

# CHAPTER 2

## Coup-proofing in Yemen: Saleh's Military

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### INTRODUCTION

In January 2011, Yemenis marched in the streets of Sana'a denouncing Ali Abdullah Saleh's policies and economic mismanagement. In resemblance to the demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt, protestors demanded change and an end to Saleh's rule over Yemen. It wasn't apparent that Saleh was willing to comply with what he conceived as a plot against the country, thus describing the protests as organized by "a control room in Tel Aviv for destabilizing the Arab world [...that is] managed by the White House."<sup>1</sup> Saleh's attempts to maintain control over the situation proved to be futile and the situation began deteriorating with signs of political violence looming around the country, particularly that Yemen served as a host for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the allegedly Iran-supported Houthi Movement. This prompted the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), led by Saudi Arabia which shares 33% of its land borders with Yemen,<sup>2</sup> to intervene in an attempt

to avoid an endless bloodbath. The GCC's initiative was concentrated around a transfer of power from Saleh to his deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi which in return Saleh would be granted an amnesty along with his subordinates. Although initially refusing the terms of the agreement, Saleh eventually agreed to sign the GCC's initiative following a failed assassination attempt during Friday prayers in the presidential palace.<sup>3</sup>

Although Saleh had transferred power to Hadi in November 2011, he was still operating at the core of Yemeni politics. Saleh's reluctance to abandon the presidency soon turned into complete refusal to abandon Yemen's political process. In the immediate period following the agreement's signature, Saleh contended that "Our people will remain present in every institution. Two months have passed since this

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<http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/14.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> The assassination attempt was in June of 2011. Although he survived the assassination, Saleh was heavily injured and was immediately transferred to Saudi Arabia to receive medical treatment. Peace talks were at large with the Saudis during this period.

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<sup>1</sup> Tobias Thiel, "Yemen's Arab Spring: From Youth Revolution to Fragile Political Transition," 2012, 5.

<sup>2</sup> "Saudi Arabia - Geography," accessed May 21, 2019,



creation of this weak government, which doesn't know the ABCs of politics. It won't be able to build a thing or put one brick on top of another." <sup>4</sup> Saleh adopted the role of a spoiler through which he undermined Hadi's legitimacy and obstructed the transitional government's roadmap. With 33 years serving on the head of the country's pyramid, Saleh overshadowed Yemen through situating the country's joints in the hands of his subordinates. In addition, Saleh utilized his entrenched tribal networks to maintain a future transition that poured into his favor. After all, the alliance built between Saleh and his long-time enemies the Houthis consolidated the latter's grasp over Sanaa, paving a way for the beginning of the civil war.

Hence, this paper aims to discuss the transition's failure in Yemen through analyzing the impact of Saleh's policies both during his years in presidency and after stepping down. The reader should note that limiting the transition's failure to one factor would not be plausible. As such, this piece focuses mainly on Saleh's pre-2011 policies with particular focus on Yemen's

4 Barany Zoltan, "The Challenges of Building a National Army in Yemen," 2016 accessed May 21, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/challenges-building-national-army-yemen>.

military as a result of its pivotal role in Yemen's demonstrations. The paper is structured as follows. First, an explanation on the coup-proofing strategies practiced by Saleh and how that fragmented the country's security apparatus. Second, an analysis on the amnesty granted to Saleh and how it provided him with the space to maneuver as he pleased during Yemen's transition. Last, a conclusion that sums up the paper's objectives.

## COUP-PROOFING STRATEGIES

The role played by the state's armed forces is determinant in preserving the country's security from internal and external threats. <sup>5</sup> Under autocratic regimes, the establishment of a strong security apparatus facilitates the state's mission in its struggle to control local dissidence, prevent regime overthrow, and maintain its authoritarian grasp over power. <sup>6</sup>

5 Michael Makara, "Coup-Proofing, Military Defection, and the Arab Spring," *Democracy and Security* 9, no. 4 (September 1, 2013): 334–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2013.802983>.

6 Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004): 139–57, [https://doi.org/10.2307/4150140.including weak civil](https://doi.org/10.2307/4150140.including%20weak%20civil)

Militaries, however, are a weapon with two sharp ends. While from one side they serve as the state's sword and shield in protecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity, militaries can pose an existential threat on the ruling regime by internally mobilizing for the purpose of toppling that regime. Particularly when we look at a region like the modern Middle East, military interventions and coup-d'états proved to be decisive in shaping the region's political structure. In this way, the Middle East demonstrated to have a fertile soil for coup-d'états in various occasions, where fifty-five coups were conducted between the end of World War II and the end of the 1980s – half of which were successful. <sup>7</sup>

The decrease in coups trend can be attributed to a variety of reasons amongst which is that the political leadership "learned to take preventative measures to forestall their recurrence." <sup>8</sup> A leader that prioritizes staying in power invests in tailoring a strategy to prevent potential dissidence within the military ranks that attempt to conduct a coup. <sup>9</sup> As such, coup-proofing practices rotate around the objective of preserving the regime's grasp over power

society, state-dominated economies, poor socioeconomic performance, and nondemocratic culture. By contrast, the region's enduring authoritarianism can be attributed to the robustness of the coercive apparatus in many Middle Eastern and North African states and to this apparatus's exceptional will and capacity to crush democratic initiatives. Cross-regional comparison suggests factors both external and internal to the region that account for this exceptional strength. <sup>10</sup> `DOI:"10.2307/4150140";ISSN:"0010-4159";title-short:"The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East";author:[{"family":"Bellin","given":"Eva"}];issued":{"date-parts":[["2004"]]}];schema:"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"`

<sup>7</sup> James T. Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1, 1999): 131–65, <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228899560202>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Jun Koga Sudduth, "Coup Risk, Coup-Proofing and Leader Survival," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 1 (January 2017): 3–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316676885>.

through deterring potential military defection aimed at toppling the regime. It is defined as "efforts or actions adopted by political leaders that will reduce the military's ability to organize a successful coup". <sup>10</sup>

Notably, there are three main coup-proofing strategies that regimes adopt. <sup>11</sup> First, regimes establish 'parallel militaries' with autonomy that are inherently independent from the regular army's command. Unlike the state's armed forces which are mainly responsible for protecting the state, the parallel militaries operate mainly to protect the regime. <sup>12</sup> Parallel militaries, in principle, do not necessarily enjoy the capabilities of defeating the state's regular army. However, they enjoy the capacity of high resistance that would discourage potential coup attempts as a result of the high opportunity cost. <sup>13</sup> Second, regimes invest in the loyalty of the security apparatus through providing the latter with cohesive financial budgets. Such measures keep the military and its personnel satisfied and would therefore reduce coup possibilities. Therefore, the regime establishes an atmosphere where the survival of the military's financial security is highly dependent on the survival of the regime itself. Third, regime builds the military in accordance with 'communal identities' where the sensitive military positions are given to officers that enjoy strong relations with the regime. As such, the military ranks are given to officers depending on the regime's level of trust and not on the officers' personal capacity. <sup>14</sup>

## COUP-PROOFING IN YEMEN

Coup-proofing strategies fit well in explaining the civil-military interactions in Yemen under Saleh. Saleh's firm grasp over the military facilitated his stay in power, particularly in a context where his predecessors were either assassinated or

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> (Makara 2013) See no.5 above

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

toppled by a coup. <sup>15</sup> To prevent a coup from recurrence, Saleh extended his family's (Sanhan) control in Yemen's army. Although his tribe roughly represented 1% of the entire Yemeni population, 70% of the commanding positions in Yemen's security apparatus fell under the Sanhan's command. <sup>16</sup> Saleh established a criteria of delegating military command to forces in accordance with the latter's loyalty rather than competence or experience. <sup>17</sup>

Saleh's main objective was regime survival in which he sought to tailor an army that was more invested in protecting the regime than protecting Yemen's national sovereignty. <sup>18</sup> His endeavors to keep the military's command under his watch were embedded in the allocation of military personnel in the country. Yemen's military was mainly concentrated around Yemen's capital Sanaa and its peripheries. <sup>19</sup> Illustrating the exact number of soldiers to the reader would require extensive research not only because transparency is absent in Yemen but also reports suggest that one-third of the Yemeni military consisted of 'ghost soldiers'. <sup>20</sup>

15 Eliezer Be'eri, "The Waning of the Military Coup in Arab Politics," 1982, 15.

16 Adel Al-Shargabi, "The Restructuring of the Yemeni Army," *AlMuntaqa* 1, no. 1 (2018): 38–50. 2011, 40 days after the outbreak of the youth revolution in Yemen, General Ali Muhsin Saleh al-Ahmar, commander of the Northeastern region and the First Armored Division, Brigadier Muhammad Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, commander of the Eastern region, and a number of other senior officers declared their support for the Yemeni Revolution. As a result, the Yemeni Army found itself divided into two armies, "the pro-revolution army" and "the family army," as labeled by the revolutionary forces, indicating the latter's link to Ali Abdullah Saleh's family. These developments exposed the hidden split within the army, spiraling these divisions to the point of no return. The capital Sanaa and a number of other Yemeni cities subsequently witnessed clashes between these two armies, and between their respective militias, leading the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC

17 Ibid.

18 (Zoltan 2016) See. No.4 above

19 Ibid.

20 Khaled Fattah, "Yemen's Insecurity Dilemma," Carnegie Middle East Center, 2014, <https://carne-gie-mec.org/2014/02/11/yemen-s-insecurity-dilem->

As such, the responsibility of protecting the state's borders were often delegated by Saleh to remote tribesmen and paramilitaries at best or completely left out of his interests at worst. <sup>21</sup> The absence of a centralized military command exacerbated a fragile border security. This would be evident in the 1995 events of the effortless Eritrean occupation of the strategic Yemeni islands of Hanish. <sup>22</sup> Notably, Saleh's coop-proofing practices rendered the capabilities of the military, thus creating armed forces that are incompetent in protecting the state.

Saleh sought to maintain complete autonomy over the country through appointing his loyalists in the core of Yemen's security apparatus. As Laura Kasinof defined it "He [Saleh] ruled in such a way that under every rock in Yemen, one could find his footprint." <sup>23</sup> As illustrated in table 1 in the appendix, <sup>24</sup> the reader can see how Saleh entrenched his men in the military's roots. Most sensitive posts were distributed amongst Saleh's inner circle. In even more extreme cases, children would inherit fathers' positions following their death, as seen in the case of the Central Security's command.

Saleh operated as he wished without encountering any legitimate dissidence to his decisions. The lack of regulatory law on the state's armed forces facilitated Saleh's efforts to prevent the institutionalization of the armed forces and increased his decision-making autonomy in the military. In addition, Saleh was in charge of determining the number of soldiers, the recruitment methods and standards, the

21 (Al-Shargabi) see no.16 above

22 Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, "Red Sea Security and the Geopolitical-Economy of the Hanish Islands Dispute," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 3 (1998): 367–85.

23 Kasinof Laura, "Ali Abdullah Saleh: Yemen's Unrelenting Despot - POLITICO Magazine," Politico, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/28/ali-abdullah-saleh-yemen-obituary-216177>.

24 Khasruf Muhsin, "The Yemeni Army: Its Creation, Evolution and Pathways For Future," *Aljazeera Center for Studies* (2012) Arabic Source <http://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2012/07/20127308279666699.html>

regions where new recruits came from, and in which the military units were to be deployed. He routinely issued orders promoting armed forces officers without abiding by the legal conditions surrounding such promotions. This could be further identified through Saleh's decision to grant his son, Khaled Ali Abdullah Saleh, the rank of a colonel and the command of a mountain infantry division immediately after his graduation. 25

Since his rise to power, Saleh invested in mending ties with local tribes in his struggle to protect the regime. 26 Tribes resembled a fertile soil for the military's recruitment and the sustainability of Saleh's power. In an interview given to the International Crisis Group, a retired military officer stated that Saleh concluded an agreement with the Sanhans 27 that General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar will succeed Saleh if the latter was assassinated. 28 However, Saleh started gradually favoring his son, Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, the commander of the strong Republican Guard at Ali Mohsen's expense. The Republican Guard was equipped with exceptional resources that varied from recruitment, arms, gear, ammunition and supplies. 29 Naturally, the disparities expanded between the Republican Guard and Ali Mohsin's 1st Armored Brigade as well as the rest of the Yemeni military. This triggered unrest across several ranks within the military, particularly after Ahmed Ali became a member in Yemeni Parliament in 1997. This was evident in the case of Mohammed Ismail al-Qadhi, the military commander of the Eastern Region, who was allegedly the most vocal against

Saleh's policies in that regard. 30 Al-Qadhi, along with other senior military officials, lost their lives in a helicopter accident in 1999. 31 This assists in demonstrating how Saleh left no opportunity for dissent against his decision making autonomy. It could also be seen through Saleh's attempts to further weaken Ali Mohsen through exhausting his military division in six wars against the Houthis in the North. Saleh acknowledged how powerful Mohsen was, and perhaps conceived him as the only strong competitor to his son Ahmed. After all, Mohsen was regarded by many as the strongest man in Yemen only after Saleh. 32 However, the space left by Saleh for the opposition was significantly scant. He clipped the wings of any entity that would represent a threat to his decision-making authority. Saleh even attempted to eliminate Mohsen through giving Saudi Arabia the coordinates of Mohsen, presenting them as coordinates for the Houthis. 33

## YEMEN'S MILITARY SPLIT

When demonstrators took on the streets of Sanaa in part of the Arab Spring events, Saleh's concerns rotated around maintaining power rather than addressing the demands of the demonstrators. As people started calling for Saleh to step down, he maneuvered through calling upon his supporters to mobilize and create a countermovement, promising to adopt political and economic reforms, and preparing the country for constitutional amendments. 34 However, the demonstrators were defiant and their trust in Saleh was not in its best forms. They refused Saleh's proposals and insisted that

25 Holger Albrecht, Aurel Croissant, and Fred H. Lawson, *Armies and Insurgencies in the Arab Spring* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). Pp 66

26 Ibid.

27 Saleh's Village

28 "Yemen's Military-Security Reform: Seeds of New Conflict? | Crisis Group," International Crisis Group, accessed May 21, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/yemen-s-military-security-reform-seeds-new-conflict>.

29 Ibid.

30 Winter Lucas, "Restructuring Yemen's Military Leadership," Foreign Military Studies Office, 2012, <https://community.afan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-mono-graphs/204274>.

31 Ibid.

32 Vincent Durac, "Yemen's Arab Spring – Democratic Opening or Regime Maintenance?," *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (July 1, 2012): 161–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2012.694042>.

33 (Al-Shargabi 2018) see no.16 above

34 (Tobias 2012) See no.1 above

he should immediately step down. The situation grew difficult for Saleh to handle as the country was passing through a period of dramatic deterioration. In less than a year, the country has recorded more than 2,000 casualties and injuries exceeded 22,000.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the country reached its highest recorded inflation rate of 24.77% by October of 2011.<sup>36</sup>

Saleh's incompetence to maintain control over the developments in Yemen triggered unrest amongst some ranks in the military. He started resorting to violence in an attempt to maintain control over the popular movement. His excessive use of force prompted many of his historic allies to abandon him, namely tribal sheikhs as well as Sunni clerics.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, strongman Ali Mohsin al-Ahmar also decided to defect and take the side of the protests, thus throwing his weight behind the demonstrators.<sup>38</sup> Ali Mohsin's decision was probably motivated by Saleh's deliberate policies to have his son, Ahmed, inherit the republic. Mohsin mobilized his forces into the capital of Sana'a to protect the demonstrators from any belligerent actions that Saleh would adopt.<sup>39</sup> Mohsin's defection fractured the military into two main parties: on the one side Saleh and his son along with their supporters and on the other side, Mohsin and his supporters.

Armed confrontations continued between both parties in what appeared to be tit-for-tat

35 al-Haj Ahmed, "Yemen Says More than 2,000 Killed in Uprising," *The Washington Post*, 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/yemen-says-more-than-2000-killed-in-uprising/2012/03/18/gIQAG0tcLS\\_story.html?amp;utm\\_term=.492e453470a0&noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.ae198fd-f70ba](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/yemen-says-more-than-2000-killed-in-uprising/2012/03/18/gIQAG0tcLS_story.html?amp;utm_term=.492e453470a0&noredirect=on&utm_term=.ae198fd-f70ba).

36 "Yemen Inflation Rate | 2019 | Data | Chart | Calendar | Forecast | News," *Tradingeconomics*, accessed May 21, 2019, <https://tradingeconomics.com/yemen/inflation-cpi>.

37 Sajid Aziz, "View of Yemen Conundrum | CISS Insight Journal," 2015, <https://ojs.ciss.org.pk/index.php/ciss-insight-journal/article/view/74/77>.

38 Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, "Tracking the 'Arab Spring': Why the Modest Harvest?," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (October 10, 2013): 29–44, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2013.0061>.

39 Ibid.

battles with no end in sight. On the 3rd of June 2011, however, Saleh survived an assassination attempt during Friday prayers inside a mosque within the presidential compound.<sup>40</sup> He was heavily injured and was transported into a hospital in Saudi Arabia to receive medical treatment. During Saleh's stay in Saudi Arabia, Hadi served as the country's acting president. In the meantime, Riyadh intensified its efforts to broker a peace deal between the contested parties. The GCC Initiative/Framework, rotated around a transition of power from Saleh to his vice president Hadi while in return Saleh as well as his supporters are to be granted amnesty. Saleh was reluctant to sign the agreement and didn't find it easy to relinquish power;<sup>41</sup> however, he eventually agreed to sign the GCC Framework and transfer power to Hadi on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2011.<sup>42</sup> Saleh's decision received ambivalent reactions from the protestors and the opposition, particularly that many saw that granting Saleh an amnesty was a betrayal to the popular demands and found it difficult that Saleh will simply abandon the political process.<sup>43</sup>

## SALEH AND THE GCC INITIATIVE

The GCC Framework was in principle a promising step forward in Yemen's future. However, the agreement had no guarantee that Saleh would abandon Yemen's political process. As Ibrahim defines it "the GCC initiative is based on a formula

40 Mohamed Sudam and Jason Benham, "Yemeni President Leaves Country for Medical Treatment," *Reuters*, 2011, [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen/yemeni-president-leaves-country-for-medical-treatment-idUSTRE73L1PP20110604?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FtopNews+%28News+%2F+US+%2F+Top+News%29](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen/yemeni-president-leaves-country-for-medical-treatment-idUSTRE73L1PP20110604?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FtopNews+%28News+%2F+US+%2F+Top+News%29).

41 Marwa Rashad, "Yemen's Saleh Signs Deal to Give up Power," *Reuters*, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen/yemens-saleh-signs-deal-to-give-up-power-idUSTRE7AM0D020111123>.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibrahim Fraihat, "Still Hope for a Deal in Yemen, Despite Saleh's GCC Snub," *Brookings* (blog), November 30, 2011, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/still-hope-for-a-deal-in-yemen-despite-salehs-gcc-snub/>.

to trade “justice for peace”,<sup>44</sup> arguing that Saleh’s departure from presidency didn’t imply his departure from politics. Although the resulting GCC Initiative included a mechanism to transfer power away from President Saleh, it did not remove him from authority so much as organized a form of power sharing with him.<sup>45</sup> The GCC Framework allowed space for all political parties to participate in the transitional period. This was distributed on a 50-50 basis in which the Joint Meeting Party JMP, the main opposition wing that consists of 6 parties and together had 22% of the parliament, would tailor a power transition with the General People’s Congress GPC [Saleh’s party] that represented 77% of the parliament.<sup>46</sup> Ironically, Saleh was not removed from his position as the president of the GPC. Therefore, Saleh and his aides had direct influence on the political roadmap as well as its implications.

Despite the GCC Initiative and Saleh’s ouster from power, Yemen was pretty much still defined by political unrest. The division within the security apparatus along with the absence of a centralized military exacerbated a security vacuum across the country. Street-level security deteriorated in Yemen’s urban and the country had fallen increasingly into the hands of a wide variety of militias and armed factions without the rise of a single dominant center of power.<sup>47</sup> Hadi’s efforts to maintain control over the country were constantly challenged by Saleh’s subordinates. His decisions and decrees were notably futile as a result of the decision made by Saleh’s men not to comply with Hadi’s measures. For example, Hadi issued a decree renouncing the command of Mohammed Saleh al-Ahmar and Tariq Muhammad Abdullah Saleh over the air

force and the special guard respectively, yet both officials refused to adhere to Hadi’s decision.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Mohammed al-Ahmar threatened to bomb Sanaa’s airport as a response to Hadi’s decree. Another example would be Hadi’s directions for Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh to relinquish control over missile units were Ahmed Ali refused Hadi’s call and also threatened to bomb the capital with missiles.<sup>49</sup>

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper discussed the transition in Yemen and explained how Saleh’s policies stood as an obstruction in the path of Hadi’s government. The transition’s failure was influenced by various factors. However, I attempted to tackle its failure from the angle of Saleh’s coup-proofing practices during his years in power. The paper briefly explored the notion of coup-proofing and explained how it assists in understanding the fragmentation in the country’s security apparatus. Different examples were illustrated as evidence in support for the paper’s argument. Saleh’s doctrine in ruling the country was driven by his desires to acquire full autonomy over Yemen’s decision politics. His coup-proofing practices rotated around granting his inner-circle full control over the sensitive positions in the country’s security apparatus. Saleh’s criteria in allocating positions was motivated by the loyalty of his aides. As such, positions were given in accordance with Saleh’s trust in his subordinates and not with competence or experience. These policies created a fragmented military that was loyal to Saleh and his regime rather than Yemen’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The military was therefore divided and could not offer any effective support in maintaining peace in the country. ■

44 Ibid.

45 Maged Al-Madhaji, “How Yemen’s Post-2011 Transitional Phase Ended in War,” *Sana’a Center For Strategic Studies* (blog), 2016, <http://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/39>.

46 Eyad Ahmed and Osamah al-Rawhani, “The Need to Build State Legitimacy in Yemen,” *Sana’a Center For Strategic Studies* (blog), September 29, 2018, <http://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/6496>.

47 (Zoltan 2016) see no.4 above

48 (Al-Shargabi 2018) see no. 16 above

49 Ibid.

## Appendix

Table 3: Saleh's Army

Name	Position	Rank	Relationship with Saleh
Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh	Commander of the Republican Guard	Brigadier General	Son
Muhammad Abdullah Saleh	Commander of Central Security	Major General	Brother
Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar	Commander of the northwestern military district and the 1st Armored Division	Major General	Half Brother
Muhammad Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar	Commander of the Air Defense	Major General	Distant Cousin
Muhammad Saleh al-Ahmar	Commander of the air force	Major General	Half-brother
Tareq Mohammed Abdullah Saleh	Commander of Presidential Guard	Commander	Nephew
Muhammad Ali Khalil	Commander of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade	Major general	Saleh's Sanhan Locality
Saleh al-Zannin	Commander of the Second Armored Brigade	Major General	Saleh's Sanhan Locality
Yehia Muhammad Abdullah Saleh	Commander of Central security *Following his Father	Brigadier General	Nephew
Ammar Muhammad Abdullah Saleh	Commander of Yemen's National Security	Brigadier General	Nephew
Tayseer Muhammad Saleh al-Ahmar	Yemen's Military Attaché in Washington	Major General	Married to Saleh's Step Sister
Ali Saleh Al-Ahmar	Commander of the Sixth Air Brigade	Major General	Half Brother
Mohammed Abdullah Haidar	Commander of the 35th Armored Brigade	Major General	Saleh's Sanhan Locality
Mahdi Makwla	Commander of the Southern Region	Major General	Saleh's Sanhan Locality