance of social relations, to name just a few examples. Some of these ideas and practices were taught at Yemen's diplomatic training institute and have been codified in Yemen's diplomatic law. The complexity of Yemen's diplomatic institutional dynamics combines and goes beyond singular concepts such as clientelism, nepotism or merit-based bureaucracy.

This thesis calls for greater scholarly attention to the not-so-luxurious dimensions of diplomacy and the uneven socio-material resources and practices outside (as well as within) the Euro-American orbit. Recently, a few scholars have begun examining the diplomacy of small states in the Caribbean and elsewhere (e.g. Wight, 2002; Cooper & Shaw, 2009). While the study of "small state diplomacy" points to the heterogeneity of global diplomatic practice, it mostly concerns itself with abstract strategies, including for example the formation of alliances, policies of regionalization, and tactical behaviour in international organizations. This approach treats macro-level factors, for instance the relative size of the state, as a main explanatory variable, while failing to capture institutional micro-dynamics, internal power struggles, and inter-personal differences in behaviour and attitudes. As this study argues, it is only through an actor-

and practice-centred approach that the divergent meanings and enactments of being a diplomat can be understood.

In light of the partial and situated nature of current diplomacy research, this study calls for the "provincialization" (Chakrabarty, 2000) of diplomacy, which needs to be re-thought from the "geopolitical margin". This means acknowledging silent yet omnipresent references to "Europe" – defined by Chakrabarty (2000) as a hyperreal figure of imagination. In this study, the narratives of Yemeni diplomats were, at least in part, "entrapped" in European references. This was shown by self-identifying allusions to "third world thoughts" and the "self-evident" reflection of civil prudential theory in descriptions of diplomatic loyalty and professionalism. Moreover, this research project and its conceptual and theoretical toolkit have been conceived within "global academia" and are as such entangled in "the globality that the European modern has created" (p.46). It is debatable whether the positionality of the researcher – a white German PhD student at the University of Cambridge – allows for the development of a postcolonial perspective completely free from Eurocentrism and its self-serving perpetuation of power inequalities. Notwithstanding its contested feasibility, a postcolonial ambition guided the design and implementation of this thesis. Foregrounding the voice of Yemeni diplomats, it aimed to write their narrated ambivalences, power relations, and complexities into both the contemporary history of the Yemeni foreign service and into academic theory. This study thereby takes an important first step toward the "provincialization" of diplomacy research and contributes to a radically heterogeneous imagination of diplomats and diplomatic practice.

Rather than developing general explanatory patterns, this thesis emphasized the contradictory, plural, and heterogeneous struggles that have shaped the continuous re-learning and re-production of the Yemeni diplomatic service. The outcomes of such struggles are impossible to summarize in single "schemas that seek to naturalize and domesticate this heterogeneity" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.42). Instead, a postcolonial and postfoundational perspective is of great scholarly value, helping to critically deconstruct and use concepts, such as "the state" or "diplomacy", without dogmatically committing to a single theoretical definition. By adopting an inductive approach that starts with Yemeni diplomats and their practices, this research endeavour produced

new insights that shed light on the notion of neo-patrimony, for instance, and on the resource scarcity of non-Western diplomatic services. To scale up scholarly efforts to "provincialize" our understanding of diplomats and diplomatic practice, more ethnographically inspired research needs to be conducted, especially outside of Europe and North America.

IV Diplomatic practice and the global politics of stateness

The present analysis of the Yemeni diplomatic service offered important insights into the Yemeni state, which stood at the core of political debate and conflict in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising. Building on existing scholarship that highlights the role of diplomats in sustaining the permanence and solidity of states (Jones & Clark, 2015; Sending, Pouliot, & Neumann, 2015), this project illuminated the micro-processes involved in such maintenance work. In doing so, it shifted emphasis toward the concept of sovereignty, especially its external aspects.

Importantly, this study viewed the expression and recognition of sovereignty as the work of individual political agents. As such, the notion of sovereignty is shaped by global inequalities: powerful actors can grant or deny the status of sovereign statehood to less powerful others. The institution of the diplomatic service has long been intertwined with such uneven international politics. In fact, the global diplomatic system has long "stood in the service of empire building" (Constantinou & Der Derian, 2010, p.11), denying access to colonized "non-sovereign" actors. As illustrated in this study, the foreign ministry in South Yemen was the last state institution to be allowed real political sway and full independence by British colonizers. Born in a context of political oppression, the eventual establishment of a South Yemeni diplomatic service signified the "success" (i.e. international recognition) of the government's sovereignty claims. In fact, having embassies abroad amounted to a symbolic display of its newly gained "state status".

The historical entanglement of international recognition, sovereignty, and a government's successful claim to "statehood" experienced a comeback in Yemeni politics following the outbreak of war. Seeing its political authority severely contested within state borders, the Hadi government placed great emphasis on maintaining its

international recognition outside of Yemen. This observation builds on recent research proposing that external sovereignty has become a crucial component in governmental claims of running and representing the state. Specifically, contemporary scholarship suggests that the internal sovereignty (i.e. supreme political authority within a defined territory) of a government increasingly depends on its participation in international society (Eckes, 2015). The diplomatic service constitutes an important medium through which such international engagement takes place. In fact, this study suggested that a primary function of the Yemeni diplomatic service has been the maintenance of external sovereignty through the display of diplomatic institutions and the (hollow) practice of diplomatic loyalty.

The continued operation of Yemen's diplomatic institutions has gone a long way toward showcasing government authority – and functionality. Irrespective of its actual effectiveness, running a diplomatic service arguably allowed the Hadi government to demonstrate its ongoing ability to "play the game of sovereignty", whereby "playing" involved the surface-level imitation of mainstream international state demeanour. Embassy banners advocating Yemen as a tourist destination indicate the occasionally cynical, insincere, and odd nature of diplomatic state projections at a time of civil war. Dressed in suits, Yemeni diplomats continued celebrating "national days" in foreign embassies around the world, attended academic events, and mingled with other diplomats and politicians. In the process, they nurtured the *perception*, if not *illusion*, of the Yemeni state as a coherent and functional political entity, "governed" by the "legitimate" president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Besides constructing an image of stable state presence, the maintenance of diplomatic buildings and ongoing performance of diplomatic loyalty reinforced the general bias in international affairs to maintain already existing state entities.

V Avenues for further research

Future research should further explore the role and functioning of diplomatic services in the Middle East and other "non-Western regions". A comparison, for instance, would help develop and expand this project's insights, further examining the (dis)similarities of diplomatic institutions within and beyond the Middle East. This could be done

through an in-depth study of the intra-regional knowledge transfer that seems to have taken place in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising. As was suggested in this thesis, it is plausible to assume that diplomats of different Arab states discussed their experiences and learned from each other at a time of political uncertainty. Yet, this exchange of ideas did not result in uniform practices and similar institutional developments. While these dynamics could not be systematically investigated in the context of this study, future examination of intra-regional similarities and differences should put the notion of a "Middle Eastern diplomatic culture" to a test (Brown, 2003).

A people- and practice-based approach to diplomatic services in the Middle East would also add novel contributions to our current understanding of foreign policy-making in (semi-)authoritarian states. While much has been said about authoritarianism in the Middle East, especially following the 2011 uprisings (Heydemann & Leenders, 2013; Bellin, 2012), most work has focused on the national level (Tansey, 2016). It is only recently that international components of authoritarian politics have received greater attention (Tansey, 2016; Tolstrup, 2019; Escribà-Folch & Wright, 2015). Yet, little is known about the inner life of foreign policy institutions and the role of diplomats.

Further research on diplomatic services in the Middle East would also advance our insight into the role of diplomats in times of (civil) war. Existing studies on civil war diplomacy show that internal conflicts can have significant international dimensions, for instance in Syria, Libya, and Iraq. Nonetheless, most research on "conflict diplomacy" focuses on the decision calculus of external states, especially those who choose to intervene in civil wars (Balch-Lindsay *et al*, 2008; Cunningham, 2010). Shifting focus to rebel and (exiled) government actors' uses of diplomatic practices and state institutions offers a promising addition to the existing literature. It would further illuminate the role of diplomatic actors and institutions in competing state claims and explore in greater depth the concept of "war time diplomacy". As the Yemeni case study suggests, at a time of war, diplomats can serve the purpose of one-sided advocacy and engage in the "hollowed out" performance of loyalty – aimed mostly at perpetuating the *perception* of continuous stateness.

A final promising avenue for research regards the concepts of diplomatic agency and discretion. This includes diplomats' freedom of expression, especially with respect to their use of social media. The study of Yemeni diplomats has shown that the professional definition and boundaries of their agency were fuzzy and contested. While some behavioural guidelines were enshrined in law, the wording of legal codes was often unclear, and its application lacked consistent enforcement.

A look at traditional diplomatic theory suggests that diplomats have long been asked to show "professional intimacy" at work, make judgment calls, and rely on their own interpretation and situational instinct.[538] Striking the right balance between emotional agency and neutral obedience, between the following of orders and spontaneous personal choices, requires diplomatic discretion, which has received little attention from diplomacy scholars.[539] Noteworthy exceptions are Kuus (2014) and Cornut (2018), who both explore diplomats' navigation of professional norms, studying not only "the rules of the game but more specifically the ways in which departures from these rules are also a part of the game" (Kuus, 2014, p.166). While not mentioning "discretion" as such, both authors view the deviation from (in)formal direction as a common practice in diplomacy. They link the use of discretion to a diplomat's level of experience and skill, arguing that deviation requires a "true insider" because "amateurs do not know how to improvise. They perform practices mechanically, like actors reciting a memorized monologue" (Cornut, 2018, p.725).

While not denying that experience plays a role in the deployment of discretionary practices, this study suggests that diplomats' broader socio-political context constitutes a further important factor that impacts the boundaries and enactment of diplomatic discretion. In Yemen, the heightened emotions, cognitive liberation, and politicization that marked the 2011 uprising arguably enabled and motivated diplomats to increasingly deploy practices that pushed and renegotiated the boundaries of their

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[538] Being modest, kind, trustworthy, and approachable, for instance, may be essential to building and maintaining good relationships, which in turn might benefit a diplomat's work, e.g. in the exchange of information or the conduct of negotiation. Nicolson (1963) thus argues that the ideal diplomat "is required to cultivate the intimacy of persons of eminence or influence in the country in which he resides" (p.198).

[539] "The structure of rules and regulations with which bureaucrats must comply is not as tight as it may appear to outsiders, and it leaves significant room for discretion. This discretion, in turn, allows bureaucrats to develop different styles of work and to give expression to them" (Zacka, 2017, p.5).

professional conduct. Similarly, the rise of social media as a tool and medium of diplomatic practice has blurred the boundaries of discretionary boundaries, triggering considerable debate among Yemeni diplomats. Contemporary diplomacy research would benefit from a better understanding of diplomats' discretion, especially with regards to their private use of social media.

VI The relevance of ethnographic diplomacy research

Official state diplomacy is arguably in the midst of change (Stanzel, 2018). Rapid societal and technological developments, specifically digitization, affect how the work of diplomats is understood – by themselves and by others – and changes the diplomatic attributes that are deemed necessary or desirable. A recent German policy report, titled "New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century," finds that:

> "Diplomats' responses to modern challenges often fall under the radar of governments and the public, precisely because they do not conform to what is traditionally considered to be typically diplomatic" (Stanzel, 2018, p.5).

Little is known about diplomatic actors' changing professional worlds and professional practice today. Frequently "diplomacy" is referred to as a uniform and essentially unchanging global system, that seems secretive, sealed off, and exclusive. Academic and media discourse mention "the state" and "diplomacy" without breaking open and explaining these categories, what they contain and mean, to both insiders and outsiders.

As this study has shown, ethnographic research on the micro-level is crucial to understanding the construction, composition, and in some cases limitations, of such macro-level images. While a quick glance at the Yemeni diplomatic service might suggest stability and institutional resilience, a micro-level perspective complicates such impressions. Zooming-in on the minute developments that have unfolded within Yemeni foreign policy institutions since 2011 reveals considerable fragmentation of practices and subjectivities. This highlights "the limits of a state-centred approach that takes for granted the idea of a centralised diplomacy and a single national voice" (Bonnefoy, 2018, p.51).

The actor- and practice-centred study of diplomacy produces nuanced insights that are of broader social and political relevance. After all, diplomats and their behaviours influence the policies, actions and self-understandings of governments. They arguably also impact the public's understanding of foreign policy and international politics (Stanzel, 2018). In fact, the emphasis of individual agents and agency in diplomacy, might impact dynamics of public accountability in foreign affairs. If the diplomatic service is no longer seen as a dubious uniform entity, speaking with a single voice of authority, media and academic attention might shift to the behaviour of diplomats, whose action thereby becomes more accountable to the broader public.

This research has gone beyond superficial (re)presentations of international affairs, wherein diplomatic institutions feature as anthropomorphic entities severed from the very people whose day-to-day routines make possible foreign policy, diplomacy, and, to some extent, the state itself. Offering a rare glance "behind the scenes" of Yemeni diplomacy, it has achieved a level of nuance that is crucial for informed, sensible, and effective foreign policy-making pertaining to the Middle East. Developing an in-depth understanding of diplomats and diplomatic services around the world, their heterogeneous challenges, subjectivities, and practices, can significantly improve how contemporary global diplomacy is conducted on the ground.

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