

State-building in Fragile States: Strategies of Embedment

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State-building in Fragile States:
Strategies of Embedment

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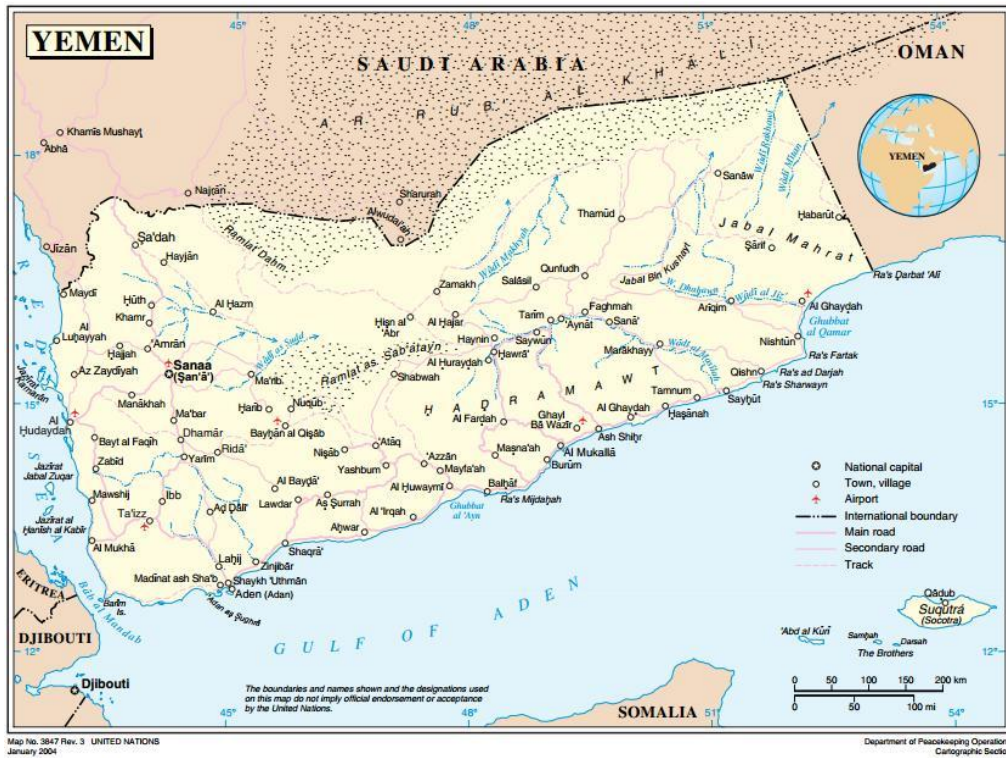
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Maria-Louise Clausen
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Maps



List of abbreviations and acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APPP	Africa Power and Politics Programme
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ATA	Afghan Transitional Administration
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COCA	Central Organization of Control and Accounting
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CYDA	Confederation of Yemeni Development Associations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EB	Executive Bureau
EU	European Union
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPC	General People's Congress
Hirak	Al-Hirak al-Janubi (The Southern Movement)
IDA	International Development Association
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Islāh	Hizb al-Islāh (Yemeni Congregation for Reform)
JMP	Joint Meeting Parties
LAL	Local Authority Law
LC	Local Council
LCCD	Local Councils for Cooperative Development
LDA	Local Development Association
LDC	Least Developed Country
MAF	Mutual Accountability Framework
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOLA	Ministry of Local Administration
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MP	Member of Parliament
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
NFL	National Liberation Front
NGO	Non-government Organization
ODA	Oversees Development Assistance
ODS	Official Document System

OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen)
PNPA	Peace and National Partnership Agreement
PRE	Political Relevant Elite
PWP	Public Works Programme
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SFD	Social Fund for Development
SNACC	Supreme National Anti-Corruption Commission
SWF	Social Welfare Fund
TPSD	Transitional Program for Stabilization and Development
TFG	Transitional Federal Government (Somalia)
The Fund	Social Fund for Development
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPOS	United Nations Political Office of Somalia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
US	United States (of America)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen)
YECO	Yemen Economic Corporation
YPC	Yemen Polling Center
YSP	Yemeni Socialist Party

Note on transliteration

All Arabic named and places are written in their common English version for increased readability. This still warrants a few comments. I use the *ī* to indicate a voiced “i” such as in *Salīh* and I use the ‘ to signal the “ayn” sound, that has no equivalent in English, such as in *Sana’a* or ‘*Abd*.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

“I need you to stand with me, for the sake of Yemen. Serious decisions are going to be made.” These words were uttered by the Yemeni transitional president, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, at a meeting following the closure of the National Dialogue Conference in early 2014.¹ It was a decisive moment and feelings were running high as the final document, the result of 10 months of deliberation by 565 political representatives in nine different working groups, was presented to the world and the Yemeni public. These words underlined that behind the enthusiastic celebrations of the closure of the National Dialogue Conference, both the political situation and the living conditions for ordinary Yemeni had been deteriorating while the discussions on the future of Yemen had been ongoing.

10 months earlier, on 18 March 2013, President Hadi kicked off the National Dialogue Conference:

This day is very exceptional because all Yemeni people are gathering inside a single room to a new clean leaf in their modern history and to close their past which were about to break them.²

This underlines the historical significance of the National Dialogue but also the historical threads being drawn from the contemporary political turmoil to the historical conflicts, which have characterized the Yemeni state-building process. On 5 March 2013, when announcing a preparatory committee for the National Dialogue, President Hadi emphasized the point:

It (the National Dialogue) is a historical chance that will not be repeated again – it is enough for Yemen to have been moving from one conflict to another for 50 years. Yemeni people are looking forward to the change and the future.³

¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/02/yemen-ready-change-20142264830304367.html> (Last accessed 21 February, 2016).

² President Hadi kicks off conference of inclusive national dialogue, Monday, 18 March 2013: <https://presidenthadi-gov-ye.info/en/archives/president-hadi-kicks-off-conference-of-inclusive-national-dialogue/> (Last accessed 2 April, 2016).

³ President Hadi receives technical committee for inclusive national dialogue conference, Tuesday, 5 March 2013: <https://presidenthadi-gov-ye.info/en/archives/president-hadi-receives-technical-committee-for-inclusive-national-dialogue-conference/> (Last accessed 2 April 2016).

Indeed, the date of the opening ceremony itself was significant. On 18 March 2001, one of the most violent days in the Yemeni uprising, known as “Bloody Friday”, more than 50 protestors were killed by the regime. It became the starting point for mass defections from the regime and thus the beginning of former president Ali ‘Abdullah Salih’s downfall. The National Dialogue Conference was a cornerstone in the Yemeni transition following the Yemeni uprising in 2011 and indeed an impressive accomplishment. Although at times a chaotic and less than transparent process, the National Dialogue Conference succeeded in bringing together political representatives from different parts of the Yemeni society, including women, youths, representatives from political parties, Ansar Allah (Houthis), civil society representatives and the Southern movement. These representatives were given an almost impossible task, though; to formulate the foundations of a “new” Yemeni state.

This project began with a basic empirical observation: There is substantial divergence between representations of Yemen outside and inside Yemen. Two brief examples illustrate the point. First, if one were to evaluate the importance of political actors in Yemen based on how frequently they are referred to in international media, one would think Yemen is ruled by al-Qaeda. However, in Yemen, al-Qaeda is often referred to as nothing more than the tool of the former president Ali ‘Abdullah Salih. Whether it is true or not is not the point here, but it illustrates a disconnect of priorities between the Yemeni and Western donors. Second, another favored narrative of Yemen is to paint it as backwards and ruled by primordial and static tribes. Yet, in Yemen, although many educated, urban elite actors are critical of the political role of tribes, they are usually described in dynamic terms; as having changed and evolved due to Salih’s co-optation of tribal leaders. These two examples made me wonder about the binaries that are frequently reproduced in the state-building literature; informal/ formal, state/ non-state or modern/ traditional, as they did not seem to match the Yemeni reality. But at the same time, they had an impact as they held weight among the Western donors on which Yemen depend. This created a disconnect between the way state-building was envisioned and described in the literature and how it actually played out in the field – a disconnect that seemed to be linked to the definition of Yemen as a fragile state as it facilitated binary understandings of the Yemeni reality.

This thesis focuses on the interplay between internal and external actors in state-building interventions. Existing literature tends to either overlook internal actors or emphasize the lack of capacity or the unwillingness of internal actors to change. I argue that the use of the fragile state concept facilitates interventions that emphasize external legitimacy as internal actors are understood through binaries (good/bad, formal/informal, good/ spoiler). In-

ternal actors are often reduced to *for or against* an intervention, but internal actors will most likely see an intervention through the lens of their ongoing internal power struggles and try to embed the intervention into the local context in a way that maximizes their relative benefit of the intervention.

These reflections led to the following research question:

What shapes processes of state-building in so-called fragile states?

And the following three sub-questions:

1. How has the fragile state concept emerged and what are the implications of its use?
2. How do internal elite actors shape state-building interventions?
3. How have internal elite actors shaped state-building interventions in Yemen?

The overall research question has been specified in three sub-questions. First, I wanted to understand how fragile states, such as Yemen, become amenable to state-building interventions. I point to the use of the fragile state concept itself. It is extensively used but also notoriously difficult to pin down as definitions abound, focusing on slightly different aspects of the state or suggesting slightly different variables to measure it (Iqbal and Starr 2016, 14-19). This suggests that the attractiveness of the concept lies less in its descriptive qualities and more in the political opportunities it provides.

This leads to the key question of this thesis; how do internal elite actors shape state-building interventions? The investigation begins by taking a step back; looking towards the European state formation experience to understand the impetus for state-building in the first place; the goal of state-building. Is it possible to learn from the European experience, and if so what can be learned? This brings out a key difference between the European state formation and current state-building interventions; the role of external actors. State-building interventions are not internal processes but are the result of interactions between internal and external actors. I argue that the fragile state category makes the “fragile state” amenable to intervention and facilitates a simple binary understanding of internal actors in the so-called fragile states (formal/informal, traditional/modern or state/non state). However, internal actors do not fit into these neat categories. Instead, their strategies in the face of external interventions are understood as a consequence of their relative internal position. Internal actors will seek to embed the intervention into the local context in a way that maximizes their relative gains. In this process, internal actors shape and are shaped by interventions.

The final part of the thesis is dedicated to a detailed case study of Yemen. This study provides an in-depth application of the theoretical framework. The case study applies the theory to a specific case but is not a test as the argument made here is constitutive rather than causal. Yemen was chosen because it illustrates the breadth of the theoretical framework, being categorized as a fragile state and subjected to multiple types of interventions by various external actors working with different internal actors.

1.1. The case of Yemen

Yemen is generally considered a fragile state and has as such been amenable to different types of external intervention. Additionally, the fragility of Yemen cannot be explained by reference to it being an artificial construction of colonialism, nor is it ethnically or religiously divided. It is, however, a new state, only formed on 22 May 1990, whereas the idea of Yemen as a single political entity has long historical roots. One notable scholar on Yemen, Paul Dresch, has argued that: “Since the rise of Islam, if not well before, the idea of Yemen as a natural unit has been embedded in literature and local practice. Unified power has not” (Dresch 2000, 1). Although the idea of Yemen as a historical civilization appeals to the imagination of many Yemenis, it does not manifest itself in adherence to or trust in central state institutions (Wedeen 2008, 25). At the same time, Yemen’s history has been characterized by external intervention, especially related to the notion that Yemen is chaotic and defined by tribes, a quintessential traditional and informal political organization.

Representations of Yemen as a fragile state particularly emphasize the security perspective. The US has, for example, presented Yemen as one of the frontline states in the war against terror. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been called the most dangerous threat to the American homeland. This perspective accentuates Yemen as one of the “world’s largest exporters of terrorism”⁴ and a major source of Western concern. In this perspective, Yemen is a fragile state and AQAP exploits the lack of a state monopoly of violence in Yemen to grow in strength. Former president Salīh worked with the Americans to curtail AQAP, and current President Hadi has been even more forthcoming; publicly acknowledging that the United States is using drones in Yemen (Clausen 2015b). This narrative is generally propounded by Yemen’s neighbors, who are at least as concerned as the US with the perceived security risk emanating from Yemen. Their concerns are pro-

⁴ Why Chaos in Yemen Worries Western Nations, CNN, Jan 21, 2015: <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/01/21/wrn-pkg-gorani-yemen-importance.cnn> (Last accessed 2 April 2016).

pounded by shared borders. Currently, Saudi Arabia is leading a coalition of states who are intervening to re-instate the so-called legitimate president, President Hadi, and re-establish order after what is commonly referred to as an Iranian-backed, insurgent group took power. In a recent opinion piece, Yemeni president Hadi argued that: “Without intervention, Yemen’s future might have been that of a largely lawless and feudal society”⁵. This should be juxtaposed to the presentation of Yemen during the National Dialogue Conference, where Yemen was held out as a much needed success story of the “Arab Spring” and put forward as a model for a range of states engulfed in conflict such as Syria. This echoes a general tendency in the approach to Yemen; either Yemen is represented as a success story and a transitional democracy or as a fragile state on the brink of collapse and a breeding ground for terrorism. This way Yemen epitomizes many of the current challenges understood to be related to state fragility – both in terms of security and development.

Yemen is an excellent case for studying how internal actors embed state-building interventions in the context of state fragility, as multiple external actors simultaneously intervene and interact with internal elite actors. This has partly been facilitated by Yemen’s poverty; although Yemen is a rentier state, oil reserves are limited and the state’s fate has therefore, from its interception, been linked to the willingness of both regional and extra-regional external actors to support it. Finally, Yemen has regularly been accentuated as a positive example; “an unlikely democracy” or one of the success stories of the Arab uprisings in 2011. Usually this perspective points to Yemen’s relatively vibrant public sphere and experiences with relatively free and fair elections. Hence, Western states, and especially the European states including Denmark, have worked in Yemen to strengthen state capacity and support democratization and respect for human rights.⁶ Yemen has continuously balanced between being a place of chaos and a place of hope and provides rich opportunity to investigate multiple types of interventions by multiple external actors.

⁵ President Hadi, A path to peace, New York Times, 29 March 2016: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/30/opinion/yemens-president-a-path-to-peace.html?_r=0 (Last accessed 1 April 2016).

⁶ The humanitarian narrative has especially been promoted by the United Nations but is generally recognized. The situation in Yemen has become what UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator, Johannes Van Der Klaauw, called a humanitarian catastrophe in a relatively short time because Yemen was poor before the current crisis escalated. The head of the ICRC Peter Maurer has said that: “Yemen after five months looks like Syria after five years” <http://www.businessinsider.com/ap-ap-interview-red-cross-chief-decries-yemen-violence-2015-8--10--2?IR=T> (Last accessed 1 April 2016).

1.2. State-building: the existing literature and gaps

From Haiti in the Western Hemisphere to the remnants of Yugoslavia in Europe, from Somalia, Sudan and Liberia in Africa to Cambodia in Southeast Asia, a disturbing new phenomenon is emerging: the failed nation-state, utterly incapable of sustaining itself as a member of the international community (Helman and Ratner 1992, 3).

State fragility and state-building have been hot topics in political and academic debates for the last two decades, starting with Helman and Ratner's influential article, quoted above, which identified failed states as a new major international problem. I begin by investigating the meaning of fragile state as the idea that states can fail, the notion of the fragile state, is a precursor to the idea that states need to be rebuilt. As formulated by Christopher J. Bickerton: "Only after the idea that states could fail had been established was it possible for internationalized state-building to be mooted as an acceptable solution" (Bickerton 2007, 102). It is a truly interdisciplinary research area, which makes it challenging to identify clear-cut strands of research. The following categorizations should therefore be read as indicative and not as silos with no overlap or interaction. In part this is a reflection of the "essentially contested" nature of the state fragility concept (Connolly 1993; Gallie 1956).

1.2.1. Typologies of the state: Defining "fragile state"

There is a great deal of conceptual vagueness in the state-building literature. It uses the fragile state term more or less interchangeably with alternative terms such as "failed", "failing", "crisis", "weak", "collapsed", "poorly performing", "ineffective", "lame Leviathan", "neopatrimonial", "quasi", "pre-modern" or "shadow" state (Bøås and Jennings 2005, 387; John 2010, 11; Lemay-Hébert 2009, 22). Some authors have recognized the analytical problems in the conceptual ambiguity, for example David Carment, who introduces the idea of a "developmental continuum" (his accentuation) where states are characterized as "strong", "weak", "failed" or "collapsed".⁷ Likewise, different donors, such as the OECD, have developed different typologies, which differentiate between post-conflict/crises or political transition situations, deteriorating governance environments, gradual improvement and prolonged crisis or impasse (OECD 2010, 147).⁸ Nevertheless, the litera-

⁷ Similar typology by Call, which differentiates between weak state, collapsed state, war-torn state and authoritarian regime (Call 2008)

⁸ Although not a continuum of fragility, the World Bank CPIA (Country Policy and Institutional Assessment programme) is used to categorize fragile states as a combined score on

ture offers no unanimously accepted guidelines in the use of the different concepts (Carment 2003, 409). The fragile state concept is the most widely used and hence most influential concept, spanning fields from development to security and policy to academia and is therefore used throughout this study (Barakat and Larson 2013, 21; Engbjerg-Pedersen, Andersen Riis, and Stepputat 2008, 21-22; Fisher 2014, 316).

There is no single universally agreed upon definition of fragile state, but definitions of state fragility tend to reflect which areas of the state the policy report or academic paper sees as the most decisive factor to induce reform. Some definitions have, however, gained more currency than others. The OECD definition of states as fragile “when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations” has been influential (OECD 2007). This definition has been criticized for pointing to the “will” of state structures as “will” is a normative concept, yet, the lack of capacity and the lack of willingness features centrally in the fragile state literature. Other definitions accentuate national, regional or global security threats (Bøås and Jennings 2005), lack of economic development (Chauvet and Collier 2008), a legitimacy deficit (Holsti 1996; Pegg 1998), weak institutional capacity (Ezrow and Frantz 2013; Fukuyama 2004b) or a combination of factors such as the fragile state rankings. The number of states potentially being referred to as fragile ranges from 60 to 30 (Hameiri 2007; Iqbal and Starr 2016, 19), which reflects the definitional ambiguity.

Critiques of the fragile state concept have been manifold, especially emphasizing its conceptual ambiguity or, in other words, the lack of definitional and analytical precision, as described above (Jones 2013, 51). Whereas these critiques seek to refine definitions and measurements, the overall notion and usefulness of defining some states as “fragile” are accepted (Ezrow and Frantz 2013). Another critique, less common but still part of the mainstream literature, accentuates that what these states, regardless of how they are defined or conceptualized, have in common is that they are evaluated on the basis of an ideal type Weberian state and in that comparison they fail (Bøås and Jennings 2005). The point has been formulated by Klaus Schlichte: “as long as the idea of the state is uniform and constant, the variation of states, even the failure of some states, can be expressed only in terms of deviation from the standard” (Schlichte and Migdal 2005, 11). This way, state fragility

the 16 indicators will categorize a country as fragile in the World Bank, which can have real consequences for aid allocation (Nay 2014; Rocha De Siqueira 2014). The World Bank indicators accentuate institutional capacity and economic policies. This is further discussed in chapter 5.

is more about dashed expectations of the Western world than the actual empirical challenges that states experience (Lemay-Hébert 2009, 25; Milliken and Krause 2003, 1-2).⁹

I argue that the fragile state concept is a so-called essentially contested concept, i.e., a concept with disagreement about its proper use, multiple meanings and strong normative inferences. I discuss this at length in chapter 5, so here it suffices to say that I point to the lack of shared definition as this is a defining element in the way the fragile state concept is used. Hence, its widespread use is not a reflection of its descriptive qualities but rather, I argue, its normative qualities. I show this through a detailed conceptual analysis of the emergence and spread of the fragile state concept, which is followed by a discussion of the implications of its use.

1.2.2. The state-building literature

The scope and volume of literature dealing, in some way, with state-building makes it necessary to make some rather broad generalizations in characterizing the literature. Although not all work on state-building fits neatly into one category, a defining characteristic with a majority of studies has been to find the formula of state-building; focusing either on the role of democracy and elections, economic reforms or institutional set-up. These studies typically build on an explicit or implicit desire to pinpoint what made the European state successful so that this factor or combination of factors can be transferred to so-called fragile states. Here I briefly consider each approach and then explicate four shared weaknesses of these literatures.

Legitimacy (democracy): This cluster of literature typically points to the importance of legitimacy in establishing “strong” states, but as legitimacy is difficult to operationalize, a common prescription for fostering legitimacy is democracy promotion, i.e. the holding of elections (Call 2011, 308-309; Lemay-Hébert 2009, 36). One debate in this literature has focused on whether democracy (elections) should be promoted after a well-functioning state has been established or if it can be part of the state-building process (Carothers 2007). The aim is to (re)create a legitimate political settlement but also for the external actors to identify a national actor that, ideally, represents the interests of the citizens (Marquette and Beswick 2011, 1708). The selected internal leadership will then secure a perception of ownership by working with the external actors. However, the potential downside of early democratization is increased conflict as elections become competitions over access to scarce resources (Collier 2007).

⁹ A special issue of *Third World Quarterly* was recently dedicated to the fragile state concept, entitled “Fragile States: A Political Concept” (2014, vol. 35, no. 2).

Economic reforms. The second cluster of approaches to state-building is linked to the previous cluster, but focuses on economic liberalization as a path to state-building (Paris 2004). The argument is that economic growth leads to political transformation and democratization (Krasner 2011, 125). In the European state formation, history economic development, the introduction of capitalism, happened in tandem with political changes and helped establish the state. This is occasionally linked to Max Weber's notion of the Protestant ethic as motivating capitalist expansion or the geographical structure of Europe, i.e. limited territory which was generally easily accessible, leading to a highly competitive environment and a need to establish clear property rights (Brock et al. 2012, 28).

Institutional capacity building. This third cluster of literature is also the most expansive. It focuses primarily on building the institutional capacity of the state, which is assumed to in turn lead to legitimacy (Ayoob 1995, 27; Grindle 1997; Lemay-Hébert 2009; Rotberg 2004, 2).¹⁰

Samuel Huntington argued in 1968 that the most important distinction is not *form* of government but *degree* of government (Huntington 1968). Nicolas Lemay-Hébert refers to this as the "institutionalist approach" (Lemay-Hébert 2010). The focus is on the state's ability to provide public goods, and as such state-building should focus on capacity building of the state including providing security (Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Rotberg 2004). It is the ability of state institutions to provide and regulate a minimal provision of core public goods, usually security, health and education (Call 2011). A sub-category of the literature emphasizes security, following Max Weber's definition of the state, and thus sees building the capacity of the security sector as most important (Egnell and Haldén 2009; Fearon and Laitin 2004; Krasner 2004).

Although all three explanations each point to relevant elements of stateness, they suffer from four major weaknesses. First, these literatures have been caught up in trying to refine or identify *the* variable or factor that is the key that unlocks the mystery of how to build states. That is, the critique focuses on *how* state-building is implemented (Angstrom 2008, 375). I argue that it is not possible to identify one factor (or a combination of factors) that can convincingly be argued to account for the outcomes of state-building interventions. This is because of the ambiguity of the fragility term, leading to

¹⁰ Kurtz and Schrank claim that neither legitimacy nor monopolization of force should be defining parts of stateness and instead focus solely on the characteristics of public administration (Kurtz and Schrank 2012, 613). However, since ability to implement administrative decisions across the state's territory is obviously central, it is difficult to see what difference their rejection of monopolization of violence and legitimacy actually makes in their analysis.

a variety of interventions, which each leads to distinct internal responses. Even if state-building is narrowed down to only mean post peacebuilding, UN-led operations, the empirical record shows that it is difficult to draw general lessons.

Second, these explanations tend to view state-building as a technical endeavor (Call and Cousens 2008, 4; Fukuyama 2004a, 17; Zaum 2007, 1). This is most clearly seen in the use of capacity building. Some critical authors, such as David Chandler, have argued that the state-building agenda obscures the exercise of power and as such institutionalizes new hierarchies of power (Chandler 2006). This is echoed by for example Roland Paris, who argues that international peacebuilding operations can be viewed as an updated version of “the *mission civilisatrice*, or the colonial-era belief that the European imperial powers had a duty to ‘civilise’ dependent populations and territories” (Paris 2002, accentuated in original). Hence, this literature links the legacy of colonialism to the current practice of state-building interventions and the inherent political character of the fragile state concept is accentuated (Ayers 2012).¹¹ However, this literature does not investigate how state-building is not only an act of power on the state but also on specific actors within the state. State-building interventions strengthen some actors at the expense of others, thus rearranging internal power relations.

Third, the state-building literature generally assumes the involvement of external actors (Andersen Riis 2010, 1; Bliesemann de Guevara 2008, 348; Call and Cousens 2008, 4; Chesterman 2004, 5; Fritz and Menocal 2007, 13). External actors are described as benefactors who engage in state-building interventions to help secure development and security for the people of the state. There is, however, a relatively new recognition that external intervention can have adverse or unintended consequences or that external actors are not neutral actors but play a role (Aoi, De Coning, and Thakur 2007; Barakat and Larson 2013). This is echoed by the “Do no harm” agenda, as formulated by the OECD or whole-of-government approaches focusing on increasing donor coordination (OECD 2010; Paris and Sisk 2009, 13). The literature, however, focuses on how to make external intervention more effective and pays limited attention to how external actors influence internal actors or how external actors can become internal actors. Moreover, broad references to “the international community” conceal that the state-building literature tends to focus on interventions by the UN and Western states, whereas the role of regional actors is relatively less investigated.

Fourth and relatedly, these literatures tend to privilege the perspective of external actors, thus operating with a shallow understanding of internal ac-

¹¹ (See for example Hill 2005; Jones 2013; Morton and Bilgin 2002; Morton 2005).

tors as spoilers or lacking capacity. Some authors have suggested that fragile states are fragile exactly because of internal elite preferences and strategies (Bøås and Jennings 2005, 390; Reno 1999).¹² This is supplemented by a literature that takes a more uncritical view of the local, assuming that if decision-making competences could be delegated to the local level, most notably through decentralization or support to civil society, then current fragile states would flourish. In this literature, the “local” is somehow better than the central. In general, however, internal actors are excluded or understood through a simple binary of formal/state/modern versus informal/non state/traditional, where the former is weak and the latter acts as a spoiler.

1.2.3. Intervention and sovereignty

This section looks at the final aspect of state-building interventions – understanding how the literature deals with the “intervention” part of the state-building intervention.

The most expansive literature is found within the area of military intervention, especially in relation to civil war (Angstrom 2008; Aydin 2012). However, interventions are understood in the broadest possible sense, meaning that interventions can also be economic, such as sanctions or rewards to internal actors (Bapat and Kwon 2015; Drezner 2000), ideational such as democracy promotion (McFaul 2004) or support for educational centers and schools with the intention of spreading a certain understanding of the world or finally for humanitarian reasons (Binder 2009; Choi 2013).

Interventions can be directed at all types of actors, including government organizations and non-state organizations such as human rights organizations. Interventions can be forcible or non-forcible. It is relatively seldom that external actors intervene without any previous relationship to the state and no established relationships to internal actors. Most frequently, external actors intervene on behalf or in support, at least tacitly, of an internal actor. This means that what is sometimes referred to as “alliances” or “partnerships” between external actors and internal actors can also be interventions (Avraham and Barak 2014, 171). In sum, interventions are actions by external actors that aim to further an agenda outside their own domestic context.

Sovereignty is based on a constitutional idea of the rights and duties of the governments and the citizens of particular states. The core is that the

¹² See also for example Diana Cammack, who argues that patronage can be completely logical from the perspective of a rational government, or Pierre Englebert, who focuses on the role of historically determined structures of African states as leading rational policymakers to choose institutions and policies that are inimical to development (Cammack 2007; Englebert 2002, 10).

state is a territorial jurisdiction, whose government is the principal authority (Jackson 2007, x, 10). Cynthia Weber declares that: “Generally, sovereignty is taken to mean the absolute authority a state holds over a territory and people as well as independence internationally and recognition by other sovereign states as a sovereign state” (Weber 2001, 1). This is not as clear as it might seem as the precise content of the areas over which the state can legitimately control remains contested (Krasner 1995, 236). Moreover, sovereignty has an internal and external dimension; the internal dimension refers to the supreme authority of a government of a populated territory, and the external dimension refers to being recognized internationally as a state (Jackson 1999, 3).¹³ This corresponds to the division between juridical and empirical sovereignty where juridical statehood refers to the legal recognition of a government’s territorial jurisdiction by other states as the primary legal entities in the international system (Brownlie 2003; Jackson and Rosberg 1982). Empirical sovereignty, on the other hand, is the internal dimension of states, i.e., how they actually work. The focus is on the central state’s ability to control its territory, primarily militarily but also public activities in general (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 2-3).

1.2.4. Defining state-building interventions

To sum up the previous sections before moving on to the contributions of this study, I briefly outline how state-building intervention is used in this study. Overall, state-building interventions refer to the *process of external involvement in the strengthening or (re)creation of governance structures*. A few features of this definition should be noted:

1. Although state-building will often focus on strengthening and building the capacity of structures associated with an ideal Weberian state (top-down institution building), it can also be directed at NGOs or other struc-

¹³ Internal sovereignty does not follow automatically from external legitimacy; as Bridget Coggins formulates it: “Acceptance by other states does not cause statehood and sovereignty from the top down. It merely reaffirms what has already been achieved in fact at the domestic level” (Coggins 2014). Yet, external sovereignty is important, as being recognized as a state is the access card to an international system built on states as units. David Strange quotes L.F.L. Oppenheim’s dictum that “through recognition only and exclusively a state becomes an international person and a subject of international law” to illustrate that although Max Weber’s definition of states is commonly referred to as the starting point for analysis of the state, it is in fact external recognition that places political entities in the category of states (Ladwig and Rudolf 2011, 199; Strang 1991, 150). It also follows from this that a state’s inability to internally live up to some minimum standard of what a state is supposed to do, does not absolve the state’s legal status as a state and as such it remains protected by international law from annexation.

tures outside the state (described as bottom-up state-building) (Menocal 2011, 1719).

2. State-building takes place in non-Weberian states but not necessarily in post-conflict environments, making peacebuilding a subset of state-building (Scott 2007, 6).¹⁴ However, a substantial literature defines state-building as a subset of peacebuilding, or as Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk argue: “State-building is a particular approach to peacebuilding” (Paris and Sisk 2009, 1).¹⁵
3. State-building and nation-building are not synonyms. Nation-building focuses on creating a nation, which can be either a side effect or part of the state-building intervention but not a synonym for state-building (Ignatieff 2003; Zaum 2007, 1). There has been a tendency to not distinguish clearly between state-building and nation-building, especially in US debates (Lemay-Hébert 2009, 34).
4. State-building involves external involvement. This can be in the form of UN involvement and large scale missions (Chesterman 2004, 5). But probably more influential or common are daily cross-border interactions between different internal and external actors. The process of state-building can thus be understood as a conscious effort to bring about some change from the outside, whereas state formation, the European historical process, was the result of negotiations and compromises without a known end result.¹⁶

1.3. Contributions to the state-building literature

The state-building literature is ever growing; however, the above review identified some limitations, most notably related to 1) the concept of state fragility on which the notion of state-building as a suitable remedy rests; 2) a static and binary understanding of internal actors involved in state-building; 3) limited attention or understanding of the role of diverse external actors in state-building; 4) the complex interactions between internal and external actors in state-building interventions. These limitations will be addressed in this study.

First, the fragile state concept. My contribution to the state fragility concept builds on a less commonly heard, yet recognized critique of the fragile

¹⁴ Indeed, there can be tradeoffs between state-building and peacebuilding, especially in relation to creating a viable political settlement (Call and Cousens 2008).

¹⁵ Examples include Louise Riis Andersen, who defines state-building as: “Extended international involvement in the construction of institutions of governance in the aftermath of civil war” (Andersen Riis 2010, 1).

¹⁶ This will be further discussed in chapter 2.

state concept, that being categorized as a fragile state facilitates certain types of foreign policy towards that state (Barakat and Larson 2013, 22). Specifically, that the use of the fragile state concept has deprived some states of the privileges of sovereignty and opened the door to interventions (Bøås and Jennings 2007; Call 2011). This study contributes to this critical literature in two ways; first by empirically documenting the emergence and spread of the fragile state concept. This illustrates the degree to which the Weberian state, which is best understood as an ideal type in the Weberian sense, has become the analytical measuring stick. Moreover, the conceptual analysis in chapter 5 documents the conceptual ambiguity of the concept by investigating how the concept is *actually* used, particularly in the UN. This includes looking at *who* uses the concept. The second contribution lies in investigating how the use of the fragile state concept, despite its conceptual ambiguity, is used to describe certain states in a way where the assigned “fragility” becomes their defining characteristic. This way, these states are positioned as deviant and as such amenable to interventions. The starting point is that words matter – and in this context words are particularly important in establishing the link between a problem (state fragility) and a solution (state-building). Both concepts are characterized by substantial conceptual ambiguity, which leaves those using the concept (the *who*) with considerable leeway in deciding which states will be defined as fragile, what characteristics are emphasized to objectively document fragility, for example rankings, and third, what action is suitable to solve the problem of fragility. Discussing state fragility in relation to terror, developmental challenges or perhaps even a result of global interdependencies may thus foster different approaches. Chapter 5 does not end by suggesting a better or more “refined” approach to fragility as all language comes with preconceptions. The point is not to identify the “norm-free” language but to introduce a general sensitivity to the fact that the language we use to describe problems affects what counts as a solution. This entails recognizing power relations, which allow some (the OECD states) to define others (the fragile states).

The tendency to start the analysis from what the state is not (its fragility) can at best yield explanations for why the state lacks certain properties and not to understand how it actually works (Eriksen 2011b, 235). Hence, as important as the analysis of the emergence, content and use of the fragile state concept is in its own right, it also functions as a stepping stone for the following sections, which focus on how internal actors embed external interventions into the local context.

Second, internal actors in state-building. The state-building literature focuses on internal actors at a national level as decisive for building strong states. In this context, the purpose of the state-building intervention is to

strengthen the state vis-à-vis so-called informal institutions (society). There is now a growing literature that rejects this binary between state (good) and informal (bad) as well as recognizes that institutions and organizations seldom function as envisioned when transferred from one context (Europe) to another (the fragile state); however, this literature is characterized by substantial conceptual ambiguity. This study contributes to this literature in several ways. First, it introduces a framework that dissolves the inherent distinction between formal and informal institutions, and argues that all institutions and organizations consist of both formal (legal-rational structures) and informal elements (norms). Second and relatedly, this entails rejecting the implicit understanding that institutions would work as expected was it not for surrounding norms (Hameiri 2007, 123). This study does not reiterate a separation between state and society as two distinguishable spheres, which can be understood separately. This does not mean that it is not possible to distinguish between state and non-state, but that analytically there is no innate “state essence” that separates state organizations from non-state organizations. It should also not be taken as a rejection of the importance of social norms, but norms are not the focus of this study.

Third, external actors in state-building. The involvement of external actors in state-building is often understood through a naïve model of politics where external actors are understood as a benign and uniform actor who works with the central state to strengthen the state. The study contributes to the literature’s understanding of external actors by taking an actor-centered approach to interventions. This builds on recent accounts of interventions, where it is demonstrated that external actors cannot be viewed as a unitary actor or as representing homogenous interests (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004, 384). This study particularly points to the importance of incorporating regional actors.

Fourth, the concept of “embedment”. There is a tendency in the state-building literature to build on a restricted, binary understanding of internal actors. Government actors are generally assumed to support interventions, but lacking capacity, or secondary, they are portrayed as spoilers. Non-state actors are either change agents, typically NGOs working to support human rights or the like, or spoilers, typically portrayed as groupings based on primordial bonds who oppose change (Lake and Fariss 2014, 569). This study contributes by nuancing this understanding of internal actors. It shows how internal actors seek to embed the intervention in the local context in ways that will increase their power vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. The state that emerges is the result of these interactions between different internal and external actors playing out in multiple areas simultaneously. A state-building

intervention is not a linear process where one actor intervenes, sees its agenda completed, and then exits as the state has been built.

1.4. Empirical gaps and contributions

The in-depth case study contributes to the empirical and area-centered literature on Yemen. The existing literature can be divided into a policy-oriented literature and an academic literature with some overlap.¹⁷

The policy literature is produced by a mixture of analysts, journalists and academics working in think tanks such as Chatham House¹⁸ and the International Crisis Group. The International Crisis Group has produced several high-quality reports on the Houthis and the Yemeni uprising and transition.¹⁹ Additional work has been published by, among others, the Atlantic Council, especially on federalism²⁰, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and occasionally other policy outlets.²¹ There is also quality journalistic work on Yemen, notably by researchers and a few knowledgeable journalists. These reports are policy oriented or attempt to explain the complex Yemeni context to a wider audience and policy makers. They are usually descriptive and focused on a specific empirical event. This is also seen in an occasional normative bias. However, several of these works are empirically very strong and written by people with superior knowledge about the Yemeni context.²²

In addition to the policy literature, this study primarily draws on two overall strands of literature; first, anthropological works from the 1970s and 1980s after Yemen had become a republic and became more accessible for researchers. A number of works focus on northern tribes, including their role in local community development (Dresch 1989), (Weir 2007), (Swagman 1988), and (Carapico 1998). More recent work on tribes includes Marieke Brandt's (2013; 2014) work on the integration of tribes in the Houthis conflict and Najra al-Dawsari's work on tribes and conflict resolution (Al-

¹⁷ Research conducted by Yemeni and other Arabic-speaking scholars has not been accessed due to the language barrier. I am aware of relevant work, and especially when I claim to conduct a detailed case study, it is problematic that I cannot read what Yemeni scholars have written on the subject.

¹⁸ (See for example Hill et al. 2013).

¹⁹ (International Crisis Group 2009; International Crisis Group 2011b; International Crisis Group 2014a).

²⁰ (Al-Akhali 2013; Al-Akhali 2014a; Al-Akhali 2014b).

²¹ (Boucek and Ottaway 2010).

²² There are also some high quality travel novels. I particularly enjoyed "The Despairing Developer: Diary of an Aid Worker in the Middle East" by Timothy Mitchells and "Yemen Chronicle: An Anthropology of War and Mediation" by Steven C. Caton.

dawsari 2012). Anthropological work has also been done in South Yemen, for example by Susanne Dahlgren (2010) and Marina De Regt (2007).²³ These works demonstrate the complexity of Yemen and the regional diversity. The literature aims to elucidate different aspects of Yemeni society and politics that have not previously been investigated. As Yemen was, and in part remains, uncharted academic territory, much of this literature focuses on describing and documenting social and political practices at the micro-level and hence provides a valuable reservoir of detailed background knowledge.

This study primarily contributes to a second strand of literature that seeks to explain and understand the Yemeni state. Broadly, this literature can be divided into accounts that focus on internal relations within the Yemeni state and research that investigates Yemen's relations to international actors. The Yemeni-centered literature specifically focuses on Yemen's experience with democracy starting from the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990. This includes works by Lisa Wedeen (2003; 2008), April Longley Alley (2010), and perhaps most notably Sarah Phillips (2008b; 2011b). One focus area is the Yemeni political parties, specifically Islāh, an Islamist party (Schwedler 2006; Yadav 2013b; Yadav 2014) and the formation of the Joint Meeting Parties, an umbrella for Islāh, the Yemen Socialist Party and several minor parties in an attempt to form a more cohesive opposition to Salih and his party, the General People's Congress (GPC) (Browsers 2007; Burrowes and Kasper 2007; Durac 2011). Although appreciative of the Yemeni "experiment with democracy" as Sarah Phillips calls it, a recurring theme in this literature is the centralization of power by Salih. This includes the marginalization of the former South Yemen as well as the north of Yemen where the Houthis have their core area. This literature sees the uprising in Yemen largely as a predictable outcome of a "perfect storm" of grievances that had been building for years in Yemen, most notably the protest movement in the former South Yemen, and the six wars that were fought between the regime and the Houthis from 2004 and onwards (Alley 2013a; Alley 2013b; Day 2012; Dorlian 2011; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells 2010). However, this literature seldom links internal power struggles to the external level.

A limited literature focuses on Yemen's relations with international actors, particularly the relationship between Yemen and Saudi Arabia (Gause 1990; Katz 1992), including Laurent Bonnefoy's work on the spread of Salafism in Yemen (Bonnefoy 2009; 2011a; 2014). There is also some work on Yemen's relations to the US, including the drone program (Johnsen 2013;

²³ Others have written more specifically on the political situation in South Yemen, for example Stephen W. Day (2008; 2010; 2012) and Noel Brehony (Brehony 2011, 185; Brehony 2014). This literature has likewise been consulted but is not extensively applied as the Yemeni case study focuses on the political situation from a northern perspective.

Phillips 2012; Phillips 2016; Rugh 2010; Sharp 2015; Swift 2015), as well as other actors such as the EU and the GCC (Burke 2012; Durac 2010). It is clear from the literature that Saudi Arabia is the most important external actor for Yemen and that Yemen increasingly has been defined and understood through the lens of counterterrorism and state fragility. Unfortunately, the most relevant work on the relationship between Yemen and Saudi Arabia focuses on the period prior to unification, and it does not investigate how external interventions were embedded into the Yemeni context by internal actors.

This study contributes to these literatures in several ways. First, this study specifically links the overall description of Yemen as a fragile state to external interventions. This corresponds with other work on Yemen, particularly in relation to the American drone program.²⁴ Second, it addresses how internal actors shape interventions by external actors, including the complex ways in which internal actors embed external state-building interventions into the local context. Thus, the study not only points to the importance of elite politics, or the importance of patronage in Yemen, but shows, through concrete case studies in key areas related to state-building, the strategies that Salih, and later Hadi, have used to embed external intervention in the Yemeni context. This shows how the outcomes of interventions reflect how they merged with internal elite struggles at a specific time. This way, state-building is seen as the combined outcome of multiple interventions by various external actors. Third, the study contributes to an understanding of the events following the Yemeni uprising. Although more quality research is starting to appear, the role of the UN and the GCC in the transitional agreement, as well as the strategies of different elite actors, is relatively under researched, in part because the security situation has made it increasingly difficult to do research in Yemen.

In sum, this study contributes to the empirical literature on Yemen by analyzing key events, discussions and policies in relation to state-building, seeing state-building as the sum of interactions, and including a wide range of actors. State-building is the focus, not a particular actor or a specific relationship between two actors.

²⁴ A recent chapter by Sarah Phillips discusses how US conceptions of Yemen as a fragile state has fueled the exact insecurities it seeks to eliminate (Phillips 2016). Moreover, Sophia Dingli has written a short article on the usefulness of the failed state thesis with Yemen as her case (Dingli 2013).

1.5. Limitations of the study

Before continuing to explicate what this study is about, it seems in order to write a few words on what it is *not* about.

First of all, this study does not provide causal explanations but instead asks questions of a “how” character. This means that it does not try to explain state-building through causal analysis or to pinpoint or refine central variables that can be used to measure if an intervention produced “more state”. Instead, the theoretical framework focuses on the strategies of internal actors within more narrowly defined sub-cases. The study does not claim that these sub-cases together make up the state. Each sub-case is a piece in the large state-building process, but putting the pieces together does not a state make. The aim is to understand what shapes state-building interventions but I do not intend to explain how each intervention affected the state. This is not to say that I completely refrain from discussing how interventions have impacted the state but it is not the central focus.

Second, the study is inspired by political ethnography as a method and an approach to understanding political phenomena. However, despite the 2½ months of fieldwork it is not an ethnographic work in the sense that it describes a reality based on immersion and participant-observation in a specific context. There are several reasons for this, including the precarious security situation in Yemen, but most importantly the aim is to understand how state-building is shaped by how internal actors embed external interventions in the local context. As the study demonstrates, these interactions take place on multiple levels and in different institutional settings. Consequently, there is no *one* place where I could have immersed myself. The study thus takes a middle ground, trying to reach out, from political science to the field of political ethnography, which I believe could provide important insights to the state-building literature in specific and political science in general, especially by shining more light on actual politics and not just what can be referred to as “respectable politics” – the policies and the actions that take place in public.²⁵

Third, the study focuses on internal processes including how external actors and the use of the fragile state term influence these internal structures. It does not deal with systemic factors such as globalization or colonialism.

²⁵ See (Auyero and Joseph 2013).

1.6. Outline of the dissertation

The study proceeds as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the theoretical frame. Chapter 2 uses the European state formation process to point to internal legitimacy as a key mechanism, although not a narrow understanding of legitimacy linked to the Weberian state. In the second part of the chapter, an inclusive typology for legitimacy in state-building is developed, which distinguishes between external and internal legitimacy. Chapter 3 is divided into three parts. The first part zooms in on internal actors; its main aim is to demonstrate that the binary between informal/ formal, modern/ traditional and state/ non-state is of limited analytical value and to outline the main concern of internal elite actors in the face of intervention i.e. to gain or maintain power. The second part discusses external actors. I argue that different external actors can have varying motives for intervening and that regional actors often play a key role in relation to state-building. Moreover, I outline the four main strategies external actors apply in relation to state-building. The third and final part presents the combined theoretical framework for investigating how internal actors embed external interventions into the local context. Chapter 4 outlines the ontological, epistemological and methodological framework of the study. I lay out the research design of my study and explicate how data was collected and analyzed. Specifically, the chapter describes some of the challenges related to conducting interviews in Yemen. Chapter 5 begins to answer the first sub research question, by conducting a detailed conceptual analysis of the fragile state concept using UN documents. The chapter documents the spread of the fragile state concept and the diversity of situations in which it has been applied. It analyzes how the fragile state concept is all-encompassing and thus facilitates state-building interventions. Chapter 6 is a general introduction to the Yemeni case before I, in chapters 7 and 8, analyze Yemen in more detail through a number of subcases that function as micro-cosmoses of state-building. Each chapter addresses several sub-cases that illustrate the multiple ways interventions are carried out and the strategies internal actors apply in the face of different kinds of external intervention. Chapter 9 summarizes the findings and puts them into a broader perspective.

PART I.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: WHAT SHAPES STATE-BUILDING?

Part I consists of chapters 2 and 3 that construct a theoretical framework to answer what shapes state-building interventions in so-called fragile states.

Chapter 2 uses a brief outline of the two major explanations for the European state formation experience - war makes states and capital accumulation - to argue that whereas European state formation was a process of developing mutual dependency relations between internal elites and populations, current state-building interventions are engineered processes that then to focus on external legitimacy and actors. This leads to the development of a typology of legitimacy that accentuates the distinction between internal and external legitimacy. Chapter 3 builds on chapter 2 to develop a theoretical model of what shapes state-building interventions. This takes three steps: The first step investigates internal actors, the second step focuses on external actors and finally, in the third step, all of these elements are combined in the model of what shapes state-building interventions in fragile states.

Combined the two chapters develop a theoretical model that starts with the resources of internal actors, understood as military and economic capacities, as well as their internal and external legitimacy. These resources are used as a starting point as they define the position of the regime vis-à-vis alternative internal elite actors. These resources also define how and to what degree internal actors are able to embed the external intervention in the local context. Thus, the key argument is that state-building interventions are shaped by internal actors strategies of embedment.

Chapter 2.

Learning from history: juxtaposing state formation and state-building

The state has become the only possible type of political organization in the international system (Stepan, Linz, and Yadav 2010, xi).²⁶ Sami Zubaida for instance describes the state as “the ‘compulsory’ model” in relation to the independence movement of former colonies (Zubaida 1989, 121), which is echoed by Georg Sørensen, who notes that “the institutional form of sovereign statehood has been the completely dominant form of political organization since the process of decolonization” (Sørensen 2001, 342). Charles Tilly speaks of the “incredible hegemony” of states (Tilly 2003, 4) and Lisa Anderson refers to the state as the “default political institution” (Anderson 2004, 2).

This chapter shows how state-building seeks to replicate the European state formation experience, both by identifying the key variables that led to the formation of successful European states, but also as the implicit justification for a rather intrusive act; the state-building intervention. The first part of the chapter use a brief review of the two main arguments on state formation in Europe to explicate what elements were historical particular for the European process and which elements can be analyzed as more universal factors related to creating well-functioning structures of governance.²⁷ This demonstrates that European state formation and current state-building interventions are very different processes.²⁸ State formation is endogenous, incremental and open-ended whereas state-building interventions are externally backed attempts at socially engineering a state towards an ideal, the

²⁶ There are 196 states and 193 are members of the United Nations. This excludes the Vatican State, Kosovo and Taiwan. The Palestinian territories also remain disputed.

²⁷ See (Spruyt 2002, 129), who sees the interest of comparative political scientist in the origins of the state as springing from the desire to elucidate patterns of state formation in developing states. The sentiment is also formulated by Tilly, who writes that it is his hope that the European experience will help us grasp what is happening today and perhaps even do something about it (Tilly 1985, 169).

²⁸ The distinction itself between state formation and state-building is known, also in policy documents. The OECD has for example defined state formation as “dynamic, historically informed, often contingent process by which states emerge in relation to societies” whereas state-building is the “purposeful action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process for negotiating the mutual demands between state and societal groups” (OECD 2008, 13-14). Yet, the distinction is seldom used in any purposeful way.

Weberian state. The second part of the chapter develops a typology over legitimacy that builds on an empirical understanding of legitimacy. This chapter shows that the discussion on legitimacy in the state-building literature tend to be too narrowly attached to a Weberian understanding of the state, which means that alternative sources of legitimacy are overlooked (Dorff 1999, 68; Gibson 2004, Chp. 3; Gilbert 2012, 483; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009, 355).²⁹³⁰ The chapter argues that legitimacy should be separated from the Weberian ideal type state. This opens up for a more nuanced understanding of legitimacy which is used to construct an inclusive typology of legitimacy which can be used to investigate legitimacy in the context of state-building interventions where the local government is arguably only one among multiple potentially legitimate internal actors.

2.1. Defining the state

Any discussion on state formation or state-building should begin by explicating what the state i.e. how is the state defined, especially because “the state” remains a “messy” concept. Michael Mann argues that the main problem is that most analyses implicitly contain two levels of analysis; what the state looks like institutionally and what it does, its functions (Mann 1992, 4). In relation to this distinction, Weber argues that it is not possible to define the state in terms of the ends to which it is dedicated but only according to the means peculiar to it (Weber 1964, 155). Weber focuses on the use of force as peculiar to the state as per his definition of the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory” (Accentuated in the original Weber 1964, 154). In general, Weber emphasizes that states are far more stable if considered legitimate (Weber 1964, 125). Analytically the means of government can thus be considered in terms of domestic authority or legitimacy on the one hand and the ability to govern on the other hand (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 6).

Today the literature on the state is dominated by the concept of state-ness. Stateness was introduced by J.P. Nettl to facilitate the measurement of the degree to which a modern Weberian state exists in a given entity and

²⁹ Oliver Schlumberger argues that legitimacy in the non-democratic Arab world has not been studied in any encompassing manner for more than 30 years, and Mark Sedgewick adds that this neglect is not restricted to the Middle East as for example legitimacy in the former communist regimes was also overlooked (Schlumberger 2010, 233; Sedgwick 2010, 252).

³⁰ I use sources of legitimacy to denote the various types of legitimacy. Others have used “sources of legitimacy” to describe internal and external audiences who make legitimacy assessments (Deephouse and Suchman 2008, 54).

consequently enable comparative analyses (Nettl 1968, 579). Nettl's article has become a shared starting point for the subsequent literature on stateness. The stateness concept has the advantage of disaggregating the state concept which facilitates comparative analysis (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014, 1205; Kraxberger 2007; Nettl 1968). However, the downside is that the disaggregation of the state concept has led to a great deal of varying definitions (Kurtz and Schrank 2012). Broadly speaking the literature on stateness has either emphasized the power of the state, including administrative and coercive capacity, or legitimacy. The former type of literature focuses on the degree to which the state can exert power and the means available to the state in extending its authority across its territory (Andersen, Møller, and Skaaning 2014, 1208). A few examples include Francis Fukuyama, who points to "the ability of states to plan and execute policies and to enforce laws cleanly and transparently..." (Fukuyama 2004b, 9). This is echoed by (Khadiagala 1995), who posits that "[s]tateness, then, refers to the functional ability of institutions to organize constraints and effect compliance to orient human action toward certain expectations and rules of procedure" (Khadiagala 1995, 34). Finally, Naomi Chazan explicates the link between stateness and society when defining stateness as "the capacity to entrench the authority of the central state and to regularize its relations with society" (Chazan 1992, 122). The second perspective emphasizes the legitimacy of the state. This literature tends to present legitimacy as either a consequence of functioning Weberian state institutions or as narrowly linked to citizenship and elections (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995; Lindberg 2006; Linz and Stepan 1996). Bratton and Chang for example note that "legitimacy of the state is in itself a reciprocal product of democratization..." (Bratton and Chang 2006, 1059). The capacity of the state, specifically its administrative and coercive capacity, and legitimacy linked to elections is understood as the central tenets of stateness and hence the natural focus of state-building interventions.

2.2. Explaining European state formation

In 1987, Lisa Anderson argued, in relation to state formation in the Middle East, that state formation could take two forms; "the construction of any sort of political association with legitimate and adequately financed administrative and military capabilities, or the development of the specific characteristics of modern 'rational-legal' bureaucratic authority" (Anderson 1987, 2). From this observation, I take three interrelated questions, which will be discussed in more detail in this section. First, what are the central tenets of the European state formation experience? Second, how have these tenets travelled outside the European context? And third, what then are the most defin-

ing differences between the European state formation experience and current state-building interventions? The literature on the European state formation is dominated by two strands of literature (Eriksen 2011a, 445). The first focuses on geopolitical factors as famously epitomized by Charles Tilly in the “war makes states” phrase. The second literature inspired by fiscal sociology emphasizes the development of an alternative elite, a bourgeoisie, as a counterweight to the previously dominant feudal aristocracy (Hadenius 2001, 237).

2.2.1. War makes states

The most cited argument for the emergence of the European state emphasizes the link between war-making and state-making as summarized in Charles Tilly’s famous dictum that “war makes states” (Tilly 1985, 170). The argument has been elaborated on by a number of historical studies focusing on Europe, such as Ertman (1997), who refines the argument by demonstrating that the impact of war on bureaucratization is not uniform across all time periods (Ertman 1997). Especially two elements will be highlighted here; the monopolization of coercive powers by the state and the largely external nature of wars during the European state formation process. Charles Tilly defines coercion to include all concerted applications, threatened or actual, of action that commonly causes loss or damage to the persons or possessions of individuals or groups who are aware of both the action and the potential damage (Tilly 2003, 19).

In relation to the first point, the states in Europe developed against the backdrop of a long history where regional and local power holders had both the means and the right to wage wars. Beginning in the seventeenth century rulers in Europe slowly managed to shift the balance so that neither individuals nor rival power holders within the state could bear arms (Tilly 2003, 69). This process happened incrementally as the state elite gradually increased both its breadth and depth of influence. Moreover, the process took place in parallel to the state’s expansion of its own coercive capabilities. As a result, it has become not only impossible but also illegitimate for factions inside European states to seize power without the assistance of at least segments of the state’s own coercive apparatus. Thus, this process forms the backdrop to Max Weber’s claim that “the use of force is regarded legitimate only so far as it is either permitted by the state or prescribed by it” (Weber 1964, 282). Relatedly, the monopolization of coercive powers by the state was followed by the gradual introduction of regulation of the use of coercion

through the emergence of an international system of states.³¹ Finally, the prolonged periods of war making and war preparation in Europe made it necessary to mobilize increasing amounts of resources. This was further accentuated by changes in military technology, which meant that the type of warfare changed – away from open plain fighting towards sieges on strategic cities which raised the costs of war significantly (Spruyt 2002, 135-136). This meant that European states gradually moved towards a system of collecting taxes in money to pay for standing armies (Tilly 2003, 84). The growing task of collecting and distributing funds in relation to war making and war preparation resulted in an increase of permanent officials engaged in administrative tasks at both local and national level (Ertman 1997, 77). The state apparatus expanded to be able to extract and distribute increasing resources in relation to war preparation and, as Michael Barnett points to, these war-associated changes rarely returned to prewar levels (Barnett 2012, 3).

Second, the European state-building process was dominated by the importance of external threats; in fact, in the words of Tilly “Over the millennium as a whole, war has been the dominant activity of European states” (Tilly 2003, 74). According to one account the survival rate was dim: “By 1900 there were around 20 times fewer independent polities in Europe than there had been in 1500. They did not disappear peacefully or decay as the national state developed; they were the losers in a protracted war of all against all” (Cohen, Brown, and Organski 1981a, 902). The seminal years in the European state formation process were characterized by violence, which could on the surface have looked like political decay. In a sense, these were the years of war of all against all, and when the state, as we know it now, finally emerged victorious, order prevailed.³² A defining characteristic was that the external threat came primarily from within the region whereas Europe as a whole inhabited a relatively protected position in time and space (Tilly 1975, 40). The clear demarcation of boundaries and territorial integrity that defines the international system today became the result.

2.2.2. Capital accumulation and taxation

The second argument in relation to the emergence of the European state emphasizes the importance of accumulation and concentration of capital including the increasing ability and dependence on taxation by the European states. The emergence of merchant elites, commerce and industry played a

³¹ See also Holsti’s account where he supports the above argument and additionally points to how the institutionalization of war helped to manage the worst excesses of war (Holsti 1996).

³² The argument is inspired by a Hobbesian reading of history.

central role in challenging the status quo and introducing political pluralism. Moreover, the increased dependence of European rulers on taxation saw an expansion of the civilian bureaucracy, which in itself had a large impact on the European societies (Moore 2004).

The European context stimulated the potential for private capital accumulation in a number of ways but most importantly political power was dispersed in Europe. This provided both merchants and labor the opportunity to move towards the most stable and profitable markets and in turn gave elites an incentive to secure the safety and conditions that would make them attractive marketplaces (Spruyt 2002). Hence, capitalism as a system developed in Europe as capitalists gained control over production and flourished as capital-concentrated manufacturing became the basis for prosperity in the European states (Tilly 2003, 17). One central aspect was the introduction of more efficient, capitalist-oriented property rights and establishment of enforceable commercial relations that protected merchants from coercive power (Greif 2006, 95-96). In the European experience states that were unsuccessful in transforming their economies from being primarily based on feudal agriculture were at a disadvantage. The emergence of a new bourgeoisie elite provided rulers with the option to fund government activities including increasingly costly wars through domestic taxation. Previously government activities had primarily been funded through the ruler's private means and money lending, so this was a substantial change that had large effects on the relationship between ruler and citizens. The European states, which became legitimate representatives of well-defined populations, were the most successful in extracting and distributing resources as coercion is not a very cost-efficient way of governing (Buzan 1991, 85; Spruyt 2002). Specifically, the dependence on domestic tax collection gave the European states the incentive to begin bargaining with the people and to extend representation to increase the legitimacy of the state to make possible an agreement over the conditions of taxation and government budget (Eriksen 2011a, 449). This reduced the role of local patrons while placing representatives for the national state in every community and expanded popular consultation in the form of elections and legislatures (Tilly 2003, 63). Simultaneously, taxation creates the expectation among taxpayers that they are to receive services in return for the resources that they provide to the state. Taxation has received substantial attention in the fiscal theory of state formation because there is an envisioned robust link between the emergence of strong states and states' expansion of their revenue base through taxation (Schneider 2012, 36). It was the demands of taxation that led the European states to exercise a more direct and centralized control over public life including security and justice (Paris 2003, 156). Finally, taxation requires a distinction between public and

private law. Private law applies to relationships between individuals whereas public law applies to the relationship between individuals and the state. Thus, public law determines and regulates the organization and functioning of the state, including taxation. The public-private distinction only fully emerged in the Western world in the nineteenth century, where it was a central tenet of liberal thought meant to protect the civil sphere from the encroaching power of the state (Dodge 2008, 371). The distinction remains contested but highly relevant as it influences which body of laws applies. The issue becomes further complicated in countries where private law is considered legitimately dealt with by religious or non-state actors, thus delegating the issue to outside the state's legal system.

In sum, the states which were able to extend tax collection structures over their territories while managing to stimulate private capital accumulation prospered. A central aspect was, just as in the “war makes states” argument, the development of an effective bureaucracy. This has led to the link between having a well-functioning Weberian-type bureaucracy and the prospect for economic growth and sustained development (Brown 1989, 369; Evans and Rauch 1999).

2.3. The state outside of Europe

In the previous section, the European state formation process was reviewed through two key arguments; the “war makes states” thesis and an argument which focuses on capital accumulation. Both these perspectives emphasize the development of relationships of mutual dependency between elites and citizens, most clearly seen in the growing importance of taxation. In this section, I investigate how these arguments have travelled outside Europe to illustrate how historically contingent processes cannot be transferred to other contexts.

2.3.1. War makes states, but not so much outside Europe

Charles Tilly argued that, in the European experience, “[p]reparation for war has been the great state-building activity” (Tilly 1975, 74). Cohen et al formulate the point in even stronger terms, arguing that “... instead of indicating political decay, violence in these states is an integral part of the process of accumulation of power by the national state” (Cohen, Brown, and Organski 1981b, 901). However, this section reviews five arguments which demonstrates the inability of war to strengthen state-building outside the European context

First, whereas the state in Europe was able to gradually disarm its population and gain a monopoly of violence, this has not happened in many non-Western states. Here I point to two key explanations for this. First, Jeffrey Herbst has pointed to the importance of geographical factors which can be illustrated by the very different geographical circumstances that characterize Europe and Africa. Whereas the European experience of “war makes states” arose from the need to compete for territory and capital, the African state was created in a sparsely populated context with limited urbanization. Hence, in the African context there was not the same incentive to invest resources in a centralized monopoly of violence (Herbst 2000).³³ Second, the state might choose to fragment its military capacity as a way of balancing internal threats (Anderson 1987, 8; Noman and Sorenson 2013). The regime creates parallel military organizations and multiple internal security agencies as a coup-proofing measure. The result can be a fragmenting of the monopoly of violence (Quinlivan 1999). Moreover, some armies are characterized by procedures of recruitment and promotion which are shaped by personal relationships. These types of armies, referred to as “patronage” or “communal” armies, tend to consist of fractions which display loyalty to the “patron” and not the state as such (Albrecht 2014, 1; Lutterbeck 2013, 31). Hence, these types of armies, in contrast to the Weberian ideal of the institutionalized army, do not protect the state but the power that pays their salaries (Lutterbeck 2013, 32-33). Finally, in some instances civilian leaders have lost control of the military; in other words, the military is the opposite of “professional” to use Samuel Huntington’s influential terminology (Huntington 1957, 83-85). The state instead becomes what Amos Perlmutter described as “praetorian”, which is defined as: “a situation where the military class of a given society exercises independent political power within it by virtue of an actual or threatened use of force” (Perlmutter 1977, 89). Praetorianism entails a high degree of direct or indirect influence in civilian matters from the military.³⁴ External actors often prioritize building up the military of fragile states because monopoly of violence is important in the Weberian notion of the state. Yet, many developing states already allocate substantial parts of their GDP to military buildup.³⁵ Furthermore, in relation to the Middle East,

³³ Hall (1985) substantiates this claim by pointing to a set of ecological points set Europe apart, such as it being a divided area with several small cores, the majority of which have deep and productive clay soils fed by rainfall. These factors, he claims, at least facilitated the emergence of a decentered agricultural civilization based on individual initiative (Hall 1986, 111).

³⁴ (See also Nordlinger 1977).

³⁵ GDP is a disputed concept which is meant to represent the market value of all goods and services produced by the economy during the period measured, including personal

powerful militaries and strong coercive capabilities have been seen as one of the main obstacles to political reforms (Bellin 2004; Cook 2007; Lutterbeck 2013, 29). Table 2.1 shows that states such as Afghanistan and Iraq spend substantial amounts on the military. In general, the Middle East and North Africa is overrepresented in the top 20 of countries with the largest military expenditure in percentage of GDP.

Table 2.1. 20 countries with largest share of military expenditure of percent of GDP (2013)

No.	Country	% of GDP	No.	Country	% of GDP
1	Oman	11.61	11	Yemen, Rep.	3.93
2	Saudi Arabia	8.99	12	Morocco	3.92
3	Afghanistan	6.36	13	United States	3.82
4	Israel	5.65	14	Bahrain	3.76
5	Algeria	4.95	15	Mauritania	3.56
6	Angola	4.91	16	Jordan	3.56
7	Azerbaijan	4.68	17	Pakistan	3.46
8	Lebanon	4.36	18	Iraq	3.44
9	Russian Federation	4.19	19	Colombia	3.44
10	Armenia	4.10	20	Kuwait	3.31

Source: World Bank (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD>)

The second argument builds on the observation that under certain circumstances war can lead to a decline in state power (Gongora 1997).³⁶ Thierry Gongora illustrates, in a preliminary finding, how the financial challenge of war making can induce or worsen a fiscal crisis of the state and weaken the infrastructural power of the state, i.e. its ability to penetrate and centrally coordinate society through its infrastructure (Gongora 1997, 324). In fact, Michael Barnett reminds us that there are also European examples of how international conflict and resource mobilization has eroded the state's control over society, e.g. in relation to the German revolution of 1919 (Barnett 2012, 10). This has several explanations such as the state's inability to provide the same levels of services during prolonged periods of war and the fact

consumption, government purchases, private inventories, paid-in construction costs and the foreign trade balance. It is the most widely used measure of economic growth.

³⁶ See also Lingyu Lu and Cameron G. Thies, who explore the link between war making and state making in the Middle East using cross-national time-series data for eighteen Middle Eastern countries from 1960-2003 and find that structural pressure related to international and domestic rivals augments extractive capacity but that both international and civil war have a negative effect on state capacity that is far greater than the positive effects of rivalry (Thies and Lu 2013).

that alternative societal actors may wield greater relative power vis-à-vis a state immersed in prolonged fighting.

The third argument builds on what Mohammed Ayoob has termed; “the third world security predicament”, to emphasize that third world states are caught in cross pressure between being expected to adhere to human rights ideals while strengthening their stateness by extending their dominion over often reluctant populations in the shortest possible time to approximate Western style statehood (Ayoob 1995, 87).³⁷ The development of the European state was violent and conflict-ridden as described by Cohen et al.: “The entire historical process of creating a national state was a long and violent struggle pitting the agents of state centralization against myriad local and regional opponents” (Cohen, Brown, and Organski 1981b, 902). Current states, on the other hand, are subject to a large number of international treaties and norms that limit their ability to legitimately apply force against alternative or competing internal actors. This makes it more difficult to gain a monopoly of force.

Fourth, and relatedly, the European state formation experience took, to a larger degree, place in an environment of external threats of annihilation. Many of the states outside Europe were created into an international system where the international society guarantees the external borders of new states. This means that the competition for controlling the means of coercion is only internal, whereas state-building in Europe took place in a context of both external and internal challenges (Sørensen 2001). Indeed, Robert Jackson points to the sanctity of international borders as potentially having a negative impact on state-building as rulers have less incentive to develop national authority when their international status is not at stake (Jackson 1992, 8). Moreover, during the European state formation experience, wars became linked to the state, the purpose of wars being to advance the interest of the state. It should therefore be critically investigated whether this understanding of war and, consequently, the theories used to explain wars remain the most useful tools for explaining armed conflicts with different characteristics and sources than the defense of the state (Holsti 1996, ch. 1). It has for example been argued in the human security literature that the primary threat no longer comes from interstate war but from a number of threats that do not follow state boundaries, such as climate threats, poverty, terror and organized crime. These threats require different responses than the development of large standing armies.

³⁷ “The normative emphasis on the sanctity of political boundaries and the demand that the new states demonstrate their capacity for effective statehood are strong reminders that states have two overriding obligations: one, to protect their juridical statehood, and two, to translate that statehood into empirical statehood” (Ayoob 1995, 87).

The final argument points to how the current international context allows the pursuit of political and economic interests by stronger states in the weak states without threatening the state's survival (Sørensen 2001). The competition between the US and the USSR during the Cold War gave developing states the possibility of securing patronage from abroad by exploiting Cold War rivalries, which made them less dependent on internal resource generation (Barakat and Larson 2013, 23; Bates 2001, 70, 80-83). Some elites in developing states have been extremely adept at extracting economic surpluses from international, economic, diplomatic and military networks, which can be referred to as "strategic rents" (Eriksen 2011a). Another aspect is the increasing presence of American military personnel for example in the Middle East (Cronin 2014, 11). Currently, the US has military bases throughout most of the Middle East, is involved in security sector reforms or is supplying allies with sophisticated arms systems. This can undermine the role of internal armies as states instead depend on external support.

To sum up, the changing external environment including the type of threats facing current states and their abilities to legitimately counter them as well as the structure of the army illustrates how the specific European historical process cannot be transferred to current state-building interventions. This is the case even when looking towards the Middle East which has been war prone, thus making it a prime case for testing the viability of the "war makes states" thesis (Schwarz 2012).

2.3.2. Capital accumulation and taxation: the globalized economy

This section points to a number of concrete difficulties in transferring the second dominant explanation for European state formation, the development of an alternative business elite and the emergent dependence on taxation so that the state was no longer solely funded through the ruler's private means. This section focuses on three main factors that inhibit the transference of the explanation to current state-building interventions.

First, globalization has undercut the "boundedness" of states, making borders more like sieves than barriers and leading to a high degree of economic interdependence and erosion of sovereignty (Migdal 2004, 20). Paris (2003) points to how new developments in the technology of commerce are undermining the efficiency of the state as an autonomous taxing entity (Paris 2003). Moreover, as Peter Evans argues, "... in the current global order the unique political status of states must be balanced against the fact that the most economically empowered 'citizens' of the international arena are transnational corporations (TNCs)" (Evans 1997, 65). This is further complicated

by the fact that economic globalization is a partial and political process where large parts of the world, notably many of the so-called fragile states, remain outside the globalized networks. Moreover, globalization provides alternative funding opportunities for states that can turn to global economic actors instead of domestic resource generation, which undercuts the incentive for the state to bargain with domestic actors (Evans 1997). Relatedly, globalization weakens the state's regulative power and ability to independently define economic policies among other things because of the special vulnerability of fragile states to illicit money flows and the increasing number of treaties and institutions combined with the deepening of existing institutions, which limits states' independent space of economic decision-making (Schneider 2012, 26-27).

Second, Charles Tilly argued that Europe was dominated by peasants and major landlords which led to a gradual fixation of borders through alliances (Tilly 1975, 28). This did not happen where long distance trade or nomadic pastoralism dominated (Anderson 1987, 4). However, even more importantly, the vast majority of the current so-called fragile states are former colonies (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 27). This means that borders were fixed according to European economic and diplomatic preferences instead of indigenous economic practices or political identifications (Holsti 1996, 62-66).³⁸ Furthermore, the colonial pursuit became a quest for territory by European powers but without the same dependence on building centralized bureaucracies or political legitimacy that had accompanied the internal European quest for territory. State institutions have been introduced, molded on the European scheme, but they seldom work as expected. This is usually explained through the persistence of "informal" or traditional societal institutions and organizations or the insufficient coupling between the state's bureaucratic structures and the surrounding society (Kiser and Sacks 2011, 129). Indeed, it has been an implicit or explicit starting point of much of the literature on state fragility that it is the fundamentally alien character of the state which has left it unable to penetrate and control society (Jackson 1992; Migdal 1988). It would, however, be mistaken to see "the state" and "the society" as two distinct spheres. In many cases the colonial state relied on local intermediaries and alliances with local non-state organizations to keep territories and populations under their control (Albrecht and Moe 2015, 10). This way the history of the so-called traditional actors such as chiefs, sheikhs or big men, are often closely intertwined with colonial practices (Albrecht 2015b, 614). Hence, decolonization produced a large number of states in the

³⁸ Saadia Touval (1972) has challenged this view.

European image but many of these states have since struggled to live up to the Weberian state ideal.

Third, the so-called resource trap. Rolf Schwarz has convincingly shown that in the oil states of the Middle East, what can be referred to as “natural resource rents” has meant that rulers have been able to pay for military capabilities without relying on borrowing or taxation. Indeed, elites in many developing states control both land and business interests in addition to the means of coercion. This means that wars have not given rulers the incentive to improve administrative efficiency or to engage in bargaining with citizens, which would lead to more representative and legitimate states (Schwarz 2012). As Michael Barnett points out, it is “only when government places certain demands on and expects society to contribute directly to its military activities one does witness the transformation of state power” (Barnett 2012, 6). It is not just oil but also foreign aid and government borrowing, which means that many non-Western states do not focus on developing their extractive capacity as they are far less dependent on their own populations than was the case in the European state formation experience. In fact, the state might instead use its resources to secure the acquiescence of the population (Anderson 1987, 10).

Summing up, these factors, i.e. migration of taxing authority, the increased role of global economic actors and the availability of rents, mean that current states operate in a very different economic environment compared to that of the European states during their state formation experience. Specifically, external relations often take precedence over internal relations.

2.3.3. Summing up: the commonalities between different narratives of state formation

The Weberian state concept is so embedded in our understanding of political reality that it is difficult to detach this specific understanding of the state from analysis of political order. This facilitates the use of a certain understanding of the state, seldom clearly defined, as an objective measuring stick against which the rest of the world’s states can be measured. Yet, as this section has demonstrated the European state formation process does not travel well.³⁹ The review of the two dominant approaches to the European state formation does, however, reveal that a major aspect of the development of

³⁹ This point has for example also been made by Steven Heydemann, who argues that the hegemonic status of Europe and the consequent insistence on generalizability of the European state formation process in time and space has produced conclusions that tend “to confirm for us little more than the fact that the twentieth-century developing world is not like eighteenth century Europe” (Heydemann 2000, 3).

the European state as such a successful political order was the development of a relation of mutual dependency between European elites and peoples.

2.4. Nuancing the concept of legitimacy

The previous sections have illustrated that the European state formation experience was, in fact, “... in a world-historical perspective – highly idiosyncratic” as formulated by S.E. Finer in his monumental work on the history of government (Finer 1997, 5).⁴⁰ It was a combination of military and economic factors that coalesced to give domestic rulers an incentive to seek support from society (Hadenius 2001, 243). Yet, although historical analysis of the factors that created this unique coalescence of factors cannot lead to replication of the process, the decisive factor; i.e. internal elite depending on local populations, can be held out as an important lesson for current state-building processes. This approach assumes that important lessons can be learned from history but that lessons must be separated from their specific historical and geographical context (Badie 2000; Chabal and Daloz 2005, 44; Herbst 2000, 22; Parekh 1992). This study tries to take a middle way between absolute relativism and absolute universalism by pointing to a way where it is possible to learn from history while respecting variation, thus avoiding trying to understand the non-Western world by what it is obviously not, namely Europe (Egnell and Haldén 2013, 2). The approach will be further discussed in chapter 4.

Legitimacy features centrally in Weber’s definition of the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory” (Accentuated in the original Weber 1964, 78) and consequently in state-building. This literature argues that “legitimacy is precisely the belief in the rightfulness of the state, in its authority to issue commands, so that those commands are obeyed not simply out of fear or self-interest, but because they are believed in some sense to have moral authority, because subjects believe that they ought to obey” (Barker 1990, 11).⁴¹ Hence, legitimacy is presented as playing a key role in making the state the most effective form of political order by securing not only the compliance of citizens but their active cooperation with the state. However, this literature elevates a *certain* perception of what is legitimate to

⁴⁰ From a slightly different perspective as the article differentiates between Westernization and modernization, Samuel P. Huntington has written an article with the telling title “The West Unique, Not Universal”, where puts the point succinctly “They (i.e. distinctive characteristics of Western civilization) make Western civilization unique, and Western civilization is precious not because it is universal but because it is unique” (Huntington 1996, 35).

⁴¹ See also Levi (2009: 354).

a universal category. The state formation process in Europe led to the Weberian state; an internally legitimate political order that proved superior in mobilizing resources and manpower. However, although it is increasingly recognized that this process cannot be replicated in current state-building interventions, the Weberian ideal continues to implicitly inform the literature on state-building which manifests itself in a tendency to prioritize an understanding of legitimacy that implicitly build on the Weberian state ideal (Gilley 2013, 71; Lake and Fariss 2014, 573; Lemay-Hébert 2009; Paris and Sisk 2009, 3; Woodward 2012, 470).⁴² Legitimacy is often reduced to quantitative indicators related to democracy, specifically pointing to the electoral process, or state institutions' ability to provide efficient services (Bratton and Chang 2006, 1059; Habermas 1975, 52, 84-85; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009; Lyons 2004, 270; Weatherford 1992).⁴³ This narrow conception of legitimacy ignores that legitimacy might have sources that are less strongly correlated with the Weberian state. The overlap between legitimacy and Weberian state is problematic as it per default excludes other types of legitimacy or at least places them in a relative hierarchy where the legal source of legitimacy associated with the Weberian state is considered the peak of human development.

2.4.1. Defining legitimacy

Weber saw legitimacy as citizens' willingness to comply with a system of rule because of their *belief* in the moral validity of that regime (My accentuation Weber 1964, 213).⁴⁴ I draw two propositions from this. First, as legitimacy is about "belief", it cannot be reduced to legal validity. Legality; that the political entity has acquired and exercises political power in accord with the political communities' laws and rules, is not enough if the established rules are not based on shared beliefs and the consent of those affected by the rules (Gilley 2009, 6; Habermas 1975, 106). Legal validity is an important element but as the law itself can be questioned, following the law is not sufficient to guaran-

⁴² There are exceptions such as Bellamy and Williams 2005 (although they focus on peace operations).

⁴³ Mark Sedgwick argues that the importance of legitimacy is generally overlooked in non-democratic regimes (Sedgwick 2010: 251). There are those who believe that only democracies can be legitimate or in other words that legitimacy does not matter for autocracies as these do not rely on the people's support (Gerschewski 2013, 18). It will be argued that this builds on a very narrow understanding of legitimacy as restricted to one specific form of input legitimacy, namely elections.

⁴⁴ I do not equate legitimacy and compliance but see the decision to obey or not to obey a law as conceptually independent of whether an institution is judged to have the authority to make a decision (Gibson 2004, 296).

tee that something is legitimate (Beetham 2013, 4). Second, the accentuation of “belief” means that legitimacy is relational in the sense that legitimacy emerges and exists in relations between people, elites and structures. Consequently, legitimacy must be investigated and understood within a specific empirical setting. This approach starts by asking how things look from within the relevant society (Angle 2005, 519). Oliver Schlumberger refers to this as an *empirical* understanding of legitimacy, which holds that what people believe to be “right” or “legitimate” differs across time and space.⁴⁵ Moreover, legitimacy as an analytical category is defined as part of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled and influenced by both (Barker 1990, 2; Schlumberger 2010, 235). This way state and society are mutually constitutive, which means that legitimate rule entails that those being ruled acknowledge the elites’ right to govern. This also means that legitimate rule cannot be reduced to a contractual relationship between power-holder and power-subject that requires one part to be always obedient (Matheson 1987, 201).

The opposite of an empirical understanding of legitimacy is a *normative* understanding of legitimacy, which holds that there is some objective notion of what is right that is universally shared (Schlumberger 2010, 235).⁴⁶ Implicit in the normative understanding of legitimacy is an understanding of state and society as two separate spheres and legitimacy as a necessary condition for the state to control society. Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat argue that the “myth of the state” is absolutely crucial to the organization and the experience of coherence and order of modern societies in most parts of the world (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 15). Indeed, as they continue to argue: “the entire idea of political legitimacy, of the difference between naked power and authority, the idea that ‘the law’ is something that stand above the contingencies of everyday life and incarnates a certain collective justice, the crucial discourse of rights adds something that once defined and authorized become unassailable and inalienable: all hinge on the perpetuated myth of the state’s coherence and ability to stand ‘above society’ as it were” (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 15). Hence, in this approach political legitimacy and the state, understood as the Weberian ideal state, are equated.

⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the “Weberian” model of state-building is often used as a synonym for normative analysis which is the opposite of what Weber advocated, namely empirical analysis (Woodward 2012, 474)

⁴⁶ This is echoed in what Stephen Weatherford refers to as system-level and individual-level perspectives, although Weatherford does not seem to recognize that the system-approach is not just system oriented but focuses on a specific system, which then takes on universal character (Weatherford 1992, 150-151).

Moreover, as legitimacy is never completely absent or completely unchallenged, legitimacy is understood as a continuous rather than as a dichotomous variable (Beetham 2013, 20; Gilley 2009, 10-11). This understanding of legitimacy introduces a level of relativism and normativity into the concept of legitimacy, which complicates quantitative comparisons across time and space. However, the fact that sources of legitimacy are best investigated in the specific context does not mean that legitimacy as *belief* cannot function as a general category across time and space. It does however necessitate a few words on the difficult use of the legitimacy concept.

2.4.2. The difficult use of legitimacy

The debate on legitimacy in international relations has not reached a consensus on the meaning of legitimacy or the best way to study the concept (Bjola 2009, 2; Mulligan 2006).⁴⁷ The ambition here is not to provide a conclusive solution to these debates but to lay out some of the pitfalls related to the use of the legitimacy concept and present how I use the concept. Just as Mark Sedgwick, I believe that “an imperfect examination of legitimacy is certainly preferable to the alternative which is to ignore one of the most important pillars on which any regime stands” (Sedgwick 2010, 252).⁴⁸

Unquestionably, there are many pitfalls related to the analytical use of legitimacy, and the critique of current research on legitimacy is manifold; M. Stephen Weatherford tells us that quantitative research has not developed sufficient links between theory and indicators, instead turning to “measurement driven research” (Weatherford 1991, 252,258). Oliver Schlumberger highlights that large-N studies such as the World Value Survey or the various regional “Barometers” are less than reliable because of framing effects. In fact, according to Schlumberger, it is altogether premature to measure legitimacy through large-N research because: “The range of unresolved theoretical and methodological challenges is too large for quantified measurements of legitimacy to make sense and provide reliable results today” (Schlumberger 2010, 236).

The literature on legitimacy has tried to counter this critique by developing better measures of legitimacy or by tweaking the legitimacy concept to enhance its conceptual clarity (Gilley 2006; Marquez 2015, 5; Weatherford 1992). However, defining legitimacy as relational and a “belief” makes it in-

⁴⁷ Corneliu Bjola argues that the main area of contention is related to three issues; how legitimacy affects the behavior of actors, how actors form their belief in the legitimacy of international norms, and third, whether legitimacy is a normative or a purely descriptive concept (Bjola 2009, 2-3). These are to some degree reflected in this chapter.

⁴⁸ The sentiment is echoed by Schlumberger (2010, 234).

herently difficult to measure and compare across time and space, and this is also not my goal here.⁴⁹ Instead, I will outline a general typology of sources of legitimacy, which can be applied to specific contexts.⁵⁰

A large part of the literature focuses on legitimacy as a way of fostering willing obedience. Legitimacy is seen as a mechanism that allows elites to control and dominate the population more effectively than through pure coercion (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009, 355). Weber argues that justifications are legitimate when internalized by the population as “beliefs” (Marquez 2015, 7). From this perspective, the main criticism has been the difficulty in knowing when this has actually happened as distinct from when obeying happens due to personal considerations, fear or ignorance (Bjola 2009, 2-3; Marquez 2015; Tyler 2006, 378). The easy answer is that: “it’s impossible to enter into an actor’s head and know conclusively its motivations...” (Hurd 1999, 382).⁵¹ This is a general challenge of doing social science, which should serve as a caution against making too firm conclusions.

Another aspect of the focus on the population’s willingness to obey is that its vantage point is a narrow understanding of the “relational” part of legitimacy. The focus is on how political elites use legitimacy to undergird their power by manipulating or using, often only discursively, *beliefs* held by the population. This is the case although some such as David Beetham recognizes that legitimacy also limits the powerful through the rules and the underlying justifications for rules (Beetham 2013, 34). This way the population is reduced to a group that needs to be convinced about the legitimacy of elites, not a co-constitutor of legitimacy. I recognize the elite’s interest in manipulating legitimacy and will therefore assume that relations consist of a combination of factors, including fear, lack of information and legitimacy. However, the starting point here is that legitimacy develops in a relationship between elites and citizens and this is most effectively done if both parties find

⁴⁹ According to Barry Buzan, variables such as socio-political cohesion, and I would add legitimacy, possess a problem when one tries to apply it scientifically because it is not a quantifiable measure. Ideally one would have precise and objective measures, but the lack thereof does not prevent them from being useful for analysis (Buzan 1991, 100).

⁵⁰ This discussion of legitimacy operates with legitimacy on a group level. This assumes that there is an agreed on common good that transcends an aggregation of individual interests (Gilley 2009, 4).

⁵¹ David Beetham has attempted to improve Weber’s understanding by instead focusing on congruence between shared beliefs and public justifications. In this sense, legitimacy has three dimensions; conformity to rule, justifiability of rules in terms of shared beliefs and legitimation through expressed consent (Beetham 2013, 15-20). However, expressed consent – or the absence of overt resistance – might likewise be explained by other elements than legitimacy, such as lack of acceptable alternatives, coordination dilemmas or a strong coercive apparatus (Marquez 2015).

the source of legitimacy relevant. But again, I cannot prove that actors *really* believe something is legitimate as opposed to being manipulated into thinking something is legitimate.

These general characteristics should be kept in mind as I move on to a discussion of *sources* of legitimacy. The aim is limited to investigating potential sources of legitimacy without attempting to argue that a specific type of legitimacy is the only possible foundation for political order or to provide a full overview of all actors' specific combination of sources of legitimacy.

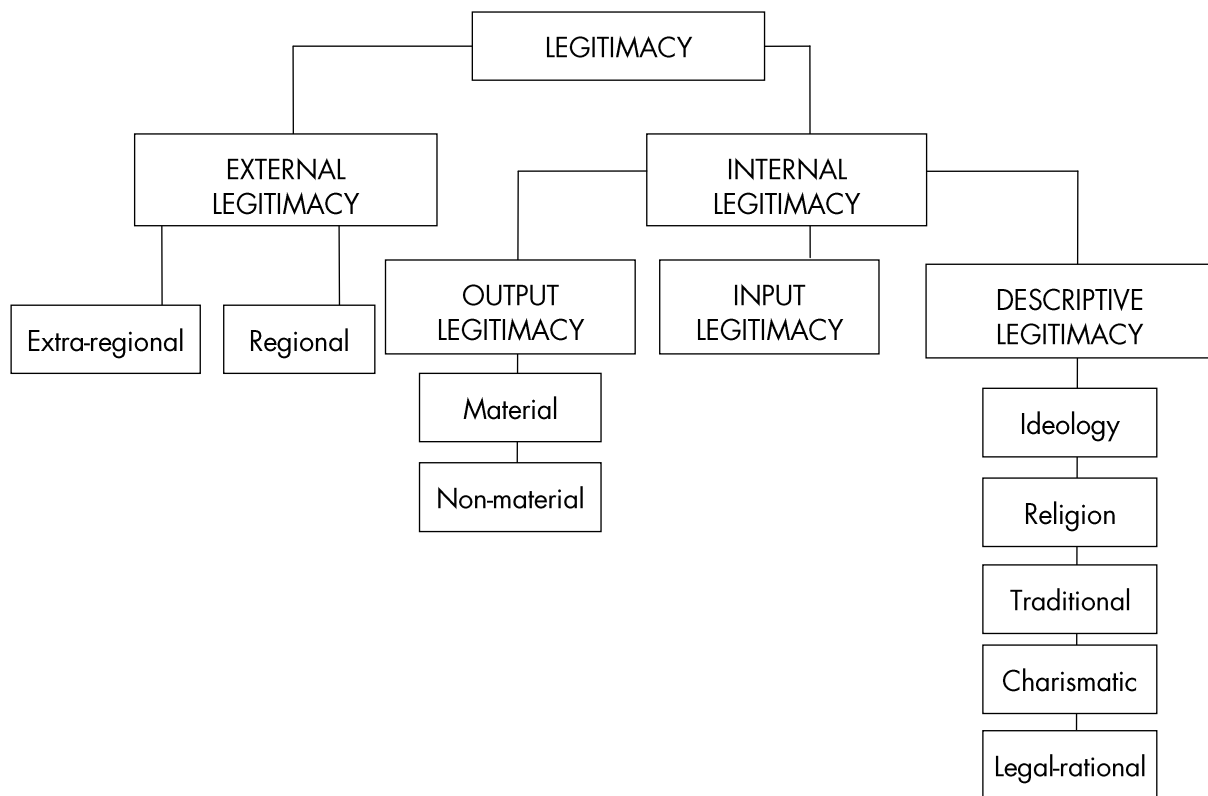
2.5. Different sources of legitimacy: the typology

The typology over sources of legitimacy as presented in figure 2.1 makes an overall distinction between internal and external legitimacy that is inspired by Mark Sedgwick's (2010) model. The separation highlights that states can have external legitimacy while lacking internal legitimacy or *vice versa*.⁵² However, the model has been modified in a number of ways. This includes adding input legitimacy and replacing a focus on economic and non-economic elements with the more comprehensive categories of "material" and "non-material" sources of legitimacy.⁵³ Typically, the regime will be the key internal actor, but there might be alternative internal actors which seek to challenge the regime. In these cases it might be relevant to compare the internal and external levels of legitimacy. Finally, although the overall idea of the separation between external and internal legitimacy is retained I suggest a modified definition of external legitimacy as explicated in section 2.5.3. These elements are discussed further below and related to state-building interventions.

⁵² This point is also made by Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 7

⁵³ Mark Sedgwick has an "international policy" category which is left out as an independent element.

Figure 2.1. Sources of legitimacy



Modified from Sedgewick 2010.

2.5.1. Internal sources of legitimacy: input and output legitimacy

Internal legitimacy refers to different mechanisms, which both people and elites view as relevant in structuring their relationship. Fritz W. Scharpf has suggested distinguishing between input-oriented and output-oriented sources of internal legitimacy (Scharpf 1997, 153). Input-oriented arguments derive from the agreement of those who are asked to comply with the rules, and output-oriented arguments focus on the ability to produce desired services.

The pre-eminent mechanism to secure input-legitimacy is elections. Indeed, democracy is by many considered a necessary criterion for legitimate political order (Habermas 1975; Hudson 1977, 4). In this view, fair elections automatically provide legitimacy to political leaders as people accept political authority in return for the right to participate in regular elections. However, majority decisions are not always the straight way to legitimate rule (Barakat, Evans, and Zyck 2012, 444; Rothstein 2009).⁵⁴ Specifically, in state-

⁵⁴ Diana Cammack describes how external actors can complain that elections lack contestation around issues, ideologies or opposing party platforms and instead are centered on personalities (Cammack 2007, 602). This obviously changes the purpose of elections as they

building interventions where elections have often been demanded and supported by external actors it is questionable if elections alone are an effective mechanism for creating legitimacy (Call 2011, 309; Marquez 2015, 12; Rothstein 2009). The belief in elections can be especially problematic if elections are presented as not just a way of selecting leaders but as a way of selecting leaders that will automatically facilitate improved livelihoods and public services. Then, if this does not happen, people are disappointed and can become disillusioned with democracy itself and not just the specific elites (Cammack 2007, 605). In some cases, elections might undermine other mechanisms that allowed citizens to communicate their acceptance of the political order (Call 2011, 314). Input legitimacy should not be equaled to elections as the central element is the ability of those who are asked to comply to voice their acceptance, not the specific way this is done (Scharpf 1997, 154).

Output legitimacy is connected to effectiveness understood as the actual performance of a political system (Lipset 1959). David Easton has introduced the distinction between diffuse and specific support to argue that some types of support are more important to the stability of political order. Evaluations of political order can be related to specific actors and their actions, but the more fundamental evaluations are related to the basic aspects of the system. As Easton argues, the latter “represent more enduring bonds and thereby make it possible for members to oppose the incumbents of offices and yet retain respect for the offices themselves, for the way in which they are ordered, and for the community of which they are a part” (Easton 1975, 437).⁵⁵ I separate between material and non-material output legitimacy.

Material output legitimacy focuses on the fulfilment of popular demands for socio-economic development and physical security, and can be referred to as a form of “quid pro quo” relationship, or what David Easton named “specific support” (Easton 1965; Gerschewski 2013, 20). It is positively affected by improvements in levels of services, especially in core areas such as education, security and health (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009; Schlumberger 2010, 238). Material output legitimacy is not dependent on where the funds for the services comes from. Thus, states with rent-based economies that are able to pursue distributional policies can have high levels of material output legitimacy (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004, 377; Beblawi and Luciani 1987; Schlumberger 2010, 245). In relation to state-building interventions, external actors frequently aim to strengthen the capacity of the state to im-

are better understood through a patrimonial type of output legitimacy than as input legitimacy.

⁵⁵ Some distinguish between vertical legitimacy (authority, consent, and loyalty to the idea(s) of the state and its institutions) and horizontal legitimacy (the definition and political role of community) (Holsti 1996, 84).

prove service provision and outcompete non-state actors (Walle and Scott 2011). However, the involvement of external actors can inadvertently undermine the internal actors legitimacy as services become dependent on the support of external actors (Bliesemann de Guevara 2012, 8).

The non-material element of output legitimacy refers to the ability to solve problems more generally. It is aligned with what David Easton referred to as “diffuse support,” defined as “evaluations of what an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not of what it does” (Easton 1975, 444). Thus, non-material output legitimacy refers to a more general attachment to the political actor that is not (as) dependent on short-term changes in service level. Non-material output legitimacy is related to the norms (for example described as the political culture of a country) and the degree to which the political actor is seen to represent and adhere to these norms.

Neither type of output legitimacy is linked to specific actors (the state). Hence, what is called patronage, neo-patrimonialism, corruption or craft are for example also potential sources of material output legitimacy (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2004). This contradicts the standard description of these practices as universally illegitimate (Van de Walle 2001).⁵⁶ This assumes that only the Weberian state and the legal source of legitimacy can provide legitimacy to political order. Patronage is thus dismissed as primarily a source of personal enrichment for elites (Lister 2007). This, however, overlooks how patronage is not uncommonly a more efficient structure for distributing services than the state structures (Cammack 2007, 601). In some cases, practices that are perceived as corrupt in a Weberian understanding might correspond to cultural perceptions of how to behave. This underlines the need to investigate sources of internal legitimacy instead of *a priori* assuming that the most legitimate approach is to strengthen the Weberian state structures vis-à-vis non-state structures.

2.5.2. Internal sources of legitimacy: descriptive legitimacy

The final type of internal legitimacy is descriptive legitimacy, which is inspired by Weber’s famous typology of sources of legitimacy. Descriptive legitimacy is important as input- and output-oriented legitimacy only gain their full legitimizing potential if supported by descriptive criteria. If citizens for example believe in elections as bestowing institutional legitimacy, i.e. as a reasonable and effective way of delegating or giving consent to political rul-

⁵⁶ There are some variations; the Africa Power and Politics Programme (APPP) has worked to show that under certain circumstances neo-patrimonial regimes could bring about poverty-reducing economic transformation in Africa (Kelsall 2011; Kelsall 2012).

ers, then elections are a central mechanism in input-oriented legitimacy. But it all depends on how elections are perceived. This is why there can be no “proper” origins of legitimacy and no *a priori* judgement can be made regarding the legitimacy of any particular authority or action. This is also why institutional legitimacy (or Weber’s legal-rational legitimacy) is understood as a sub-category within the descriptive sources of legitimacy.

Descriptive legitimacy consists of the three well-known elements from Weber; charisma, legal and traditional sources of legitimacy supplemented by ideology and religious legitimacy. According to the Weberian ideal the most important source of legitimacy is the legal source, which is considered the most effective way of coordinating and controlling activities in modern complex organizations (Bliesemann de Guevara 2012; Weber 1964). Weber associates organizational effectiveness with impersonal hierarchical structures, which define each individual’s place and role in a consistent system of abstract rules. The rules are rational and obeyed because they represent the law. The purest exercise of legal authority is the bureaucracy in which candidates are selected based on qualifications and carry out their functions in a defined hierarchy as representatives of the bureaucratic order (Rudolph and Rudolph 1979, 197; Weber 1968, 217-223). This argument is built on the assumption that organizations function according to regulative structures and that these therefore can be attributed with the success of the Weberian state (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 342).⁵⁷ This argument, underpinned by empirical examples of the effectiveness of the OECD states, forms the backdrop to state-building interventions. Consequently, there has been a proliferation of state and non-state institutions and organizations molded in the European form (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004, 380). These organizations and institutions are, however, not necessarily where real power is located. This can create a situation where the population becomes increasingly disenchanted with the non-responsive state structures and the external actors who insist on their utility. Simultaneously, other organizations such as the office of the tribal sheikh can be considered legitimate to the degree that they set rules to which both elite and non-elite actors adhere (Hudson 1977, 23).

In states targeted for state-building interventions primary sources of legitimacy are often found outside the legal sphere. Religion plays and has played a large role throughout history with plenty of examples of political

⁵⁷ It might seem contradictory that the inability of structures associated with the Weberian state is blamed on “society” whereas it is assumed that when the structures work, in the OECD countries, this happens independently of “society”. It is argued that in the OECD countries the state is strong enough to control society but what if it is not a matter of the state controlling society, but of the state actually being considered legitimate by citizens – or society – in the European context thus diminishing the need for control (or coercion)?

elites that have “sought to present themselves as God’s own representatives on earth, as rulers ‘by the grace of God’ i.e., possessing divine approval, as patrilineal successors of saints or prophets, or at least as upholders of a pious political order” (Schlumberger 2010, 238). Ideology can likewise be a potent source of support as for example in the Middle East where ideas of Pan-Arabism especially in the 1950s and 1960s were influential (Barnett 1998; Schlumberger 2010, 243). In general, ideology can, somewhat like religion, bestow a sense of reaching for goals beyond the mundane to the degree of becoming political religion (Hudson 1977, 20-21). However, ideology is somewhat dependent on the political actors performance and challenges from alternative influences (Gerschewski 2013, 19). Tradition is a third factor that can play a major role and often has in many Middle Eastern regimes, especially the Arab Gulf monarchies (Hudson 1977, 19; Schlumberger 2010, 242). Rulers can tap into tradition as a source of legitimacy if they can successfully present themselves as the current representatives of a long line of ancestors who are particularly qualified to rule because wisdom has been passed from generation to generation. Tradition is however dynamic and often manipulated (Ibid, 242). Finally, what Weber called charismatic grounds for legitimacy and described as “the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person” can play a vital role, especially in systems where the behavior and personalities of the occupants of authority roles are of dominant importance (Easton 1965, 302-303; Hudson 1977, 18; Weber 1968, 215). Middle Eastern states are characterized by assigning a strong role to personal leadership. Some leaders such as Gamal ‘Abdel Nasser from Egypt have not only been charismatic but have also been able to link their rule with other sources of legitimacy such as the ideology of Arab nationalism in Nasser’s case. This has been facilitated by the lack of strong organizations and institutions that tend to make leadership more personalized (Hudson 1977, 20).

2.5.3. External legitimacy: regional and extra-regional

External legitimacy signifies the extent to which internal actors are considered legitimate by relevant external powers. I define external legitimacy as *the extent to which internal elite actors are considered legitimate by key external powers*.⁵⁸ External legitimacy is especially important to actors that depend on aid as it is key to extracting revenues from external actors (Girod

⁵⁸ This is a modification of the definition by Albrecht and Schlumberger which reads: “the extent to which political regimes are considered legitimate by the leading external powers, that is, Western governments and international organizations” (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004, 376).

2014; Sedgwick 2010, 255). Moreover, external legitimacy can, under the right circumstances, be used by the regime to bolster its internal legitimacy or vice versa (Barnett 1998, 3). Yet, external legitimacy can also undermine internal legitimacy, especially if external actors become able to push their external perception of what are relevant sources of legitimacy onto the local context. As noted in a recent edited volume on the relation between state-building and state formation: “One of the most notable effects of international statebuilding has proven to be the corrosive effect on legitimacy of a state under international statebuilding...” (Heathershaw 2012, 249). I introduce the separation between regional and extra-regional external legitimacy, as regional actors can have as much influence on individual states as extra-regional actors but regional and extra-regional actors does not necessarily view the same actors as legitimate (Hudson 1977, 5). For example in the Middle East, it can be key to the fate of an internal actor whether it is considered legitimate by regional great powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran (regional actors) but for example the US will also play in important role (extra-regional actor).⁵⁹

It is not incomprehensible that regional and extra-regional actors will have varying perceptions of which internal actors are legitimate (or why). Typically, the literature focuses on whether the regime, frequently meant as the state’s government, is considered legitimate by external actors but often there will be other internal actors that may or may not benefit from external legitimacy. The evaluation of the incumbent government’s legitimacy, as well as the external legitimacy of potential alternative internal elites can influence the likelihood of intervention. Consequently, governments in developing states need to have both external and internal legitimacy (Barakat, Evans, and Zyck 2012, 446).

2.5.4. Summing up: different sources of legitimacy

In this section a typology over sources of legitimacy has been developed. The most important distinction, which is of central importance to understanding state-building interventions, is that between external and internal legitimacy. Indeed, this distinction affects legitimacy in state-building interventions both directly and indirectly. Directly, the distinction illuminates how external legitimacy can potentially conflict with internal sources of legitimacy. In-

⁵⁹ Mark Sedgwick introduces a differentiation between international actors and “out-of-region” actors, which are states such as Japan and China that may have different agendas than Western states and international organizations. I have chosen to treat all non-regional actors as one category as the independent political importance of these states is still fairly limited and not the focus of this study (Sedgwick 2010).

directly, the presentation of the three overall types of internal legitimacy illustrates that there is a tendency to assume that internal legitimacy can only be associated with specific structures; public services and elections, which are typically associated with the Weberian state. However, internal legitimacy, including input and output legitimacy is not analytically bound to the Weberian state. Input legitimacy derives from the agreement of those who are asked to comply with the rules whereas output legitimacy focuses on the availability of desired services. In reality there might be differing conceptions of what is legitimate within the categories as well as overlap, yet the typology points to an important pitfall in the state-building literature; assuming that what is externally legitimate is also internally legitimate or vice versa.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter began by establishing what Klaus Schlichte refers to as “statization”, that is, the state has been so successful that it has become hard to imagine political order without the state (Schlichte 2005, 17). The result has been a lack of analytical frameworks and tools to understand and explain political order detached from the European experience (Kurz 2010, 206). It is considered near impossible to rule without some level of legitimacy, or as formulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau: “The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master unless he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty” (Rousseau cited in Huntington 1991, 46; Scharpf 1997, 154).⁶⁰ Yet, this is not the same as to say that only the Weberian state can be legitimate.

This chapter has shown that the European state formation process was a highly idiosyncratic process that cannot be replicated. Yet, still the Weberian ideal state has become the universal ideal, leading to an equation between the Weberian state and legitimate political order in the state-building literature. This, in part, can be traced back to Max Weber, who, although he refers to different sources of legitimacy, he takes legal authority as the point of departure as it is associated with the “modern type of administration”. It thus sets the standard against which other sources of legitimacy are measured (Weber 1968, 217). The preferential treatment of legal authority in Weber’s work can be retrieved in the state-building literature, where it has been transformed into a tendency to view the Weberian state as the primary legitimate political order.⁶¹ This can, in effect, exclude a number of internally le-

⁶⁰ See also (Marquez 2015; Sedgwick 2010; Tyler 2005; Tyler 2006).

⁶¹ The preferential treatment of the Weberian state can also be retrieved in the institutions literature. For example David Deephouse and Mark Suchman writes that “Indeed, state certification is arguably the core archetype of legitimation, to which most other legitima-

gitimate actors and motivate other internal actors to adjust their behavior to increase external legitimacy, potentially at the expense of internal legitimacy. The typology over sources of legitimacy shows how legitimacy can come from different sources. In the context of state-building interventions, usually taking place in states where the state does not hold any kind of monopoly, I expect that other sources than the legal-rational are important. The next chapter develops a theoretical framework for this study that builds on this more nuanced understanding of legitimacy.

tion mechanisms are linked by either implication or analogy” (Deephouse and Suchman 2008, 61).

Chapter 3.

State-building: the model

The idea of state-building is anchored in a belief in the Weberian state as a universal goal for all states that simultaneously elevate the state and tend to de-legitimize alternative forms of statehood. This Western worldview undergirds the belief that intervention is legitimate (Mac Ginty and Firchow 2016, 4). However, the state-building agenda is ambiguous and is used to legitimate a wide variety of interventions, which makes it difficult to delineate when something is a state-building intervention and when it is not. Importantly, however, as Berit Bliesemann de Guevara argues in the introduction to a recent edited volume on state-building: “Any purposeful attempt at statebuilding influences power constellations by consciously or unconsciously providing power resources to certain groups in society, while closing social and political opportunities for others” (Bliesemann de Guevara 2012, 5).

This study raises the overall question: *What shapes processes of state-building?* The first step is to outline how state-building interventions are understood in this study. This builds on the discussion in chapter 2 of state-building as a deliberate process with external involvement contrary to the European state formation process. The subsequent model of how state-building processes are shaped combines the fact that internal actors are key to state-building with an appreciation of external actors’ influence on internal actors’ strategies in the context of state-building. Internal actors are seen as key arbitrators that employ different strategies depending on their position and resources to maximize gains and minimize costs related to external intervention. The goal of internal actors is to increase their relative position vis-à-vis other internal actors. The state institutions that emerge, from the constitution to the structure of public services, reflect these interactions between internal actors and between internal and external actors. These interactions cannot be understood separately from historical legacies and as such actors and structures come to co-constitute the end-result (Ahmed and Capoccia 2014, 9). This type of actor centered approach requires identifying key actors and the resources that they draw on (Asseburg and Wimmen 2016, 5). This chapter is dedicated to the main actors in state-building interventions; internal and external actors. The aim is to build a theoretical framework that can be used to understand how external interventions are shaped by the strategies that internal apply to embed the intervention in the local context.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part of the chapter, I propose a conceptualization of internal actors that distinguishes between organizations and institutions. This distinction is important to be able to identify key actors, their resources and interests as organizations are actors while institutions are not. I argue that the binary between formal and informal institutions as a way of understanding domestic politics in so-called fragile states, is bound to a Weberian ideal type understanding of the state. Finally, I lay out my understanding of internal elite actors and propose that internal actors are mainly motivated by their desire to stay or power.

In the second part of the chapter I focus on external actors. I argue that the state-building literature's focus on UN-led large-scale missions obscures that different external actors will often have different incentives to intervene. Specifically I show that regional actors have more imminent incentives to intervene. I argue that external actors' main interest is stability, which defines which strategy they apply towards the internal actor.

Part three of the chapter connects the two previous parts into a combined model over factors that shape state-building interventions. I argue that the way the internal actor responds to external intervention should be seen as a continuum from absolute shared agendas and full cooperation (cooperative relationship) to absolute undermining of each other's agendas and capacities (degenerative relationship). Internal actors seek to maximize benefits from the external actor and minimize costs related to the intervention, which leads to different forms of what I call an "integrated relationship". Typically the internal regime (or government) is involved in a two-level game, having to negotiate with external and internal elite actors at the same time (Putnam 1988). The main concern of internal actors is their position vis-à-vis alternative internal elite actors. This means that the main focus of the internal actor is to embed the external intervention in the local context in a way that maximizes its relative power vis-à-vis alternative elite actors.

3.1. State-building interventions as an ambiguous endeavor

Before I move on to the discussion of the model of state-building interventions, a few words on the state-building intervention concept. Most definitions of state-building in some way refer to "actions that strengthen state institutions" (Bliesemann de Guevara 2008, 348; Call and Cousens 2008, 4; Chesterman 2004, 5; Fukuyama 2004a, 17; Zaum 2007, 1), and so does the definition used here: "the process of external involvement in the strengthening or (re)creation of governance structures". The definition was presented in the introductory chapter and functions as a starting point for the subse-

quent discussions on what shapes state-building. However, in this section, I point to the inherent difficulty in providing an empirically clear definition of something that can involve a variety of actors, tools and motivations. This is done to underline that whether or not an intervention is defined as “state-building” is in itself a political act, which has implications for both internal and external actors. This is a brief discussion on the state-building concept but a similar point is made in detail for the fragile state concept in chapter 5.

States are usually described as independent and equal entities in the international system (Bickerton 2007, 5).⁶² Accordingly, state sovereignty is positioned in the realm of good whereas the act of intervention is *a priori* considered deviant (Malmvig 2002, 3).⁶³ However, this seemingly does not apply to state-building interventions, which are presented as a *special* kind of intervention in the state-building literature. At the same time, the ambiguity of the fragile state concept, as I will show in chapter 5, has led to a situation where all kinds of problems under the overall headlines of being security and/or humanitarian concerns are framed as solvable through state-building interventions. Thus, state-building has become a response to terrorism, international crime, and refugees, as well as environmental degradation, human rights transgressions and lack of good governance (Fukuyama 2004b, xvii; Ghani and Lockhart 2008, 23).

The result has been a sort of contingent sovereignty where state-building is presented as *supporting* sovereignty through intervention, as sovereignty is perceived “not as a ban on intervention but rather as necessitating intervention” (Chandler 2010, 3; Elden 2006, 14).⁶⁴ An example is the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, which states that the R2P aim to help states to meet their core protection responsibilities, seeking “to strengthen sovereignty, not weaken it” (United Nations 2009, §10a). The focus is on the protection of individuals, which is the responsibility of the state, but if the state does not live up to its responsibility, it becomes the responsibility of the in-

⁶² In this sense, Kenneth N. Waltz’s and the (neo)-realists’ belief in states as “like units” has been influential. Importantly, Kenneth N. Waltz argues that states are alike; not in the sense that all state are identical but in the sense that all states face the same tasks. Variation arises through the state’s ability to perform these tasks, that is in the state’s capability (Waltz 1979, 96). See also Hurd (1999), who discusses this point.

⁶³ Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations states that: “The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members” (United Nations 26 June 1945). There are conditional terms of sovereignty, such as deferred sovereignty, conditional sovereignty and earned sovereignty, but these are not of the same importance as the unqualified notion of sovereignty (Scharf 2002-2003).

⁶⁴ It is up to the state intervened in to demonstrate that it is capable of protecting its citizens, which is different than putting the burden of evidence on the actors intervening (Chandler 2004, 65).

ternational community (Arbour 2008, 448; Hurrell 1995, 62-63; Janzekovic 2013; United Nations 2005, 35).⁶⁵ Following this logic, an intervention is a state-building intervention if the external intervening actors say they are intervening to protect the internal population.

This is problematic as there can be substantial disagreement about whether references to for example the R2P are true or just a veil for more sinister interests. Putin, for example, used the R2P doctrine to legitimate recent interventions in Ukraine and Georgia. This claim has been dismissed by critics who argue that the real aim of these interventions was destabilization.⁶⁶ It is the rule rather than the exception that interventions are framed as being in the interest of at least a part of the people living in the targeted state.⁶⁷ It is recognized that external actors can intervene for multiple reasons including to protect trade interests or to secure a reliable and cheap oil supply (Choi 2013, 126; Hettne 2005, 550-551; John 2010, 11; Lambach 2007, 42).⁶⁸ Currently, the conflict in Syria has underlined the strain that large amounts of refugees put on especially neighboring states but over time the entire system of states, potentially increasing the likelihood that external actors will intervene (Levy 2001, 17). A more realist understanding of the world would see interventions as actions by great powers meant to create or maintain political and economic structures and norms of behavior that increase the stability of the system and advance their own security (Bellamy 2010, 44; Levy 2001, 8; Mearsheimer 2002; Nolte 2010). There is for example no doubt that the threat of terrorism has increased states' willingness to engage in state-building interventions. The difficulty in distinguishing be-

⁶⁵ See *In Larger Freedom: Towards development, security and human rights for all*, United Nations. Available here: <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Inlargerfreedom.pdf> (Last accessed 23 April 2016).

⁶⁶ See <http://www.hscentre.org/russia-and-eurasia/russian-intervention-ukraine-r2p-limits-reclaiming-concept-narrative/> for Ukraine and <http://amsterdamlawforum.org/article/view/58/115> for Georgia (Last accessed 20 April 2016).

⁶⁷ Another example is economic sanctions that can be legitimated by reference to human rights violations, but then lead to increased suffering of domestic populations. A case in point is the sanctions imposed on Iraq following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Although clearly linked to the military agenda of Saddam Hussein, these sanctions were tightened through references to humanitarian concerns. See http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=lps_clacp (Last accessed 20 April 2016).

⁶⁸ Within the liberal strand of thought Benjamin Fordham argues that economic interests might not be equally important to alliance commitments and rival behavior in the short run, but exports are central in shaping alliance commitments in the long run (Fordham 2008).

tween different types of interventions is expounded by the fact that all interventions basically use the same types of tools; military and economic. In some cases, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, military intervention has been followed by subsequent state-building, but it is unclear if the initial military intervention to “prepare” states for state-building would in itself be a state-building intervention in these cases.

More pragmatically, the state-building literature suggests that state-building can only take place in states that are stable. Stabilization is often described as a two-step process; first large scale violence must be stopped (or prevented) and second, and much more complicated, the state must be stabilized (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23). In the words of Barnett and Zürcher, stability is the primary goal because: “Stability, or the absence of war and a stable partner in the capital, is an important precondition for the security of the peacebuilders and their ability to implement the liberalizing reforms” (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 31). Only when the state has been stabilized, and in this sense stabilized implies that *one* actor gains full control over the state’s territory, can the state-building intervention really commence (Sisk 2013, 6). The link between peacebuilding and state-building shines through, but whereas the stabilization agenda does not necessarily exclude for example regional actors, it does exclude third party interventions into civil wars as state-building interventions (Regan 2002). On the surface that might seem an obvious point, but in reality the dividing line between war and peace is often fluffy as most state-building interventions will take place in environments characterized by sustained levels of violence.⁶⁹ There are different ways of conceptualizing war, usually focusing on battle deaths per year, but in complex environments that lack battlefields and clear boundaries between civilians and soldiers, these qualitative measures should be used with caution.⁷⁰ Here, the complete absence of violence is not seen as a precondition for state-building interventions. Indeed, violence can be a deliberate strategy during negotiations with the external actor and not necessarily meant to derail the process (Asseburg and Wimmen 2016, 13). The internal context

⁶⁹ There are different definitions of peace as the absence of war, for example operationalized through an agreed on number of battle deaths per year such as 1000 (Correlates of war project at the University of Michigan) or the introduction of the category of minor armed conflicts by the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme. However, in situations of state-building these definitions say very little. I do assume that in state-building following conflict there must be enough “stability” for external actors to have a presence in the targeted state.

⁷⁰ See for example Mac Ginty and Firchow for an interesting discussion of how locals in different settings use alternative factors to define peace, i.e. absence of barking dogs or the ability to go outside and pee in the night (Mac Ginty and Firchow 2016).

must, however, be stable enough to allow external actors to meaningfully work with internal actors.

Disregarding whether or not external actors have altruistic motives for intervening, this discussion and the more thorough discussion in chapter 5 suggest that the concept of state-building is so ambiguous that the most powerful external actors are able to define interventions as state-building interventions, in a process where specific internal actors can be named as “rebels”, “terrorists”, “legitimate rulers” and so on. This can be done through the language of liberalism that is used to “deploy a series of incentivizing and coercive strategies to produce stable outcomes” (Mac Ginty and Firchow 2016, 3). The intention is not to argue that all external actors intervene out of purely selfish interests, but to suggest that it cannot be assumed that individual internal actors will see the state-building intervention as being inherently more legitimate than other types of intervention. An intervention is an act of power; not just in the direct sense where external actors get internal actors to do something they would not otherwise do, the first “face” of power, but also through the “second face of power”.⁷¹ This has been defined as “‘nondecision-making’, i.e. the practice of limiting the scope of actual decision-making to ‘safe’ issues by manipulating the dominant community values, myths, and political institutions and procedures” (Bachrach and Baratz 1963, 632). In relation to state-building interventions, this plays out for example when external actors define the available space for action for internal actors (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 948). Finally, interventions display the “third face of power” where the external actor shapes the perceptions of internal actors to a degree where they accept their role in the existing order of things (Lukes 2006). I analyze the fragile state concept in detail in chapter 5 to make this point. Hence, power not only constrains but also constitutes actors (Abrahamsen 2004, 1459).

This discussion aimed to illustrate that state-building interventions are presented as something special in the literature, but that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is that makes them special. An emerging literature recognizes that state-building interventions can have unforeseen consequences, but the argument presented here is slightly different as it aims to point to the inherent unequal power relation that plays out in state-building interventions and that forms the background of the subsequent discussions of internal and external actors’ strategies in relation to state-building interventions.

⁷¹ This draws on Dahl’s classic formulation of power as: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl 1957, 202-203).

Part 1: Internal actors in state-building

Thus the state's "outposts" are mediated by "informal" indigenous societal institutions which follow their own logic and rules within the (incomplete) state structures. This leads to the deviation of state institutions from the ideal type of "proper" state institutions.
(Boege et al. 2008, 7).

The state holds a dual position in much state-building literature; it is simultaneously held out as an ideal and as the key actor. Hence, the starting point for analysis is the state's inability to live up to the Weberian ideal. Yet, the state is still treated as the key internal actor in a way that tends to overestimate the autonomy and cohesiveness of the state (Migdal 1994, 14). The government is elevated as the representative of the people's will, and the state is treated as if it for all people represents the most proper authority or arena for settling conflicts. Yet, in many states outside the Western world the state itself is an object of struggle (Migdal 1994, 10).⁷² We are thus left in a position where we easily come to speak of actual states as deviations from an ideal (Hill 2005, 139; Jones 2013; Morton 2005, 371).

The state-building literature tends to focus on how to most efficiently (re)create central state structures. The European state is held out as the model, and the task of the state-building literature is therefore to identify the factors necessary for states to move towards the model. However, at the same time, it is increasingly recognized that the outcomes of state-building interventions ultimately depend on internal actors (Englebert and Tull 2008, 138). Following Joel S. Migdal, I argue that the assumption that only the state can hold legitimate authority trivializes the rich negotiations and interactions that take place among multiple systems of rules (Migdal 2001, 14-15).⁷³ Indeed, taking the full consequence of this, I aim to show that institutional structures, the state that emerges from state-building interventions, is largely the outcome of internal power politics rather than formative of these outcomes (Asseburg and Wimmen 2016, 13).

⁷² Here arena is not necessarily spatially limited but, following Migdal, it is understood as conceptual locus where significant struggles occur among social forces (Migdal 1994, 33).

⁷³ This is, in part, explained by the difference between the state as "image"; what we mean when we, especially in international relations, refer to the state as a single entity and the actual practices of the state's multiple parts (Migdal 2001, 16-18). This is akin to the distinction between juridical and empirical statehood suggested by Jackson and Rosberg, where juridical statehood refers to being recognized as a state in the international system of states, whereas empirical statehood refers to the internal dimension of statehood where states are much varied (Jackson and Rosberg 1982).

This part of the chapter zooms in on internal actors. The first step is to argue that the distinction between formal and informal institutions is problematic as it reiterates an implicit understanding of the state as superior and alternatives to the state as illegitimate more than it reflects descriptive characteristics of two distinct types of institutions. The use of the formal/informal distinction has implications as it orders states into two spheres; the orderly, formalized state and the unruly, informal “other”. However, the state itself is better understood as an arena for negotiations between internal actors than as a unitary actor struggling to control informal institutions. This is not to say that the state cannot empirically be distinguished; the European state is a uniquely successful political organization.⁷⁴ It does, however, explain why state-builders so frequently encounter states that do not live up to Western state-builders’ perception of what a state is or how it should act. I then move on to discuss the most important sources of power for internal actors. The state is seen as an important source of resources; hence the internal actor that controls the state has an advantage over internal competitors. Control with the state, particularly being internationally recognized as the legitimate representative of the state, provides access to external resources. This way, being able to speak on behalf of the state externally provides access to resources that can be used to against internal competitors.

3.2. Institutions and organizations in state-building

The literature on institutions is, in the words of W. Richard Scott, “a jungle of conflicting conceptions, divergent underlying assumptions, and discordant voices” (Scott 2008, vii). Institutions have been dealt with from many different research traditions, making it a truly interdisciplinary field, but also one of considerable conceptual ambiguity (Meagher 2007, 408). The conceptual ambiguity has led to a host of different definitions including “umbrella” definitions, such as Anthony Giddens’ influential definition of institutions as “the more enduring features of social life” (Giddens 1984, 24). In this view, institutions are norms or social rules with some tenability that constrain human behavior.⁷⁵ Others include organizational entities; collective actors that act purposefully. Jack Knight writes that social theory offers definitions

⁷⁴ Weber’s definition of the state as holding the legitimate monopoly of violence illustrates the point; in a European context where the state is the dominant political organization and citizens recognize the state as the legitimate authority, the state can more meaningfully be described as “an actor”, an organization with a hierarchy that makes it reasonable to see the state leader as representing the people. But most frequently this is not the case.

⁷⁵ Scott illustrates the normative pillar through a question, arguing that the central imperative confronting actors is: “Given this situation, and my role within it, what is the appropriate behavior for me to carry out?” (Scott 2008, 65).

of social institutions “ranging from that of formal organizations, which have explicit rules and forms of administration and enforcement, to that of any stabilized pattern of human relationships and actions” (Knight 1994, 2).⁷⁶ Others, such as Helmke and Levitsky, specifically include both formal and informal institutions in their definition of institutions as “rules and procedures (both formal and informal) that structure social interaction by constraining and enabling actor’s behavior” (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 727). Hence, calling something an institution tells us little about the actual properties of the structures we are trying to explain. In fact, it does not even reveal whether the focus is on agents or structures.

I start by distinguishing between institutions and organizations. Organizations are collective actors (Knight 1994, 3), or to use Douglas North’s analogy, institutions are the rules of the game, whereas organizations are the players (North 1999, 3-5). Institutions, in this view, exist within organizations, for example in the form of ceremonies, symbols and rituals as norms or rules that provide interpretative coherence to organizations (March and Olsen 1984, 744). Political organizations are political actors with a membership core that can be delimited (March and Olsen 1984, 738). Organizations can reach and formulate decisions, which they can then act on as collective actors (Long 2001, 16). This entails some degree of an accepted chain of command (hierarchy) or process of reaching decisions within the organization (Hodgson 2006, 8). There will be a system of predictable and enforceable rewards and sanctions, which are known by participating individuals. Political organizations define the specific format of political institutions such as the constitution or the electoral system. These institutions then work back on political actors but the starting point is actor centered as I seek to answer how internal elite actors shape state-building interventions.

The state-building literature frequently differentiates between formal and informal institutions. In this literature, formal institutions are associated with the state whereas informal institutions are treated as a residual category that can encompass everything from tribes to norms and values.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁶ One definition argues that formal institutions have rules that are written down, whereas informal institutions are considered more organically developed and orally transmitted (Hodgson 2006, 11). This sees institutions as actors, and complicates the picture as for example tribes, which are typically considered an informal institution, can very well have rules that are written down.

⁷⁷ Bratton (2007) describes informal institutions as “...the patterns of patron-client relations by which power is also exercised” (Bratton 2007: 97). Williamson (2009) defines informal institutions as “...private constraints stemming from norms, culture, and customs that emerge spontaneously” (Williamson 2009:372). Volker Boege et al. refer to informal institutions as “‘informal’ indigenous societal institutions which follow their own logic and rules within the (incomplete) state structures” (Boege et al. 2008, 7). It is not uncommon

“informal” is linked to society and ineffective forms of organization and contrasted to the “formal”, understood as the Weberian modern state. The state seeks “national betterment” whereas the informal follows a logic of personal enrichment (Cammack 2007, 600). The goal of state-building interventions is to strengthen (capacity build) “formal” Weberian state institutions to make them strong enough to be able to control or penetrate societal “informal”, traditional institutions (Bratton 2007, 97; Collins 2006, 13; Grissom 2010, 494; Hippler 2005, 4; Migdal 1988, 4-5).⁷⁸ This way, informal institutions can refer to what can be called “environmental forces” or norms *and* actors such as warlords or tribes that function in parallel to state structures. This differentiation is important as it matters whether the state-building intervention is attempting to change an organizational set-up or if it is trying to change norms that will most likely cut across individual organizations. Weakening or strengthening an organization is a more straightforward process where resources, capacity building and access to decision makers can make a substantial difference. Norm change is somewhat more complicated (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Here I point to two ways in which the differentiation is relevant for state-building interventions. First, when informal institutions are understood as norms, and these are assumed to be weakened through the capacity building of the state, it is assumed that strengthening state structures (capacity building) will make unwanted norms disappear. This builds on the assumption that state structures hold within them specific norms that are universally attractive and that the informal institutions therefore can be understood and dealt with separate from state structures. This is not to say that norms are not important in understanding how political organizations, state or non-state, function (Fukuyama 2004b, 86; Williamson 2009, 372).⁷⁹ Yet, it is not clear why adding resources to state structures would move them from a situation where norms undermine the Weberian style bureaucracy to a situation where norms would support a Weberian type state. Second, the use of informal institutions to describe non-state actors tends to overlook that these actors can have very elaborate regulations that

to see informal institutions defined as “traditions, customs, moral values, religious beliefs, and all other norms of behavior that have passed the test of time” (Pejovich 1999, 166).

⁷⁸ The point is likewise reflected in the work of Michael Mann, who refers to this as the infrastructural power of the state defined as “the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm” (Mann 1992, 5).

⁷⁹ This is not to say that norm-free behavior does not exist. As Helmke and Levitsky argue, informal institutions should not be used about any behavior that is not in accordance with the rules of formal institutions (Grzymala-Busse 2010, 313; Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 727; Lauth 2000, 24; North 1999, 36). This also means that some behavior is best understood as non-institutional behavior (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 727-728).

can be written down or be orally transmitted.⁸⁰ Synonyms for “informal” includes “casual”, “unceremonious”, and “easygoing”, meaning that referring to some organizations as “informal” as opposed to “formal” suggests that the distinction is between two different types of organizations. Yet, it is difficult to identify characteristics that, across different contexts, distinguish a formal and an informal political organization (formal and informal institutions as actors). The state-building literature tends to equate the formal with the state and the informal with groups such as tribes and warlords. This way, it is not primarily a distinction based on how political organizations operate, i.e. degree of formalization, but the decisive factor is whether they are state or non-state actors. The term “non-state” actor emerged through the 2000s to describe the diverse set of actors that exist in so-called fragile states that are not the state (Albrecht 2015a, 279). The distinction has been criticized for being unclear as the non-state category is defined by what it does *not* cover, namely state actors. Instead it potentially encompasses all other types of actors; NGOs, private companies, militias, tribes and clans to mention a few examples (Avraham and Barak 2014, 3). This way the state is elevated to a special type of organization, but without characteristics that separate state organizations from other organizations. The state is a state and therefore it is special.

The differences between formal and informal institutions in state-building are summed up in table 3.1. The table is a heuristic device meant to illustrate the two extreme poles in a discussion that is, of course, more nuanced.

Table 3.1. Overview over formal and informal institutions in state-building literature

Type of institution	Organizational expression	Type of administration	Role of norms	Role in state-building
Formal	Weberian state	RationalLegal (modern)	Complementary	Partner
Informal	Tribe, big men, warlord etc.	Patrimonial (traditional)	Overlapping ^a	Spoiler

a. “Informal institution” refers to norms and actors. When it refers to an actor, the actor is seen as operating based on norms.

The binary between formal and informal institutions informs the basic idea of state-building. It reflects a normative preference for a certain type of political organization, the Weberian state, more than it refers to specific characteristics. The state, specifically underlining the bureaucratic element of the state, is presented as a culmination of a process transcending traditional lo-

⁸⁰ See the *Oxford Dictionary*.

calized organizations in society (Migdal 2001, 111). It builds on Max Weber's underlying belief that the state – the bureaucracy – will triumph as the more powerful and efficient form of political leadership (Rudolph and Rudolph 1979, 196; Scott 2008, 14).⁸¹

Much of the state-building literature builds on this binary, neatly summed up by Finn Stepputat, who argues that distinctions “...between state/non-state, modern/traditional, and formal/informal are often associated with an opposition between the state and an unruly, dangerous, and corrupting outside of clans, warlords, tribes, traffickers, and terrorists, threatening to overturn the feeble state apparatus” (Stepputat 2013, 31). This way, society is conceptualized as an unruly and dangerous outside, to use Finn Stepputat's words, in opposition to the state which is then understood to represent order and security. The modern state is placed in opposition to the informal “traditional” societies and the task of state-building is to move states towards the ideal of greater formality, understood as more state (Anter 2014, 152; Jütting 2003, 30). Informal institutions are understood as a thing of the past that survive because the state is too weak to control them (Collins 2006, 12). The starting point is frequently that informal institutions are non-representative, illegitimate and inefficient. It is for example not uncommon to see informal institutions described as a “constraint” (Williamson 2009, 372). Individuals are therefore assumed to prefer formal institutions and to only make use of informal institutions if formal institutions are incomplete or unavailable to them (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 730).

In state-building interventions, political organizations have to relate to both internal and external actors. Martin Ruef and Richard Scott argue that: “Organizations relate to numerous stakeholders and confront many constituencies, both internal and external. Accordingly, analysts must carefully consider to which sources of legitimacy they should attend” (Ruef and Scott 1998, 880). If there are different understandings of what is legitimate then political organizations have to prioritize. In the West, the so-called modern societies, the formal structures, i.e. the Weberian legal-rational type of authority, has come to function as what Meyer and Rowan call “a powerful myth”. This means that the legal-rational source of legitimacy has become ingrained in and reflects social reality to a degree where organizations *must* incorporate specific structures to not appear illegitimate (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 343). This spills over into the state-building literature where it is assumed that certain structures will lead to legitimate organizations. Thus, in

⁸¹ This reflects similar points made in modernization theory, which assumed the gradual development, i.e. modernization, of society from being particularistic with a low level of complexity towards increased centralization and complexity.

this perspective state-building becomes a process of “formalization” to build the structures associated with Weberian bureaucracy. However, as these structures were the result of internal struggles and negotiations during the European state formation process it cannot be assumed that they will be a universal source of internal legitimacy.

The new institutionalism literature shows that having elaborate legal-rational structures can become a goal in itself even if these legal-rational structures do not increase the organization’s effectiveness. John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan argue that: “Organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work and institutionalized in society. Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects, independent of the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures” (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 340). Instead of seeing one source of legitimacy, the legal-rational, as the only source of legitimacy, organization theory points to congruence as the key to organizations’ effectiveness. Helmke and Levitsky have developed a framework to understand the variety of ways that norms can interact with legal-rational structures (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 727; 2006, 5). They make the important point that norms do not necessarily undermine formal institutions or incur additional transaction costs on actors but can support or complement formal structures (Bratton 2007, 98; Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 728; Schwarz and Corral 2011, 218).⁸² It is increasingly recognized that if there is a conflict between norms and the formal guidelines of an organization, then organizations will prioritize acting in accordance with the surrounding norms as these are key to the survival of the organization (Campbell 2004, 30). This corresponds with the insight from new institutionalism that political organizations that operate in accordance with surrounding norms are more effective and better protected from immediate sanctions for variations in performance (Deephouse and Suchman 2008; Ruef and Scott 1998; Scott 2008, 71-72; Suchman 1995, 574).⁸³ However, the importance of congruence has been largely ignored in state-building interventions. Instead, there has been a strong focus on building legal-rational structures, which in some cases has led to disjointed organizations as a gap has developed between legal-rational structures and the surrounding norms (Scott 2008, 73).

This section focuses on two key distinctions: the distinction between institutions and organizations and the distinction between formal and informal

⁸² According to Grzymala-Busse (2010: 311) informal institutions can reify formal rules by defining and expanding their domain and by providing incentives and information to follow formal institutions.

⁸³ See (Rudolph and Rudolph 1979) for a similar argument in more detail.

institutions. The distinction between institutions and organizations is used as a stepping stone for the continued focus on specific internal actors in state-building. The distinction between informal and formal institutions has limited descriptive value, but helps legitimate state-building interventions with a strong focus on building legal-rational structures. The focus on legal-rational structures in the state-building literature is problematized through a discussion on how congruence between legal-rational structures and surrounding norms has been identified as key to effective organizations.

3.3. Internal actors in domestic power struggles

This section zooms in on the internal actors in state-building interventions. The aim is to move beyond the often used binaries such as traditional/modern or informal/formal and instead study what actually constitutes political order in so-called fragile states (Boege, Brown, and Clements 2009, 6). The approach taken here corresponds to an understanding of hybridity as a way to understand how local elites can draw on multiple sources of authority simultaneously (Albrecht 2015b, 613).⁸⁴ Hence, hybridity is not understood as mixing “elements of patrimonial states and rational bureaucratic (‘Weberian’) states” (Cammack 2007, 600) but as “a matter of sources of authority operating simultaneously and becoming co-constitutive through practices of order-making” (Albrecht and Moe 2015, 10).

This way hybridity points to how elite actors can simultaneously use state and non-state political organizations as sources of legitimacy, authority and resources. The key question is thus not how the state can control the non-state but how political elites maneuver to maximize their domestic influence across state and non-state organizations. In some cases, internal actors primarily draw on state organizations which can possibly lead to attempts to try to weaken non-state organizations, but arguably, the most powerful internal elite actors draw on both state and non-state political organizations. The structure of the emerging state and the variations that emerge over time in the relationship between state and non-state organizations can be explained by these power struggles. This perspective recognizes the diversity of actors associated with the state but also recognizes that the state is a key arena as control with the state provides access to resources, both domestically and in-

⁸⁴ The “hybrid” concept is often used to describe political systems where the state has to “share authority, legitimacy and capacity with other structures” (Boege et al. 2008, 10; Stepputat 2013, 31). However, this understanding of hybridity operates with the binary between modern and formal versus traditional and informal (Albrecht and Moe 2015, 5). Moreover, in this conceptualization of hybridity it is difficult to point to the non-hybrid as

ternationally. Importantly, although having a position in the state eases access to state resources, there is not a one-to-one relationship where some positions always lead to a certain amount of influence.

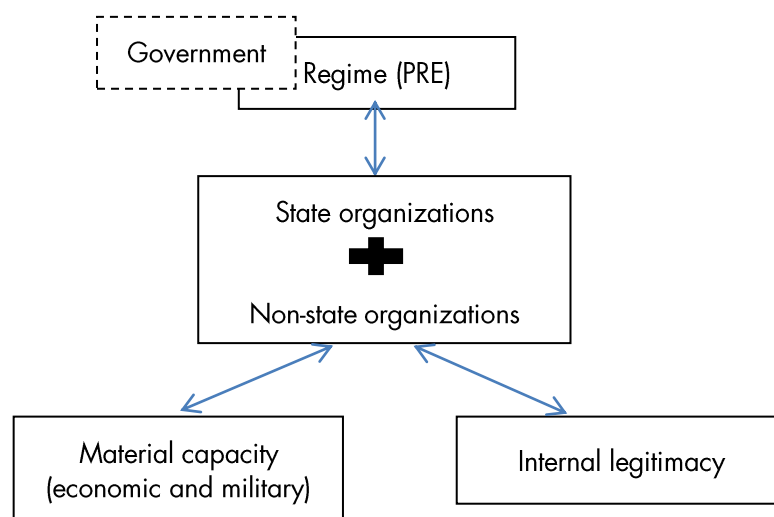
This entails that it cannot *a priori* be assumed that state actors are “good” and non-state actors are “bad”. The notion of the spoiler defined as “leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it” is thus problematic (Stedman 1997, 6). It does, however, point to an important insight: that it cannot be assumed that those who sign a peace-deal are all equally committed to the deal (Stedman 2002). Yet, the spoiler concept seems to assume that internal actors are static and thus does not incorporate how internal actors change their perception of interventions during the process of the intervention. Internal actors will find that there are benefits and drawbacks to the deal and thus try to maximize their own benefit. Moreover, it is fairly unlikely that there will be a universally shared distinction between the legitimate and the illegitimate actor(s). I therefore use “regime” and “alternative internal elite actors” as more neutral terms. Salverda and Abbink define elite as “a relatively small group within the societal hierarchy that claims and/or is accorded power, prestige, or command over others” (Abbink and Salverda 2012, 1). I do not assume that internal legitimacy follows automatically from representing the state, as internal legitimacy will depend on multiple sources as presented in the typology over legitimacy. Moreover, internal and external legitimacy does not necessarily overlap. Hence, an actor that is perceived as a spoiler from the perspective of the external actor might possess substantial internal legitimacy. At this point, it is worth pointing to the difference between state, regime and government: “Regimes are more permanent forms of political organizations than specific governments, but they are typically less permanent than the state. The state, by contrast, is a (normally) more permanent structure of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it” (Fishman 1990, 428). The regime is the organization of power; it determines who has access to political power and how those who are in power deal with those who are not. In some cases the state and the regime will be closely interwoven and both closely identified with the ruler (Ibid. 428). Here, regime is not to be likened to “administration” rather to what Volker Perthes refers to as the “politically relevant elite” (PRE) (Perthes 2004; Sedgwick 2010, 254). The regime comprises those elite actors who wield political influence that may or may not

“hybrid” seems to be little more than a way of arguing that different actors and norms influence each other (Albrecht and Moe 2015, 2, 6; Stepputat 2013).

hold positions in the state or government as well as a more implicit understanding of the way power functions. This way the regime is the embodiment of particular norms and procedures, which underlie the practice of power. The state is the apparatus that allows the regime to administer a society and the government is the more changeable element (Lawson 1993, 184-188). The regime sets the boundaries within which the government operates.

I argue that the strength of internal actors, here specifically focusing on the regime, can be understood as a combination of two overall factors; material capacity, specifically economic and military capacities, and level of internal legitimacy. Both will be reflections of the internal actors' degree of support within state and non-state organizations.

Figure 3.1. Model over regime's main sources of power



The government will be more easily replaceable than the regime and the state, as both the regime and the state are more complex structures that consist of multiple organizations. Thus, it is possible for the government to alternate with the assistance of external actors, while the regime and the state continue to operate largely unaffected. The regime is thus the political center, but alternative internal elite actors interact with the regime. Internal elite actors will differ in their relation to the regime; some will be closely associated whereas others will be in opposition. This does not necessarily overlap with those in government and their opposition, but instead refers to relevance to political process (Perthes 2004, 6). I therefore see the regime as the most important internal actor. If the regime is able to control both the state, that is, it overlaps with the government and controls state organizations, and has been able to either integrate or coerce non-state political organizations, the regime is stable. However, this will typically not be the case in so-called fragile states and power will be fragmented.

Instead, multiple internal elite actors try to maintain or improve their internal elite position (Pouligny 2006, 217). More specifically, I propose that, depending on the internal actors' current situation, internal elite actors aim to maintain their position vis-à-vis other internal actors, improve their position vis-à-vis other internal actors or regain their position vis-à-vis other internal actors. This should not be an overly controversial argument as the basic assumption that political elites seek power has been made many times before (Kinne 2005, 118). I distinguish between gaining and regaining power as it may matter empirically whether internal elite actors have had prior dealings with each other.

Table 3.2. Internal elite actors' main goals

Internal elite actors' main goal	Main characteristics
Maintain	The regime is established as the main internal actor, and therefore is primarily concerned with sustaining its position and avoiding alternative internal actors to grow strong enough to challenge it
Gain	The internal actor is seeking to gain power and control with the state. Depending on whether the internal actor is primarily state or non-state strategies to increase power might vary
Re-gain	The internal actor has previously held power but was overtaken. The process is similar to when trying to gain power, yet with the added complication that the actor will be well-known among alternative elite actors.

Moreover, three additions are made that are implications of the discussions in section 3.2. First, I argue that the power of internal elite actors is based on two interlinked sources: internal legitimacy and material resources particularly economic and military. As already argued, internal legitimacy is key to the survival of internal organizations, but material capacities can be used to buy off or coerce compliance. Second, since there are multiple internal elites, the position of one internal elite actor is relational in the sense that changes in the power of one internal actor can influence the relative hierarchy of internal actors (Pouligny 2006, 218). This is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship but overall each internal actor will be concerned about its own as well as alternative actors' level of power. Consequently, internal actors will seek to weaken internal actors, state or non-state, that are perceived to be building their capacity (Migdal 2001, 72; North et al. 2013, 4). Third, rarely will any internal actor be strong enough to dominate alone. Typically, the internal elite actors will try to buy off alternative elites and political organizations, both state and non-state, that cannot be controlled. Alternatively, the internal elite actor will find allies and make (shifting) coalitions (Migdal

1994, 21; 2001, 82). The strategies that an internal elite actor will use towards alternative elite actors thus depend on their relative power resources and the character of the relationship. The character of the relationship can refer back to previous interactions and signifies the level of conflict between two actors. This determines whether they will be able to work together or not. The compromises that an internal actor needs to make influence the goals of the internal actor as well as the internal actor's ability to reach those goals. This follows from the need to incorporate new ideas and preferences of the ally.

Consequently, although there can be periods of stability, these struggles are defined by being in flux as relative power levels and alliances change. Some periods might be characterized by more or less conflict depending on the relationship between main internal actors. This is akin to what has been called "limited access orders". The basic idea in limited access orders is that the existing elite limits access to resources, which allows the elite to capture wealth and then distribute it on a discretionary basis. Limited access orders can be relatively stable if the dominant elite can maintain its coalition while not allowing alternative actors access to resources (North et al. 2013, 4-5). Order is preferred but as all internal elites seek to maximize their relative power positions, disorder is frequent. If struggles between internal elite actors become matters of life and death, cleavages will widen and the space for negotiations becomes smaller as talk is replaced by force. This is the context that external actors intervene in. The involvement of the external actor will influence different internal actors in different ways. This will disturb any potential temporary equilibrium and set off renewed struggles between internal actors. Hence, instead of understanding internal actors' strategies as either for or against the intervention, strategies should be understood in relation to the internal context.⁸⁵

Part 2: External actors in state-building

"External actors are part and parcel of efforts to govern areas of limited statehood, building state capacity and providing collective goods and services"
(Krasner & Risse 2014: 563).

Internal actors play a key role in state-building interventions as external actors depend on internal actors to achieve their goals. Internal actors must be

⁸⁵ Moreover, even in situations where there is widespread support to an external intervention, the intervention itself might create "spoiler behavior". Andrea Kathryn Talentino for example shows how internal support to an intervention can falter through two dynamics; the feeling of imposition and as a reaction to broken promises (Talentino 2007).

“on board” as Chesterman has argued, “[s]tates cannot be made to work from the outside” (Chesterman, Ignatieff, and Thakur 2005, 9). At the same time, I argue that the regime’s level of external legitimacy influences the kind of interventions and the possible strategies that internal actors can apply in the face of intervention. Thus, this section seeks to answer the question: How can external actors potentially affect internal elite power struggles? In order for me to answer this question, I suggest a disaggregation of external actors to distinguish between regional and extra-regional actors and discuss the strategies that external actors apply. This adds the level of external involvement to the overall framework of what shapes state-building interventions in so-called fragile states.

3.4. Multiple actors in state-building

The starting point is that external actors would prefer not to intervene as interventions are resource-demanding, entail substantial risks for the intervener and have a low success rate. Hence, to overcome the inclination not to intervene, the external actor needs to have some strong motives to intervene (Jackson 2000, 252; Jakobsen 1996, 206-207).⁸⁶ The state-building literature’s focus on a specific type of intervention; the UN-led or UN sanctioned intervention with an additional focus on peacebuilding operations, overlooks that often multiple actors are involved in state-building interventions (Paris and Sisk 2009). I specifically argue that regional actors will have more imminent reasons for intervening and therefore should be given more attention in the state-building literature. The tendency to overlook regional actors is facilitated by the ubiquitous use of “international community” in the state-building literature (Hensell 2015; Robinson 2007). Frequently, the term “international community” is shorthand for the UN Security Council as the legal entity that can sanction interventions, regardless of whether the intervention is then implemented by UN, by a regional organization or by individual states. However, in other instances, the term “international community” is used to describe varying groups of states and non-state actors. This way the concept’s distinctively ambiguous character allows it to provide a thin guise for states pursuing their self-interest (Kühn and Bliesemann de Guevara 2011, 136).⁸⁷ In addition to overlooking how the term “international commu-

⁸⁶ The American debate on prerequisites for military intervention is instructive. Main characteristics include clearly articulated objectives, probable success, likelihood of popular and congressional support and a clear exit strategy (Haass 1999).

⁸⁷ The international community can be used as a reference to some form of moral reference for all humankind, but here I focus on the international community as “an” actor (Andersen Riis 2010, 14).

nity” might be a shallow façade for an intervention driven by a single state, it conceals how different external actors can have various interests in the intervention (Levy 2001; Wolff 2011, 968). The focus here is on states, which can either intervene bilaterally or through an institutional, either regional or extra-regional, set-up.⁸⁸ Recognizing that some states are more influential than others, the starting point here is that neither extra-regional nor regional organizations can be reduced to the will of a single state (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001).⁸⁹ I treat each external actor as a unitary actor. This excludes a number of actors, such as international NGOs, diasporas and multinational firms (Hensell 2015; Miodownik and Barak 2014, 4).⁹⁰

Extra-regional actors include actors such as the US and the UN.⁹¹ The UN Security Council can, according to international law, authorize interventions.⁹² This has come to include a right to administer territory, although this is not specifically mentioned in the UN Charter (Chesterman 2004, 48; Söderbaum and Tavares 2009). In the UN, state-building has developed out of the perceived need for long-term engagement after the conclusion of civil wars – an expansion of peacekeeping missions. Simon Chesterman argues that “there is little doubt that the Security Council possesses the power to administer territory on a temporary basis and that it may delegate that pow-

⁸⁸ Authors differ somewhat as to whether the regional level should be understood as either an isomorphic subsystem of the international system or as a specific analytical concern because of specific geopolitical and cultural traits (Neumann 1992, xi). Here the regional level is investigated as a separate level.

⁸⁹ Others argue that the UN acts on the interests of its member states (Weiss et al. 2007, 3). The permanent members of the Security Council have the right of veto, which ensures that no enforcement takes place against one of the great powers’ will, and in general international organizations can only act with the, at least, silent support of the principal states concerned (Waltz 1979, 88; Weiss et al. 2007, 6). Hence, international cooperation provides a shallow pretext for the projection of great power influence (Gibbs 1997). It has for example been shown that the UN is more likely to intervene in some regions than in others; specifically the UN has been quick to respond in Europe, but rarely respond in Asia (Gilligan and Stedman 2003).

⁹⁰ A developing literature emphasizes the role of transnational factors, including identity groups and flows of people and goods (Rubin 2006).

⁹¹ I focus on the UN as it is the most important international organization in relation to state-building interventions. Other international organizations include the World Bank, which has considerable potential for influencing borrowing states (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 59; Bickerton 2007, 95).

⁹² The most legitimate way of intervening is when it is collectively authorized by an international organization, preferably the UN. One of the most accepted justifications for intervention is if the intervention takes place at the invitation of an incumbent government (Bull 1985, 2). There is, however, a difference between legality and legitimacy, and the fact that interventions sanctioned by the UN are widely considered legal does not automatically make them legitimate in the eyes of those being targeted for intervention.

er to the Secretary-General (or his or her representative)” (Chesterman 2004, 54). Moreover, the UN has a special role as the preeminent espouser of humanitarian norms and a mandate to maintain international peace and security (Weiss et al. 2007, 3).⁹³ Thus, the UN has the most experience in managing state-building interventions, but the limited guidelines for *when* and *how* to respond with a state-building intervention leave room for selective interventionism (Bellamy and Williams 2005, 157; Binder 2009, 328; Gilligan and Stedman 2003, 37; Spain 2014). The second extra-regional actor is the US, which occupies a unique place in relation to state-building interventions.⁹⁴ The US has the power and the resources as well as the proven willingness to act unilaterally, for example in Iraq and Afghanistan (Berger 2006, 7-8; Chesterman 2004, 9; Fearon and Laitin 2004, 7). The US has been particularly vocal in linking state fragility to threats to international and American national security (Gheciu and Welsh 2009). Indeed, as formulated by Jeffrey Taliaferro: “[T]he United States is currently the only country with the wherewithal to project military power and diplomatic influence to geographically distant regions and a strategic interest in doing so” (Taliaferro 2012, 102). Moreover, the US is by far the preeminent exerciser of unilateral sanctions (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott 2007, 5).⁹⁵ Finally, the US not only occupies a unique position by virtue of its material capabilities, but is also, as Martha Finnemore argues, especially influential in shaping the general rules of intervention (Finnemore 2004, 5). Consequently, the US plays an important role in encouraging or discouraging other actors from engaging in state-building (Hurrell 1995, 49). Summing up, the US plays an instrumental role in individual state-building interventions and in defining the

⁹³ The first article in the UN Charter reads: “To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace” (UN Charter, see <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html>, last accessed on 29 April 2016). Research suggests that the severity of human suffering is a valid indicator for whether the UN will intervene (Gilligan and Stedman 2003; Jakobsen 1996).

⁹⁴ It is discussed whether the current system is unipolar or multipolar. Clearly, the US does not control all aspects of the global system but still exerts considerable influence, which is unmatched by any one other state. In terms of state-building, states such as China and Russia are less active than the US, but still occasionally make use of the terminology. Moreover, for example China has increased its presence and influence in especially Africa and the Middle East.

⁹⁵ This is not to say that other states cannot take the lead in specific state-building interventions; clearly they can such as for example the Australians demonstrated in the Solomon Islands (Bellamy and Williams 2005, 184-189).

field of state-building, not least in the Middle East (Albrecht and Schlumberger 2004, 384; Harders and Legrenzi 2008, 38).

Regional actors include regional great powers and regional organizations.⁹⁶ Since the early 1990s regional organizations have increasingly become involved in regional peacekeeping operations (Bellamy and Williams 2005; Durward 2006).⁹⁷ Consequently, a literature on state failure and state-building's regional implications has developed (Acharya and Johnston 2007; Boulden 2003; Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Hettne 2005). However, it has developed largely in parallel to the general literature on state fragility and state-building (Lambach 2007, 32; Wolff 2011, 953). Yet, as regionalism constitutes the main rule-based alternative to UN-based multilateralism, it is worth singling out regional organizations in the analysis (Bellamy 2010, Chapter 13; Söderbaum and Tavares 2009, 73).⁹⁸ Regional great powers dominate distinct geographical areas through a combination of military and economic capabilities as well as a degree of soft power (Hinnebusch 2013, 75-76).⁹⁹ Regional powers are measured in capabilities relative to those of other states in the region, and regional great powers might therefore have limited global influence (Neumann 1992, xii; Østerud 1992, 2). The regional level has been somewhat overlooked in the IR and state-building literature, but regional actors are often key actors (Buzan 2003; Kirchner and

⁹⁶ Here I follow Boulden 2003 who considers regional organizations to be "...multistate geographically synchronous institutional entities that have played or are playing a role in conflict situations..." (Boulden 2003, 6). Regions are defined as "a cluster of states that are proximate to each other and are interconnected in spatial, cultural and ideational terms in a significant and distinguishable manner" (Paul 2012, 4).

⁹⁷ The framework for the relationship between regional organizations and the UN is found in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which suggests that the Security Council utilize regional arrangements when beneficial but also make it clear that action by regional actors must be sanctioned by the Security Council. The focus on regional organizations has increased during the last two decades, starting from when the Secretary-General in the UN Agenda for Peace from 1992 blueprinted both joint operations and operations led by regional actors but sanctioned by the UN. The UN has since then repeatedly established the opportunity for multilateralism and regionalism to be complementary, but the prevailing formal belief continues to be that the UN must hold primacy (Boulden 2003, 15). However, the actual division of work between the UN and regional organizations has largely developed out of practice.

⁹⁸ A few regional organizations, primarily the EU, have been engaged in missions outside its neighborhood but generally regional organizations remain focus on their immediate sphere of influence (Bellamy 2010, 309).

⁹⁹ The term "great power" is preferred to hegemon as hegemon suggest unparalleled and unchallenged strength.

Dominguez 2011, 16; Wolff 2011, 951).¹⁰⁰ The Middle East, for example, as pointed to by Fred Halliday, is distinguished by ongoing incidences of regional intervention (Halliday 2012, 140). Additionally, in developing regions the interaction between non-state actors and regional actors has significant impact on the success of state-building interventions (Avraham and Barak 2014, 168), and the motivations of regional actors are central to understanding state-building interventions (Bellamy and Williams 2005, 160).

Hence, although the state-building literature, and especially the state-building literature that sees state-building as an element of peacebuilding, tends to focus on the UN and large-scale missions in which regional actors frequently intervene (Bliesemann de Guevara 2008, 2012; Scott 2007).¹⁰¹ Regional actors have good reason to intervene; they are, for example, more affected by the threat of spill-over, which gives neighboring countries a strong incentive to try to end conflicts in neighboring countries (Weiss et al. 2007, 18). The literature on fragile states suggests that state failure is contagious across borders (Wolff 2011). Hence, neighboring countries suffer the most from the immediate consequences of fragile states (Lambach 2007; Söderbaum and Tavares 2009, 73). The diffusion literature suggests that new actors will be drawn into the ongoing conflict, whereas the contagion literature argues that new conflicts break out in the vicinity of the first one because actors learn from the example provided (Harpviken 2010). Hence, especially neighboring states but also extra-regional organizations have a strong interest in intervening if events within a state seem to be spiraling out of control to a degree where the conflict might spread or provide a fertile ground for terrorist groups (Brown 1996, 25-26; Collinson, Elhawary, and Muggah 2010, S278; Kathman 2011, 848). Moreover, regional actors will most likely have tighter relations both at the level of diplomatic relations and personal relationships as well as close cross-border relations or a history of interactions between populations (Hurrell 1995, 59; Lambach 2007, 41).¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Martin Beck notes that regions have become more important after the conclusion of the Cold War, but also that some regions and some issues are shaped by regional organizations to a greater extent than others (Beck 2014, 2). In the Middle East, regional organizations have neither provided collective security nor greatly enhanced economic integration (Harders and Legrenzi 2008, 8).

¹⁰¹ Regional actors are not completely overlooked as it is recognized that regional actors, because of their local knowledge, personal ties and shared history with the relevant country, might be an alternative to a perceived “external imposition” by the UN or an extra-regional great power (Söderbaum and Tavares 2009, 74). Others have argued against the involvement of regional organizations because they, arguably, do not retain the universal legitimacy of the UN (Bellamy 2005, 160).

¹⁰² It has been shown that former colonial powers are more likely to intervene in their previous colonies (Bellamy 2010, 44).

Relatedly, there is in some regions a strong narrative of regional community, which means that the regional actors are more vulnerable to critique from domestic audiences if they do not intervene (Hurrell 1995, 65). Consequently, I suggest that regional actors play a key role as they have a more imminent interest in the stability of neighboring countries that may or may not coalesce with the interests of extra-regional actors. This is investigated in the Yemeni case.

3.5. How external actors influence domestic politics

This section is dedicated to the strategies that external actors can use to influence internal elite actors. This starts with a basic assumption about the relationship between internal and external actors; namely that internal actors have to live up to two basic minimum propositions before external actors will support them: be amenable to the external actor's agenda and have the resources to carry out the agenda. These propositions do not differentiate between state and non-state actors, but empirically the regime and actors that hold positions in the state or in the government will be preferred as they are better equipped to speak "the language" of external actors and tend to have more resources.¹⁰³

Table 3.3. External actors' strategies towards internal elite actors

External actor's strategies towards internal partner	Main characteristics
Increase support	The external actor can choose to increase material and/or ideational support to the internal actor
Target alternatives	The external actor can choose to attempt to weaken alternative internal actors through material and/or ideational factors
Overtake	The external actor can choose to overtake parts of or the entire state
Disengage	The external actor can choose to disengage from the internal actor (and potentially establish a partnership with a new internal partner)

The external actor seeks to achieve the overall goal of stability with the least amount of resources and thus has to decide whether stability is best achieved

¹⁰³ External actors will seek to strengthen actors they can relate to. For example, the US will typically focus on building the capacity of the central state, as lack of capacity is often portrayed as a bigger problem than lack of resources (Cammack 2007, 606). Moreover, NGOs, molded in the Western image, are popular partners as they are perceived as being better equipped to utilize local knowledge, which leads to more efficient interventions (Salamon 1996, 2).

by supporting the existing regime or an alternative elite actor. I argue that this decision will depend on three overall considerations; the regime's external legitimacy, the strength of the regime and the availability of internal partners as alternatives to the regime. I argue that the external actor will have four "intervention options", three of which can be applied simultaneously: increase support to the internal partner; move in temporarily and "become" an internal actor until an internal actor can take over; target alternative elite actors that are undermining the external actors partners. The fourth and final option is disengagement.

Disengagement is most likely if the regime has a low level of external legitimacy and there is a (better) internal alternative. In situations where the external actors have an established relationship to the regime, there are substantial risks associated with disengagement as it will typically mean the replacement of a known actor with an unknown actor. The external actor may have invested substantial resources, material as well as reputational, in the partnership. On top of the cost for the external actor in "starting over" with a new internal actor, it might be difficult to locate a new internal partner that will be amenable to the external actor's agenda. Furthermore, disengagement might be problematic if it creates insecurity about the external actor's commitment to regimes in other states. It has for example influenced the Gulf states' perception of their partnership with the US that the US did not "save" Egypt's Mubarak from falling in 2011.¹⁰⁴ If there are no internal alternatives that can take over from the regime, the external actor might take over for a period, for example by establishing a transnational administration. Although relatively rare, there have been a number of post-conflict state-building interventions such as in East Timor, Bosnia-Herzegovina and, more recently, Iraq and Afghanistan, where external actors, most notably the UN, have taken over some or all governmental powers on a temporary basis (Chesterman 2014).

Increased support to the regime is of course most likely if the regime has external legitimacy. In these cases, the external actor will be prepared to invest substantial resources in the maintenance of the regime as disengagement, as already discussed, can be costly. Support can take different forms, most frequently increased aid and military support, often through capacity building of the military and by supplying military hardware. More rarely, the UN Security Council can decide to use force, or individual states can decide to intervene militarily, usually supported by a coalition of states (Aydin

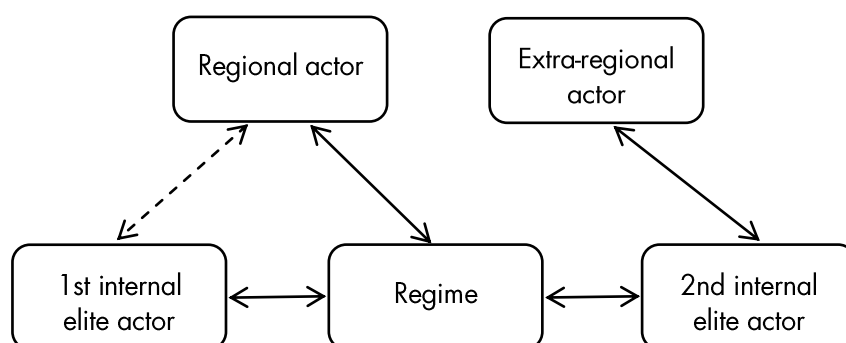
¹⁰⁴ See https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/04/20/whats-really-wrong-with-the-u-s-saudi-relationship/?wpmm=1&wpisrc=nl_cage (Last accessed 21 April 2016).

2012).¹⁰⁵ The external actor might also try to weaken alternative internal actors for example through targeted sanctions directed at specific individuals or a group of individuals. The UN has sponsored sanctions six times more frequently during the 1990s than during the preceding 45 years (Oskarsson 2012). The US is the preeminent exerciser of unilateral sanctions, but regional actors also impose sanctions (Binder 2009, 341). Finally, there are different naming and shaming mechanisms that aim to shame specific internal actors into changing their behavior (Magen and McFaul 2009, 14).

The external actor's commitment to the regime increases with high levels of external legitimacy, but there is a tipping point where the external actor realizes that the regime is no longer sustainable. It follows that how external actors respond to struggles between internal elite actors influences the outcomes of these struggles. The underlying logic can be illustrated with a simple example that focuses on two internal elite actors, the regime and two external actors, one regional and one extra-regional. Real situations would include more actors and be more complicated, but the example illustrates the overall dynamics. The regime has been losing internal legitimacy and its resource base is declining. The regime has a strong relationship with a key regional actor (high regional legitimacy) but lacks close relations outside its region (low extra-regional legitimacy). The extra-regional actor instead has strong relations with an alternative elite actor (2nd internal elite actor) that is using the resources it is gaining from this relationship to build output legitimacy. An additional internal elite actor (1st internal elite actor) is attempting to present itself as an alternative to the regional actor as it has high levels of internal legitimacy, partly based on scorching criticisms of the regime. The regime has to decide what to do. It has to find a way to weaken the alternative elite actors, but it has to be done in a way that does not jeopardize its relationship to the regional actor. Depending on the relative levels of capacities and internal as well as regional and extra-regional legitimacy, the regime has to decide on a strategy that can reassert its domestic superiority. This could include trying to undermine alternative internal elite actors, strengthening relations with the regional actor or trying to build a relationship with the extra-regional actor.

¹⁰⁵ See the UN charter, chapter VII for an overview over the tools of the UN.

Figure 3.2. Illustrating potential links between internal elite actors and external actors



The figure is a simple representation but illustrates the complexity of choices that internal elite actors face. It portrays the regime and the other internal elite actors as unitary actors, but in reality each actor is a coalition of actors, usually both state and non-state organizations as illustrated in figure 3.1. The regime, here understood as the “politically relevant elite” (PRE), includes the political elite, defined as those top government, administrative and political leaders who actually exercise political power, as well as businessmen, religious leaders and anyone else who contributes to the political process in a relevant way (Perthes 2004, 5). The criterion is relevance, not membership of a specific organization or coalition. There are different levels of influence within the PRE, which can be illustrated by a model of concentric circles, where influence decreases as one moves outward. This is illustrated in chapter 6 for the Yemeni case. The inner circle is the core elite. This system is based on patronage, and the position in the network defines access to rents. Rents make up an important part of each actor’s material capacities. Each elite actor then redistributes these rents to sustain a level of internal legitimacy. Rents are thus key to holding the network together; they work not only to enrich elites but also as a political re-distributional mechanism. Consequently, the understanding of rents sees it not only as a quest for personal enrichment but as a mechanism with potential societal benefits, not least because of the level of stability it creates by making elite behavior predictable (North et al. 2013, 6).

In sum, this part of the chapter has shown that regional actors typically have a more imminent interest in intervening than extra-regional actors and that regional actors therefore should be given more attention in relation to state-building. Thereafter an overall logic was developed to describe the strategies external actors can apply when intervening. The strategies that external actors choose will influence internal elite struggles and the emerging state.

Part 3: The internal and external: the combined model

This section combines the insights from the previous two parts in to a combined model of how internal elite actors shape state-building interventions. In part 1, I discussed the structure of internal elite actors as incorporating both state and non-state elements, whereas part 2 focused on how the strategies of regional and extra-regional actors respectively influence internal elite struggles. This section combines those two elements and discusses how internal elite actors can respond to the external influence.

The state-building agenda is supported by substantial material and ideational power. External actors directly affect internal actors through their military might and economic resources that can be withheld or dispensed based on the external actors evaluation of the internal actor, but also indirectly as external actors have the ability to project images of proper organizations and desirable political order onto fragile states (Zanotti 2011, 5).¹⁰⁶ Power is difficult to operationalize in a way that facilitates meaningful comparison, i.e. to move beyond intuitive perceptions that some are more powerful than others. Still, power matters and should not be ignored because it is difficult to operationalize. Crucial to the power of external actors are material capacities that can be used to intervene and fundamentally alter internal elite struggles.

3.6. The reality of varying agendas

Internal elite actors might seek the support of external actors but their first priority is their domestic audiences. Consequently, even the most successful relationships to external actors can become internal liabilities. This is for example the case if alternative elite actors are successful in painting the regime as a puppet of the external actor. Internal actors will also be wary of the intentions of external actors, particularly if the external actor is strong and geographically close, as this will increase the likelihood that the external actor acts on its own agenda. Moreover, it cannot be assumed *a priori*, although it often is, that internal actors share the diagnoses and cure prescribed by international actors (Englebert and Tull 2008, 110). Hence, the internal actor will seek to maximize benefit and minimize potential blowback of the external involvement. The weaker the internal actor is internally, the more susceptible it will be to external influence as a way to compensate for internal weakness.

¹⁰⁶ Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis make the compelling argument that the likelihood of peace is a result of the interaction between international capacities, local capacity and hostility (to the peace process) (Doyle and Sambanis 2010).

External actors will intervene for a reason. They have to justify the resources devoted to the intervention and might focus on establishing and implementing their own agenda at the expense of the local political leadership (Gilbert 2012; Woodward 2012, 477). This way, external actors can become powerful internal actors in their own right. This is paradoxical as state-building interventions supposedly aim to build domestic capacity. The “ownership agenda” emerged as a way to reconcile state-building interventions as intrusive acts that entail the extended involvement of external actors with the recognition that successful state-building depends on internal actors (Zaum 2007).¹⁰⁷ However, critique abounds that these concepts are shallow disguises for the continued domination of the North over the South (Abrahamsen 2004). Gordon Crawford has advocated the latter point quite clearly, arguing that the rhetoric of partnership “is part of a trend by international agencies by which their intervention in political and economic reforms in sovereign states is disguised and simultaneously accorded greater legitimacy, free of the criticism that conditionality has attracted” (Crawford 2003, 157). In this line of thinking, the “ownership agenda”, coined to hand power back to internal actors, actually maintains power with the external actor, but places the responsibility of the intervention with the domestic government, and as such the failure of state-building falls back on the internal actors (Cammack 2007, 608).¹⁰⁸ This is seen in the state-building literature, which explains the failure of externally induced reforms by reference to the lack of capacity and lack of willingness of internal actors (Gross and Grimm 2016, 125). Generally, “ownership” entails ongoing contacts to the recipient government (the partner country) to make sure they are “on board” and willing to take over when the external actor withdraws. However, it does not actually entail giving the local government control over the intervention (Chesterman 2004, 129-131). If internal practices conflict with the external agenda, then internal practices will have to change (Gilbert 2012). Thus, the ownership agenda has been criticized for being hollow (Bliesemann de Guevara 2012, 9) or a guise for international exertion of power (Bliesemann de Guevara 2008; Philipsen 2013, 27).

External actors have substantial material and ideational power, and direct opposition to external actors can thus be costly for internal actors. In-

¹⁰⁷ The Paris Declaration of 2 March 2005 stresses the need for ownership (among other things) but without much practical advice as to how this is done. Instead, ownership seems more akin to “responsibility”. It is the responsibility of the partner country to develop and implement its national development strategies. See

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf> (Last accessed 20 April 2016).

¹⁰⁸ Pierre Englebert emphasizes the importance of endogenously developed structures to the construction of well-functioning state institutions (Englebert 2002, 4).

ternal actors therefore have incentives to avoid open conflict and instead embed interventions in the local context, which makes the local context into which the intervention is embedded key to understanding its outcomes.

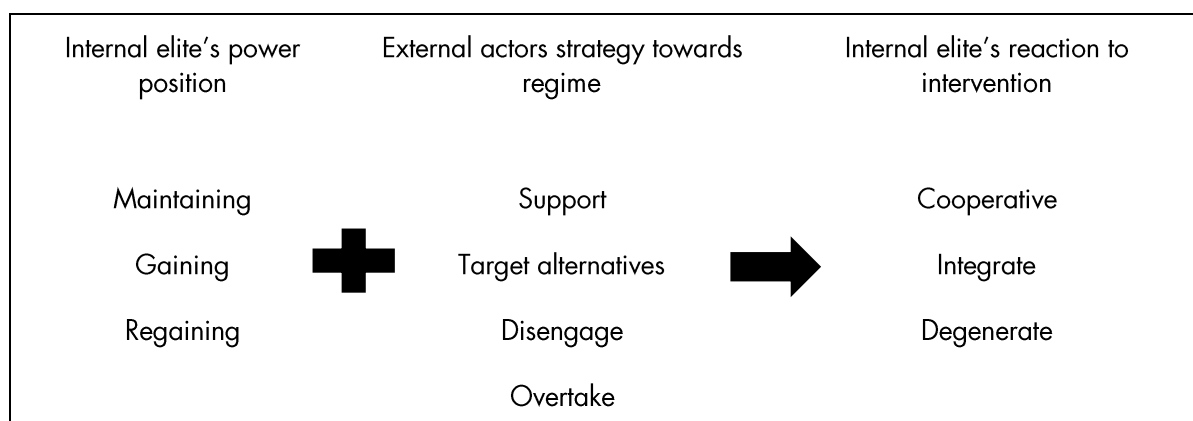
3.7. Regime reactions to interventions

The regime's reactions to the intervention cannot be made to fit neatly within a dichotomy of acceptance or rejection, but is a reflection of the local context (Richmond and Mitchell 2011, 339). Even when interventions are at the request of the regime, they will seldom be supported by the entire population. Moreover, interventions tend to lose support over time, as local actors often come to feel that they are being pushed to conform to outside notions (Talentino 2007, 153).¹⁰⁹ Hence, the relationship between internal and external actors should be seen as a continuum with varying levels of overlapping agendas that develops over time. Consequently, the three overall categories that I now present are described as being distinct, whereas in reality relationships between internal and external actors will have elements of all three categories. First, a "degenerative relationship" where the external actor, regardless of intentions, undermines the internal legitimacy of the internal actor; second, a "cooperative relationship" where external and internal actors share goals and work together in a way that benefits both parties; and third, the most common form of situation where the internal actor sees both benefits and drawbacks of the external actor's intervention. This is referred to as an "integrative relationship".

These three overall categories are combined with the dimensions discussed previously; internal elite actors' main goals (table 3.2.) and external actor's strategies towards internal elite actors (table 3.3.). These three dimensions make up the model.

¹⁰⁹ However, external actors often have limited knowledge of the frequently complex political circumstances into which they intervene. This can provide opportunities for internal actors who can then manipulate the external actors for example by redirecting material resources. In this sense, internal actors can play a central role in shaping the policies of external actors and ultimately their effectiveness (Avraham and Barak 2014, 185).

Table 3.4. Model over factors that shape state-building interventions



The strategies that internal actors can apply in the face of external intervention depend on the resources of the internal actor. Internal elite actors seek to draw on multiple sources of legitimacy to expand their attractiveness, relevance and consequently their effectiveness (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975, 122; Suchman 1995, 575). These have already been discussed, so just to reiterate, I focus on internal legitimacy, which can come from three overall sources: output legitimacy, focused on the ability to produce desired services; input legitimacy, i.e. the ability of those asked to comply with rules to voice their agreement; and descriptive legitimacy, which includes Weber's three sources of legitimacy, the legal-rational, the traditional and charisma. External legitimacy signifies the extent to which internal actors are considered legitimate by leading external powers. External legitimacy can derive from regional or extra-regional actors. External legitimacy is key to extracting aid from external actors and is therefore especially important for states that are dependent on aid. Material capabilities include military and economic resources. Depending on the resources of the internal actor, I argue that three overall strategies can be used to maximize benefits and minimize costs related to external intervention.

The degenerative relationship can arise if the internal actor is so dependent on the external actor that the internal actor has limited actual autonomy from external actors (Goodhand and Sedra 2010, S82). In these instances the internal actor comes to focus on external legitimacy instead of internal legitimacy and overlooks or is incapable of embedding the intervention in the local context. Aman and Aman specifically point to this situation, arguing that "prolonged foreign control over domestic decision-making relieves the local leaders from taking critical and difficult decisions on their political future" (Aman and Aman 2014, 35). At the other extreme, an internal actor tries to sabotage the intervention by for example attacking representatives of the external actor. A less confrontational approach can be to derail the partnership

by isolating or not participating in the activities of the external actor. This can for example be done by making parallel structures that live up to donor requirements but are isolated from the real power structures or by different forms of non-participation such as boycotting elections set up by the external actor (Mac Ginty 2012). In sum, it cannot be assumed that the agendas of internal and external actors overlap, and even when they do, working with external actors can have negative internal consequences (Marquette and Beswick 2011, 1707).

Cooperation between the internal and the external actor happens when the external actor supports the agenda of the internal elite actor in ways that do not harm the internal elite actor's resources of internal legitimacy. Hence, the way that the internal actor embeds the intervention in the local context is a one-to-one reflection of what the external actor envisioned. It can, however, also be a reflection of a more "hidden" form of power where the internal actor is co-opted by the external actor and acts as its local representative (Bayart and Ellis 2000, 261). This can take a direct form where external actors act as "puppets" but it can also take a more indirect form where the internal actor internalizes the external actor's priorities (Harrison 2001).¹¹⁰ This way the internal actor assumes the policy goals and world views of the external actor, for example seen in the way that internal actors come to "speak the language of international organizations" (Kappler 2015, 882).

The third part of the model, integration, is the most common reaction as it implies a degree of cooperation with the external actor, but at the same time reflects the internal actor's main concern, its own power position in the local context. The internal actor will embed the intervention in the local context in ways that primarily aim to build the internal actors position vis-à-vis alternative elite actors and secondary to do the bidding of the external actor. The internal actor seeks the resources associated with the external actor, but has sufficient internal resources to embed the intervention in a way that fits the agenda of the internal actor. This can take many forms: Jean-François Bayart's wrote of strategies of extraversion, which are strategies internal actors use to extract resources from external actors and embed external interventions in the local context (Bayart and Ellis 2000). The most common strategy of extraversion is trickery, i.e., manipulation of forces that are too powerful to be confronted directly, for example in the form of "Potemkin vil-

¹¹⁰ Harrison highlights how the donor does not only influence internal processes directly but also through the methodology of reform; that is the regulations that follow with funding, that internal partners have to abide by. This is akin to the discussion of the power of indicators, as the process of quantification itself has disciplining effects.

lages” (Bayart and Ellis 2000, 259).¹¹¹ This includes building façade political organizations where the stated goal of the organization does not correspond to its actual purpose. For example, in many Middle Eastern countries, patronage often continues to function as a vehicle of recruitment and a mode of internal operation beneath a façade of a Weberian style bureaucracy (Anderson 1987, 7). Trickery can happen at the regime level and in daily interactions between internal and external actors in the form of what James Scott has referred to as “everyday resistance” (Scott 1989).¹¹²

The type of relationship that emerges between internal and external actors and whether it can best be characterized as degenerative, integrated or cooperative depends on the two other factors: whether the internal actor is seeking to maintain, gain or regain power and the external actor’s strategy, which is a reflection of the internal actors’ external legitimacy, regional and/or extra-regional.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has constructed a model for investigating how internal actors shape state-building interventions. The overall theoretical framework builds on the assumption that external actors hold substantial power in the context of state-building interventions but at the same time depend on internal elite actors. Internal elite actors seek to enhance power, here focusing on how the regime seeks to maintain, gain or regain power. This is the main concern for internal actors and defining for how they respond to foreign support (Asseburg and Wimmen 2016, 13). External actors intervene to secure a level of stability in the targeted state as necessary for the external actor to achieve its goals, whatever they are. External actors have four possible strategies they can apply to internal actors; increase support, target alternative elite actors, disengage or overtake the entire state or parts of it. The chosen strategy will be a reflection of the regime’s external legitimacy. There are several components to this, including potential alternatives and strategic importance of the

¹¹¹ The phrase “Potemkin village” refers to a story where Grigori Potemkin erected a fake portable village to fool Empress Catherine II during her journey to Crimea in 1787. Now, the phrase can refer to constructions which are more façade than reality.

¹¹² James Scott describe everyday resistance as “such acts as foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, surreptitious assault and murder, anonymous threats, and so on” (Scott 1989, 5). This is a quite elaborate list of very different acts, some of which are more relevant than others, but they share that they are quiet and disguised forms of pushback to an external actor with superior access to force (Scott 1989, 8). These are individual acts but these activities often become generalized to a pattern of resistance, making them a more general concern for interaction between internal and external actors.

relationship to the external actor. Hence, regional and extra-regional external actors might have varying agendas. The position of the internal actor, in combination with the regime's external (regional and extra-regional) status, defines how the internal regime can respond to the external intervention. These responses should be viewed as a continuum where the two outer poles, degeneration and full cooperation, are relatively rare while most interventions will be a combination of cooperation and degeneration as the internal actor seeks to embed the intervention in the local context.

In the next chapter, I discuss how data has been collected for the empirical analysis and in the empirical chapters I will apply the theoretical model to the Yemeni case. Based on the theory, I expect that a regime seeking to maintain its position is less prepared to accept a high degree of external involvement as it will typically have substantial internal resources. This can lead to a preference for partnerships with extra-regional external actors as these typically pose the least threat to the regime and are easiest to embed into the local context. Regional actors are more demanding external partners as they, due to their proximity, have more explicit agendas and are less easily integrated into the regimes agenda and may pose a direct threat to the internal regime. Moreover, I expect that regimes that are seeking to gain or regain their power will be more willing to accept a large level of external involvement. They need external support as they must be assumed to have relatively less material capacity and/or internal legitimacy than the internal actor they are seeking to overtake. The internal actor will seek to both increase its own support and decrease the external (and internal) level of support to other internal actors. This can lead to increased conflict as cleavages widen between supporters of the different elite actors and it increases the likelihood that external legitimacy takes precedence over internal legitimacy. Finally, I expect that external involvement will be conditioned by the importance attached to the internal struggles by the external actors. This is a reflection of external legitimacy. Moreover, if the internal events of a state are considered to have the potential to directly affect the external actor, specifically its security, then the external actor will be more inclined to intervene directly. Consequently, internal actors will have less space to integrate the intervention in the local context. This suggests that regional actors will tend to be more involved than extra-regional actors as regional actors typically are more directly influenced by events in neighboring states.

PART II.

THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Part II consists of chapter 4, which outlines the research strategy and methodology of the study.

The study began with an empirical puzzle: the divergence between presentations of Yemen as a place best understood through simple binaries that juxtapose the state to non-state actors such as tribes and al-Qaeda and the Yemeni political reality where political categories are far more flexible and overlapping. But presentations impact reality and as such perceptions of Yemen informed what was politically acceptable within Yemen. This project therefore sees words, the terms we use to describe reality, as taking part in constituting that same reality. This became especially visible in encounters between external and internal actors. Yet, these encounters also demonstrated how internal actors had substantial agency in how strategies built on specific understandings of Yemen, actually played out in the Yemeni context. This led to the focus on internal strategies of embedment as key to understanding what shapes state-building interventions. Consequently, the case of Yemen has been key to developing the theoretical framework presented here, but the framework is considered of general value. This chapter first outlines the ontological and epistemological positions of this monograph, before it moves on to discuss data collection, specifically focusing on the challenges of doing fieldwork and interviews in the Yemeni context.

Chapter 4.

Approach and methodology

All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied.
(Denzin and Lincoln 2008, 31).

State-building interventions are complex processes that involve multiple and varied actors and structures. This project investigates state-building as a two-pronged process; first, state-building interventions are investigated as a specific response to a problem that is defined as “fragile states”. Hence, the project investigates how the fragile state concept emerged and spread. Second, in specific state-building interventions, facilitated by the designation of a state as fragile, internal elite actors apply different strategies to embed external state-building interventions in the local context which shape the resulting “state”. The project began as an empirical puzzle and thus the Yemeni case is used as a starting point for the development of a general framework to understand what shapes processes of state-building in so-called fragile states.

The chapter begins by situating the study in a wider framework of understanding. The project belongs within the constructivist ontology and an interpretive epistemology, i.e., it does not subscribe to universal truths but sees knowledge as historically situated and entangled in power relationships. This is particularly clear in the conceptual analysis of the fragile state concept and the way it has been used to frame development problems as fixable through state-building interventions. The next part of the chapter describes the research design of the study and explicates how Yemen is used as an example of state-building. This leads to an account of how data has been collected and analyzed. The section briefly touches upon the collection and analysis of textual documents related to the conceptual analysis, but this is mainly described in chapter 5. The main part of the section explicates how data (interviews, observations and textual material) was collected through fieldwork in Yemen and how it was analyzed. The qualitative approach was chosen as the aim of the study is to investigate state-building in the concrete. Via multiple methods in an analysis which includes both structures and agents, the study embraces boundary-crossing efforts, both methodologically and theoretically. The study downplays differences and focuses on commonalities by incorporating different theories that seem useful in investigating state-building interventions (Flyvbjerg 1991, 104).

Summing up, this chapter provides an overview of the approach taken to the empirical investigation of state fragility and state-building interventions with Yemen as a case. The chapter consists of two main parts. The first part is a general discussion of ontology and epistemology. The second part describes the methodology of this study. The research design and methods reflect the ontological and epistemological standpoints and seeks to establish a systematic connection between methodological premises and the knowledge subsequently claimed, to make an evaluation of the claims made possible (Jackson 2010, 193).

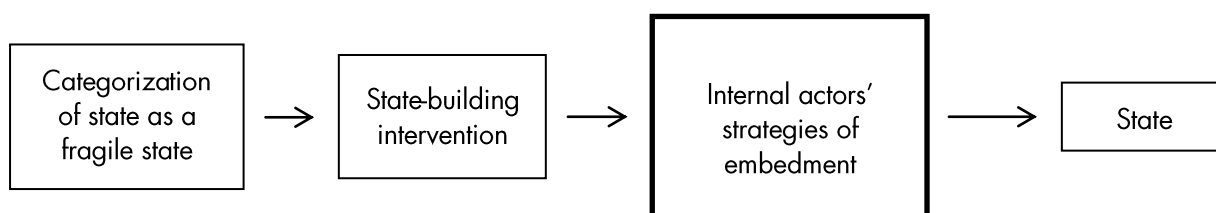
4.1. Ontology and epistemology

Ontological commitments, whether philosophical or scientific, logically precede substantive claims, and serve as the often-unacknowledged basis on which empirical claims are founded (Jackson 2010, 41).

In this section, the scientific approach that informs my analysis is laid out. This study operates within the constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. This has implications, which explicitly and implicitly inform the approach of the study.

The state-building literature is generally silent when it comes to its ontological and epistemological underpinnings. However, the focus is on material institutions, often approached as ahistorical universal structures, which will create development, liberalization and democratization. The aim is to refine this process to make the state more efficient. Implicitly, it often builds on a causal narrative; external intervention leads to a Weberian state. Now, since this is not happening, the state-building literature has moved on to try to discover why, usually focusing on internal factors (spoilers/lack of capacity) or the intervention itself (lack of resources or coordination problems). This study contributes by highlighting how international power structures, crystallized in the way the fragile state concept is used, facilitate state-building interventions. It combines this with an ethnographically inspired focus to show how the state emerging from state-building interventions is shaped by how the internal elite actors embed the intervention in the local context.

Figure 4.1. The overall argument



The arrows are not intended to suggest a causal process, but to illustrate the overall argument. Hollis and Smith have argued that there are two stories to tell in IR; one attempts to “explain” and is founded in the rise of natural science, whereas the other tries to “understand” by inquiring into meanings and reasons (Hollis and Smith 1990, 1-3). Milja Kurki argues that: “A significant divide has appeared in the discipline (IR) between those interested in scientific analysis of causes in world politics, and those vehemently opposed to the very idea of causal analysis” (Kurki 2008, 4). Those who reject the notion of causation often refer to the notion of “constitution” as an alternative to causation as it highlights the ideational aspect of the analysis as well as the fluidity of social life and practices (Kurki 2008, 132). The divide between those who believe that causation and constitution are incompatible is supplemented by accounts that see constitution and causation as outer poles on a continuum (Lebow 2009). This leads to a variety of accounts such as Schwartz-Shea and Yanow’s, which proposes a form of “constitutive” causality “that seeks to explain events in terms of actors’ understandings of their own contexts, rather than in terms of a more mechanistic causality” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 52).¹¹³

Although this research is useful by making otherwise largely implicit assumptions in causal analysis explicit, it does not change the fact that causality builds on a specific ontology and epistemology where causes can be neatly separated and quantified. Usually causation means making claims of the type “x is the cause of y” or trying to formulate a law-like statement that lives up to four factors that define good causal inference, here summarized by Henry

¹¹³ Milja Kurki argues that the split between causation and constitution is at least partly based on a narrow Humean reading of what causality is and that this narrow understanding of causality has important methodological limitations as it does not give an adequate role to history and discursive methods, epistemologically it encourages overly objectivist aims for social knowledge and ontologically it makes it difficult to deal with unobservable causes such as ideas (Kurki 2006; Kurki 2008; Kurki and Suganami 2012). These are the exact reasons why this project does not subscribe to a causal reading of reality. However,

A. Brady: 1) Constant conjunction of causes; 2) no effect when the cause is absent; 3) an effect after the cause is manipulated; 4) activities and processes link cause and effect (Brady 2008, 218).¹¹⁴ Hence, the language of causality can be quite fluid. However, overall the approach taken here focuses on understanding “how” questions as opposed to “why” questions (Doty 1996). For example, I do not propose or test a hypothesis that being defined as a fragile state makes states more prone to intervention (all other things being equal). Instead, in accordance with an interpretivist epistemology, I view knowledge as historically situated and entangled in power relationships (Wedeen 2010, 260). Actors construct the world through language; concepts. These concepts are not merely a “mirror” of an external world but are themselves involved in creating that world (Klotz and Lynch 2007, 43). Consequently, social facts and categories themselves should be questioned (Collier, Hidalgo, and Maciuceanu 2006, 213). As Klotz and Lynch argue, with implicit homage to Foucault, “Knowledge – as truth claims rather than objective historical facts – thus becomes intertwined with power, resulting in “regimes of truth” that perpetuate particular (unequal) relationships” (Klotz and Lynch 2007, 13). I argue that the fragile state concept can best be understood as an essentially contested concept, meaning that it has both a normative and a descriptive dimension but no settled meaning. Hence, the concept is not an objective description of any state. Instead, it functions to create “the truth” about some states, a truth that has consequences as it makes these states amenable to state-building interventions.

Within the constructivist ontology actors and structures are mutually constitutive (Klotz and Lynch 2007, 44). This way, actors define who they are and what they want with reference to the dominant rules and ideologies of their time (Klotz and Lynch 2007, 11). Actors create and reproduce the world, but at the same time, they are themselves shaped by these very structures. In this process, some actors will be more powerful than others and thus be able to influence the construction of structures more than others. Importantly, structure is perceived to consist of both material and ideational factors which stand in a constitutive relationship to each other. This means that neither ideas nor materiality have a meaningful presence separate from each other (Hansen 2006, 19). For example, Yemen is a country with specific characteristics (a material structure) but it comes into being through articulations of it as a fragile state. Yemen has been, within a timespan of a few years, articulated as an unlikely transitory democracy *and* a terrorist safe ha-

whereas Kurki moves on to “save” the concept of causation from its Humean roots, I prefer to use “constitution”.

¹¹⁴ As counterfactuals are closely related to the existence of a causal relationship, the lack of causality also means that it is not relevant to look for the counterfactual.

ven. Representation can have a direct impact for example on levels of aid or in evaluating whether or not Yemen is a legitimate target for American drone attacks. Methodologically, it is difficult to simultaneously account for and separate the structural influences that shape a given activity while presenting a clear narrative of agency. The result has been accounts that focus on either the macro or the micro level (Flyvbjerg 2004, 28). In this study, I start with the structure, the international system of states in which some states are defined as fragile, and then trace the implication of this categorization into the specific case of Yemen. In the case, the structural focus is supplemented by how internal actors concretely embed interventions, that is, it zooms in on the agency of, especially internal, actors. Hence, I do not argue that being categorized as a fragile state cause intervention but that the categorization stands in a constitutive relationship to state-building interventions. Similarly, I do not investigate how fragile states can be built into “strong” states (somehow defined); i.e. try to locate or hypothesize of a (or several) independent variable(s) that would lead to “state” but see state-building as an outcome of relations between external and internal actors.

The study fits into the category of research, which, “emphasize[s] that the social world is not easily ‘quantifiable’ as human actions and patterns of behavior are not always clearly generalizable” (Kurki 2008, 129). Generalizability is an important concern for positivist research as the particular only has interest when it serves to elucidate grand issues (Stake 2000, 436). Implicitly the responsibility for generalizability is on the shoulders of the researcher, who has to demonstrate that the results of the research hold for all cases within the universe of cases. The overarching goal is building general theory for the purposes of prediction (and explanation) (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 47). By contrast, interpretative researchers focus on contextuality. Researchers seek to provide a description of their research that is so “thick” that readers of their work can assess the relevance of the research for their own settings. This way, the interpretive methodology shifts responsibility for the applicability of research learning to other settings from the researcher to the reader of the research. Thus, contextuality can be treated as a more appropriate indicator for the quality of the interpretive research than generalizability (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 48).

4.2. Research design

The design of this study should reflect and make space for iteration but also for ways of investigating the multiple actors involved in state-building interventions on different levels. The project combines an in-depth conceptual analysis of the fragile state concept with an empirical analysis of the multiple

and dynamic interactions between internal and external actors in Yemen. State-building is an open-ended process, and although the focus here is on the so-called fragile states, the process is not confined to specific countries. This project zooms in on a specific case of state-building (Yemen) and specific subcases inside Yemen to analyze how internal actors embed external state-building interventions in the local context. The research is exploratory in its set-up; not because there is a lack of works on state-building but because the state-building literature has generally had a different focus. It is either policy oriented, focused on transferring the Western (European) state-building experience to alternative contexts or it seeks to identify the variable or the perfect order of variables which, if manipulated, would lead the so-called fragile states to become “strong” states. This study takes a different path, arguing that it is how internal actors embed the intervention in the local context that shapes state-building processes. The strategies of internal actors depend on the internal elite’s power position and relationship to the external actor. Yemen and the selected sub-cases is a case of these processes.

Case studies are typically framed as an “intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)” (Gerring 2007, 20). This is a reasonable definition if the purpose is to identify new variables or refine existing ones, which can then be tested in the total case population. However, the purpose of this case study is to further our knowledge of what actually takes place in state-building interventions through investigations of the concrete. Thus, the Yemeni case can be defined as a context- and process-oriented rather than a variable- and variance-oriented case study (Maxwell 2012). Yemen is considered a fragile state, which has undergone an intensive state-building process involving interaction between internal and external actors, particularly since the 1960s.¹¹⁵ In the timespan of one president, it has for example been lauded as a democratic experiment, targeted for democracy support and referred to as hosting the most dangerous branch of al-Qaeda and therefore “just” targeted by drones. Moreover, the uprising in Yemen, which unseated the president of 33 years, Ali ‘Abdullah Salih in 2011-2012, led to a transitional period where relations were in flux and thus were being re-negotiated. This facilitated data collection as many of my questions were already being discussing by internal actors. The transition also illustrates the importance of both regional and extra-regional actors.

¹¹⁵ Originally, it was the intention to also conduct data collection in Aden, the former capital of South Yemen. However, due to the deteriorating security situation it was not realistic.

In interpretive research, the choice of case and access are often intertwined. Here this has been the case in two ways; it was in Yemen that I saw the disconnect between the way state-building was portrayed in the literature and what was actually happening in a specific context and, second, in selecting a case where this could be investigated further, accessibility was an important concern. This is different from standard positivist research where case selection and case access are usually understood as two separate processes. Hence, selection is described as if “it were entirely within the researcher’s power and control” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 70). Access is never a trivial question but even less so in connection with research in states with massive social, political and security challenges. Indeed, in places such as Yemen, access is about getting in the door but even more about being accepted into social networks that can facilitate (or shoot down) research as they please.¹¹⁶ An important criterion for choosing Yemen was therefore that it is a case that would give the most insight within a relatively limited time span (Stake 2000, 446).¹¹⁷

The majority of empirical literature on state-building focuses on Africa. This is not surprising as Africa tend to dominate state fragility indexes and is the home of the majority of UN interventions. Yet, currently five out of the 16 most fragile states according to the Fragile States index are placed in the Middle East (additional ten in Africa plus Haiti).¹¹⁸ The limited focus on the Middle East in the state-building literature might also be related to a debate that has divided Middle Eastern scholars; the question of whether the Middle East is exceptional.¹¹⁹ This is important for the present analysis as it raises

¹¹⁶ Currently it is for example not easy to get a visa to Yemen, and the second time I travelled to Yemen in 2014 a number of airlines had temporarily disconnected their flights to Sana’a because of the fighting in relation to the Houthi take-over of the city.

¹¹⁷ As Schwartz-Shea and Yanow argue, all researches focus on settings that will enhance the likelihood of being able to explore the questions that interest them (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 58).

¹¹⁸ The actual delimitation of which countries belong to the Middle East still varies, however. Contentious countries are Israel, Iran and Turkey. In some accounts North Africa is treated separately, and some use the term “Greater Middle East”, which also includes some of the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia (Bilgin 2004). The Middle Eastern countries referred to as fragile are Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan (in that order). See <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/rankings-2015> (Last accessed 14 April 2016).

¹¹⁹ There has been substantial criticism of the use – and usefulness – of the term “Middle East”. First, as Pinar Bilgin argues: “The ‘Middle East’ is a geopolitical invention of external actors”, meaning that military strategic interest has played a central role in framing and delineating the Middle East (Bilgin 2005, 12). The imported quality of the state has been used to explain the relatively low level of regionalization in the Middle East. The individual states are unstable and illegitimate creatures that do not dare to delegate actual power to regional organizations. In this line of thinking, the Middle East is “exceptional” in that it is

the question of whether the Middle East can be understood and analyzed using general analytical tools and hence whether a framework informed by a quintessential Middle Eastern country, Yemen, has value outside the Middle East.¹²⁰ This debate, commonly referred to as “the Area Studies Controversy”, refers to the tensions between regional specialists and social science generalists on “what constitutes, or should constitute, the paradigm by which scholars construct knowledge about politics, economics, and international relations in major world regions” (Tessler 1999, vii). Regional specialists use their in-depth knowledge of the region’s culture, language and history to argue that any analysis that does not incorporate these peculiarities is unlikely to be accurate, whereas generalists emphasize the development of law-like generalizations, viewing the work of regional specialists as lacking methodological rigor and as being overly descriptive (Valbjørn 2003, 164). As Pinar Bilgin argues a division of work has developed where the Middle East has come under area studies that focus on gathering data and testing theories, whereas these theories are developed in other parts of the world (Bilgin 2015, 6).

This is, however, not a natural given. Fred Halliday attempts to carve out a middle ground between focusing on empirical particularities and the application of general analytical categories. To that end, Halliday suggests distinguishing between *analytical universalism* and *historical particularism*. Historical particularism points to the importance of the historical formation of societies and politics in the region. It recognizes that each Middle Eastern state has passed through a unique historical process that has shaped the specific social formation of the state. However, the particularity of Middle Eastern states can be understood using universal analytical categories. In fact, the use of universal analytical categories might be especially useful in the Middle East were the opposite of analytical universalism, analytical relativism, has occasionally led to “rampant relativism” or derailed discussions before they

the region of “realist thinking” *par excellence* defined by war and the lack of actual regional integration (Aarts 1999, 911). However, the countries of the Middle East are at the same time characterized by geographical proximity and a relatively high degree of social, cultural and religious homogeneity as well as strong narratives of regional identity (Harders and Legrenzi 2008, 2; Schulz 2011, 168). References to an “Arab nation” or the Muslim Ummah abound and have at times been a potent tool for popular mobilization. The notion of the Middle East clearly has resonance both inside and outside the region, which makes it a meaningful denominator. Moreover, it does not make the Middle East exceptional to have been created through external forces’ military strategic interests; indeed, this is a general trait of regions (Bilgin 2004, 26).

¹²⁰ The comparative literature has especially pointed to the Middle East as exceptional in terms of its lack of democratization (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1995; Heydemann 2016).

could commence as there was no agreement on who could speak or what categories to use (Halliday 1995, 12-16).¹²¹

This debate is related to the question of whether research is inductive, deductive or a combination. Deductive inference is theory driven and reasons from general claims to particular conclusions while inductive inference reasons from particular claims to general conclusions (Jackson 2010, 82-83). This project began with an empirical puzzle, thus following an inductive logic of inquiry, and then sought to generate plausible explanations from available data in a situation where there was a lack of applicable theories. In this process, I moved back and forth between theory and empirics questioning empirical materials and theoretical literatures, a process that was facilitated by doing two rounds of fieldwork a year apart.¹²² This process is less about establishing the truth but instead seeks to suggest likely connections, based on intensive knowledge of the empirics. Klotz and Lynch sum it up nicely: “Interpretation requires at least some key concepts to guide the selection of relevant information. In turn, those concepts result from researchers trying to understand, and act within, their socially constructed world. Theory and evidence thus inform each other. The more credible claim combines the insights of studies that rely on generalizations with others that stress detail” (Klotz and Lynch 2007, 21).

Hence, although the study presents as if the theoretical framework was developed independently from the empirical case and then applied to the case to support and exemplify the general theory, in reality the theoretical framework was developed through reiterations, which involved going back and forth between theory and empirics. Theory guided the tour but in a way where empirics were allowed to respond and introduce adjustments to the theoretical path as the study moved back and forth between the abstract and the concrete. For example, the typology over legitimacy in chapter 2 was adjusted to account for potential differences between internal, regional and extra regional legitimacy. The theoretical framework in chapter 3 combines and adjusts a number of insights from different theoretical approaches, including the use of political organizations instead of informal and formal institutions as well as the inclusion of internal actor’s resources into the model over the factors that shape state-building interventions.

¹²¹ Other examples of research that emphasizes that the Middle East can be understood using universal analytical categories include Sami Zubaida’s *Islam, the People and the State* (1989) where he argues that Islamic features of Middle Eastern politics are best understood as particular instances of general social and political processes (Bromley 1994, 88; Zubaida 1989).

¹²² Schwartz-Shea and Yanow refer to this approach as “Abductive reasoning” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 27).

There is a balance between being so relativistic in ones use of concepts and understandings that only the most abstract statements are possible and making statements which are so detached from any empirical reality that they lose empirical relevance. The approach taken here is to point to the importance of language in defining reality. Specifically, this is shown in how the use of the fragile state concept not only describes the world but partakes in its creation. It is also recognized that although the same concept is known and used universally, it might hold very different meanings for those using it depending on the context. At the same time, however, we need concepts and theoretical frameworks to be able to make sense of the empirical world. Thus, the framework is specific enough to guide the empirical investigation but abstract enough to allow for historical (empirical) particularities.

Consequently, the study aims to simultaneously contribute to the general state-building literature and the Yemeni case-specific literature.

4.2.1. Subcases as micro-cosmoses

This study has as its starting point that large-scale transformations such as state-building interventions have ground-level sources and effects (Auyero and Joseph 2013, 2). The theoretical framework is abstract and, as such, universal, but its application is necessarily anchored in the specific context. The case study provides an in-depth application of the theoretical framework, and thus aims to elucidate the “big” process of state-building through “thick description” and selected, concrete subcases, in which it is possible to capture how internal actors embed external intervention in the local context – investigating the “the big” in “the small”.¹²³ When viewing state-building as an open-ended, complex and dynamic process, it is necessary to anchor the study of the actual processes in very concrete locations where these interactions play out. It is in these cases of state-building that the power struggles and interactions that decide the future of the state become most visible (Flyvbjerg 1991, 92). Five cases have been selected due to their centrality in relation to the current Yemeni transition and state-building process as sites where the abstract process of state-building is investigated in the concrete:

- **Decentralization.** Decentralization is analyzed in two periods of Salih’s rule and as such juxtaposes an incremental, locally led process with the development of a legal framework of decentralization, arguing that internal actors can manipulate donor agendas to centralize power structures even in processes that are by definition meant to decentralize power.

¹²³ The notion of thick description was developed by Clifford Geertz in relation to anthropological studies (Geertz 1993).

- Basic education. Basic education is used as an example of how internal and external actors interact within service delivery. Basic education has been a priority for both donors and especially the Yemeni government. This case illustrates how the involvement of multiple donors can be used by the regime to present itself as a committed partner by facilitating a wide range of partnerships in effect leading to a disjointed system that supports patronage over effective service delivery.
- Al-Qaeda. This case focuses on how the framing of Yemen as a fragile state hosting a dangerous branch of al-Qaeda has facilitated the American military intervention. It analyzes how Salih was able to embed the American military intervention in the local context and use it to strengthen his regime vis-à-vis alternative internal actors.
- The Executive Bureau. This case focuses on how Western donors seek to reconcile what become contradictory aims in fragile states defined by their lack of government capacity, namely securing aid effectiveness and building government capacity building.
- The National Dialogue Conference/federalism. This case focuses on an event that was framed as the cornerstone in the development of the “new” Yemeni state following the uprising in 2011. The National Dialogue Conference was a 10-month inclusive dialogue meant to conclude in the formulation of a new constitution. Federalism, the most contentious issue discussed during this conference, is used to illustrate how embedment requires internal resources.

Other potential cases could have been selected, such as security sector reform, health instead of education or water management, which will most likely, in time, emerge as the most important political issue of all.¹²⁴ However, these were the cases that emerged as key to understanding state-building interventions in general and state-building in Yemen in particular. The selection was made to ensure diversity in the illustrations of the policy issue under investigation (Schatz 2009, 283). These cases are thus distinguished by being “information heavy” (Flyvbjerg 1991, 149). In some cases, such as the al-Qaeda, data collection primarily focused on how the al-Qaeda was perceived in Yemen by non al-Qaeda members. I did also not interview American policy makers. Nor have I interviewed the top echelons of the Yemeni elite, which feature centrally in this study. The analysis of their actions is

¹²⁴ Water scarcity is considered the most important and most complex development challenge in Yemen as it will impact all other aspects of life. It is, however, currently being overlooked, as other areas, most notably the ones discussed in the Yemeni case, take precedence (Read more on water management here: Lackner 2014b; Mewes 2011).

based on centrally placed Yemeni politicians, activists, civil servants and analysts. Case selection and approach are a reflection of which cases I could gain access to. I do not claim that these five cases together can “explain” the Yemeni state. I do, however, argue that these cases present key concrete spaces that epitomize the actual processes of state-building, including how different internal and external actors interact. Each case illustrates a different aspect of the overall state-building process – pointing to the micro-foundations of state-building while elucidating the complexities at play as strategies and policy documents are translated into the specific context.

This points to the central argument of this thesis; that state-building interventions are shaped by how internal actors embed external interventions in the local context. The strategies of internal actors depend on their material capacities and level of legitimacy. Hence, outcomes of state-building interventions depend on the local context. This speaks to why a focus on planned activities as described in strategies and other policy documents or to reliance on quantitative indicators despite their low quality in many fragile states tend to be able to say more about what interventions have not achieved (Weberian states) than actual outcomes.¹²⁵ The only way to access these complex relations of actual politics is through in-depth studies where it can be studied in the concrete (Flyvbjerg 1991, 20-21). This focus on deep knowledge of the context as a precondition for knowledge as commonalities to area studies, where understanding context is considered key to knowledge (Schatz 2009, 3). This method is inspired by political ethnography both as a “sensibility”, in the sense that the study aims to provide a representation of the Yemeni reality that can be recognized by the Yemeni who have provided input to the study and second as a methodological approach that emphasizes immersion into the field and detailed empirical knowledge (Schatz 2009). As already mentioned the study sees some concepts as universally relevant and therefore included in the theoretical model, for example legitimacy, but believes that the exact meaning of the concepts (what is legitimate) must be studied in the specific context. Thus, legitimacy is universally important, but *what* is legitimate is relative and linked to the specific context. The notion that the researcher can know why actors act as they do is problematic, but it makes even less sense to, by default, assume that all actors see the world as the researcher does (Wedeen 2010, 259). Research always takes place from a

¹²⁵ A similar argument is made by Bent Flyvbjerg’s in his investigation of planning policies in a Danish context. According to Flyvbjerg, the most important decisions and activities are found *before* there are any written documents, in what could be called the planning phase, and second in the implementation phase (Flyvbjerg 1991).

stance that is unfortunately overlooked in much positivist research as it presents itself as a universal, value-free starting point.¹²⁶

4.3. Data collection

This section presents the data sources used in this study, including how the data was collected. The data can be divided into two overall categories; first, written materials, especially UN documents accessed through the UN database and policy reports from major international organizations such as the UN, OECD and the World Bank. Second, interviews, observations and written materials collected in the capital Sana'a in Yemen during two periods of fieldwork in November-December 2013 and October-November 2014. Additional information has been collected via Skype and other social media during the entire duration of the project (2013-2016). This also includes written materials such as laws, evaluations and other country-specific reports on Yemen in general and on specific areas of interest.

The data collection method was qualitative as a qualitative research design is particularly well suited for research in areas of limited knowledge, high complexity where cultural constructions prevail (Dahler-Larsen 2007, 322). Hence, during and between the two periods of fieldwork I began analyzing data, moving from empirics to theory and back again, in the process adjusting the theoretical framework and the interview guides. This way, the project has an inductive starting point, but benefitted from a dynamic and generative relationship between induction, deduction and interpretation. In this process, observations and casual encounters in the field form an important backdrop to the interviews. Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read describe it nicely as cues that “open a window onto the worlds of subjects” (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 238). The fieldwork did entail repeated encounters with more than a third of the people interviewed. These encounters were either repeat interviews or meetings in other professional settings but also meetings in social settings such as qat chews and meals. Hence, access was an on-going process where I as a researcher had to navigate more complex and long-term relationships than if I had done survey research, for

¹²⁶ This is related to the already discussed separations within political science where some research areas have been delegated to area studies (the Middle East) whereas others inform mainstream political science. Consider why a Middle Eastern researcher working hard to understand the Danish language and gain access to the Danish public sector, would not be referred to as an area specialist but as a “public sector specialist” whereas a Dane working hard to learn Arabic and study the public sector in let's say, Egypt, could be referred to as an ‘area specialist’. It illustrates how research is anchored in the West (Tessler 1999, xiv).

example (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 59). Generally, qualitative, or site-intensive methods, implies “cultivating a deeper engagement with a locality, context or set of informants” than in other types of research (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 238). This approach was chosen to get as much data as possible on the *actual* politics of state-building. It entailed questioning official narratives of previous and ongoing political processes and pointing to the real power holders in Yemen. Hence, although the topic of my research was not politically problematic, specific quotes could cause problems for specific individuals.

4.3.1. Data collection: documents

This section gives a brief overview of how the textual documents used in this study were analyzed. The written data was analyzed in different but complementary ways. The more structured analysis of two types of documents, which is specified below, has been supplemented by readings of newspaper articles, reports on Yemen, state fragility and state-building and updates on social media. This provides a background to the analysis but was not systematically documented.

Prior to setting up the theoretical model for the factors that shape state-building interventions, the project analyzes the emergence and use of the fragile state concept. This is done using two types of documents: a general search of when and how the fragile state concept is used in the UN system and an inductive, in-depth analysis of selected policy documents related to fragile states.

The first type of documents varied in form, length and type such as reports or discussions in the General Assembly and the Security Council. Documents were included based on a general search in the UN archives, referred to as the Official Document System (ODS). The ODS, which I refer to as the UN archive, is a full-text, born-digital database with UN documents published from 1993 onward, as well as scanned documents from before 1993. It contains a wealth of information, including documents of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiaries, as well as administrative issuances and other documents. The database is free to use and can be accessed through the un.org homepage. It is possible to customize searches. The first search, which is further explicated in chapter 5, was a general search to get an overall impression of how frequently, by whom and in what context the fragile state concept was used. The search did not distinguish between different types of UN documents but only looked at the context in which the fragile state concept was used. In each case, the sentence or the context in which the “fragile state” concept was

used was copied into a separate document. This is documented and analyzed in chapter 5.¹²⁷

The second type of documents in the conceptual analysis of the fragile state concept was selected policy reports, which were used to nuance the findings from the analysis of the UN documents. The fragile state concept first emerged among donors and in policy circles before entering academic discourse. The policy documents were selected based on their relevance for the establishment and spread of the fragile state concept. The eight selected documents were written by the UN, OECD and the World Bank, three international organizations that have all been central in the development and proliferation of the fragile state concept. An overview of the documents can be found in table 5.7 in chapter 5. The documents were analyzed using an inductive strategy to not limit which categories could emerge. Centrally, the point of the conceptual analysis was to discover how the documents use and frame the fragile state concept without beforehand limiting the potential categories by introducing preconceived notions of the concept. Following the advice of Kathy Charmaz, open coding was done relatively fast to avoid too much reflection during coding (Charmaz 2014, 48). The next step, focused coding, entails deciding that “some number of your earlier codes are appropriate for categorizing your data more thoroughly and for further analytical elaboration” (Lofland 2006, 201). Through the focused coding process, some codes emerge as more relevant categories and these form the foundation of the subsequent analysis.¹²⁸

4.3.1.1. Yemen as a fragile state

In chapter 6, the Official Document System (ODS) or the UN archive is used to investigate developments in the use of the fragile state concept in relation to Yemen. The search was restricted to documents from the General Assembly and the Security Council until 1 January 2016 to delimit the number of documents. The search is an attempt to capture how Yemen has been used in discussions that also featured the use of the “fragile state” or “failed state” concept. The analysis includes 46 documents and is further specified in chapter 6.

4.3.2. Data collection: interviews and data from the field

The primary source of data for the investigation of state-building processes and the strategies that internal elite actors apply to embed external state-

¹²⁷ The material is available upon request.

¹²⁸ The focused and open codes are available upon request to the author.

building intervention in the local context in Yemen is fieldwork. The data collection methods were qualitative and primarily interviews, some observation and document research. 28 interviews were completed with relevant actors in Yemen.¹²⁹ This was supplemented by countless informal conversations with especially media people and researchers. It also builds on some observational data gathered during my months in Yemen such as during visits to ministries and other settings.¹³⁰ This was supplemented by evaluations, reports and laws such as the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, which were given to me in connection with interviews. Some of these materials were given in confidence whereas others, such as the Local Administration Law, are public, but not always easily accessible. Finally, other secondary sources such as news articles in English language Yemeni newspapers, specifically the *Yemen Times*, have been continuously monitored, and relevant homepages and social media sites including the NDC secretariat homepage were consulted and used to ensure the quality of the gathered materials and to adjust questions along the way. Events were unfolding during and in-between fieldtrips. For example, the Houthis took over Sana'a just before my second visit to Sana'a in 2014, which influenced the interviews that year.

4.3.2.1. The interviews

The recruitment of respondents was not easy but was facilitated by previous visits to Yemen.¹³¹ Before going into the field I had thought about categories of people that I would ideally be able to talk to, such as participants in the NDC, specifically covering the state-building group and the Southern group, youth activists and people who had knowledge of decentralization and federalism, but I had no interviews set up when I first arrived to Sana'a.¹³²

¹²⁹ One interview was done via Skype and two individuals were interviewed twice (in 2013 and again in 2014). Three interviews were with non-Yemeni working in or with issues related to state-building in Yemen, and 6 of the 28 interviews were with women.

¹³⁰ Unfortunately, I was not in Yemen during any of the plenum sessions of the National Dialogue.

¹³¹ I had been to Sana'a three times before doing the fieldwork for this project, in 2005 and 2006 (in relation to a partnership between Yemen Red Crescent and Danish Red Cross) and in 2008-2009 where I did a month's fieldwork in Yemen Red Crescent for my master thesis.

¹³² I did not have a fixer, so all interviews were set up by me, or in a few cases by someone I had just interviewed. It was a process that was markedly less structured than the impression you are often left with when reading accounts of how respondents have been recruited. This was of course partly a consequence of the special circumstances, doing research in Yemen, which for example means that it is seldom very useful (or possible) to set up ap-

I had a few contacts from prior trips to Yemen, whom I called when I arrived to Sana'a in 2013. They helped me with suggestions for my first round of interviews. These were supplemented by contacts that were established as I met people, for example during qat chews where I would typically introduce myself and my reason for being in Yemen. The process can best be described as random sampling (snowball sampling). For example, a friend invited me to a qat chew where I was asked about my research. I told about my difficulties setting up interviews, and a well-connected person, whom I had never met before, offered to provide me with a list of English-speaking participants in the NDC. I received the list, which had about 10 names on it, but unfortunately the formatting of the list had gone bad so I ended up with names (in Arabic) and numbers but no way of knowing which name matched which number. I therefore called numbers without knowing who would answer but ended up getting some of my most successful interviews.¹³³ I also had some success contacting people via Facebook if I was not able to get a phone number. Gradually, a larger number of interviews were with people my respondents recommended when I asked if they knew of someone who could be of relevance for my research. Referrals also helped establish contact as it is always helpful to be able to refer to a common acquaintance. As a rule, if I was able to establish contact, the person would agree to be interviewed.

The people I interviewed were politicians, activists, civil servants, representatives of external actors and political analysts. In some cases, I found contact details on specific people I thought would be relevant, for example based on articles where their names were mentioned, but in none of the cases where I managed to set up interviews was this done through an office.¹³⁴

The clever observer will have noticed that there are more than 28 respondents in the display. This is because several of the respondents had more than one function, including politicians who also worked in the public sector and researchers who were also politically active.¹³⁵

pointments before being in Yemen. Once in Yemen, appointments would usually be for the same or the following day, so long-term planning was not an option.

¹³³ Although the process is described as random, I did reach a certain level of saturation on specific topics, especially the NDC due to the length of the period I was in Yemen and the return visit in 2014. Looking back, the process was quite exhausting but I don't see how I could have managed to speak to a more diverse group of people. Certain names began to reoccur when I asked for references, simply because the group of elite actors in Yemen who speak English and are available for interviews at any given time is relatively limited.

¹³⁴ I tried contacting for example the NDC secretariat but never heard back. However, through Facebook I was able to get an interview with a centrally placed person and visited the secretariat.

¹³⁵ Six of the 28 interviews were with women. Women were well represented in the National Dialogue Conference but are generally underrepresented in the political sphere (public

Table 4.1. Overview over respondents

	Type of actor					
	Politicians	Youth activists	Civil servants	External actors/ NGOs	Political analyst/ researchers	Non-state actors
Number	6	2	7	6	7	2

Of the respondents, nine participated in the National Dialogue in different working groups and in different roles. The majority was in the state-building working group, but I also spoke to representatives from the Sa'ada working group, the Southern Issue working group, the Development working group and two people who were not part of the working groups but had been part of the organizational set-up of the NDC.¹³⁶ Four interviews were done with the help of a translator; in two cases the translator was found on the spot and in two cases I brought the translator to the interview (two different). I prefer not to use an interpreter because it tends to limit the thickness of data but also because establishing trust is much easier in direct communication (Fujii 2013).¹³⁷ In one of the cases where I did not bring an interpreter, the interpreter was my contact who had set up an interview for me with more senior representatives in the NGO I was visiting and in the fourth situation the interview had been set up for me so it was not until we met that we realized that we needed an interpreter. A person in the office was quickly recruited. The experience of using an interpreter varied. In one case the interview turned into a group discussion as two other people joined the conversation and the interpreter became involved in the conversation by giving personal experiences of relevance to the discussion. Initially, I found this annoying as it made it more difficult for me to control the interview, but looking back it probably led to more interesting data— and in the concrete example, I was able to interview one of the people who joined the conversation in private afterwards, which was more helpful than the original interview.

positions in general). I did not specifically seek out women. In the empirical chapters I have completely anonymized the interviews, but they are identified by a number so that each quote can easily be identified if necessary.

¹³⁶ Chapter 8 explains the National Dialogue Conference including its set-up in more detail.

¹³⁷ My interpreters were recommended by friends and had experience translating but were not professional interpreters. Professional interpreters can be quite expensive in Yemen and I was on a budget.

I would characterize the people I spoke to as elite actors although not all of them would define themselves as such.¹³⁸ There were certainly also a great deal of variation in the group, but they all had experience dealing with foreigners and participated in some way in political processes which is why I spoke to them – to have them explain something outside of themselves where they are the experts (Leech 2002b, 663). In this sense, the study reiterates a common problematic, that Yemen (and similar places) tends to be understood through the filter of a relatively small group of affluent elite actors. I had the advantage of an existing network in Yemen and thus recruited respondents in a variety of ways but it is still worth mentioning as there is a danger that research comes to be based on relatively few and not necessarily representative elite actors.

The interviews were semi-structured with questions that are meant to allow the respondent to elaborate their responses and to allow for a “conversational flow” (Aberbach and Rockman 2002, 674). This allowed me to adjust questions both during and in between interviews as my knowledge deepened and as contextual factors changed. Moreover, the questions were adjusted to the specific roles of the interviewees. I worked with an overall interview guide, which developed between 2013 and 2014 (Annex A). During individual interviews, I would, depending on the situation, occasionally depart considerably from the interview guide.

In November/December 2013 the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was approaching its final deadline and provided a natural starting point for interviews. Often, interviews would start with some small-talk related to the NDC or the transition, and then shift into an actual interview. This had several advantages; in most instances it would have been rude to not allow for some small-talk, but the small-talk also had the added advantage of allowing me to present myself, usually accentuating that my first visit to Yemen was ten years prior to the current research. Finally, the gradual change from small-talk to interview made the situation less threatening, I imagine, for both me and the person I was interviewing. Often the NDC was brought up by the respondents themselves or I would start by asking either about the NDC or the uprising which led to the NDC, depending on who I was talking to. Either way, I would start with some descriptive “non-threatening” questions, which had the added advantage of revealing what the respondent perceived as the most central aspects of the transition and/or the NDC (Leech

¹³⁸ In one case, I became very aware of the potentially exposed situation I could be in if the interviewee decided to use his power against me. In all my visits to Yemen, this is the situation where I have felt most exposed, and although nothing happened, the feeling of having, in effect, placed my physical well-being in the hands of a stranger was not nice. It took a couple of days before I could get out of the house again.

2002a, 666). The process was similar in October/November 2014, but the initial small-talk would focus on the Houthis as they had by then taking over Sana'a and the NDC had concluded.

Hence, the interview would start with some general questions related to the overall political situation and potentially the subcase the respondent had specific knowledge about. This would allow me to ask more specific follow-up questions, possibly deviating from the interview guide, but it was my experience that broad questions followed by probing was the most effective way to get information (Berry 2002, 681; Leech 2002a, 668). Usually, respondents would refer to the most important political actors but if not, I would ask a direct question (*Who are the most influential political actors in Yemen?*). This question was not particularly useful by itself, but I used it as a starting point for probing into elite relations and potential changes since the uprising in 2011. Likewise, I would ask directly about the role of tribes in Yemen (*What is the role of the tribe in Yemen?*), generally after the respondent had mentioned that a specific actor was tribal. I asked about external actors at the end of interview, unless it was brought up by respondents. Again, I would start with a broad, general question (*What is the role of external actors?*). This question would prompt respondents to talk about Saudi Arabia most frequently or, in a few cases, the international community understood as UN and Western states. This in itself illustrates who the respondents view as key actors. It is sometimes recommended that the researcher “dumbs down”, but in this context, to be honest, my concern was more to convince the respondent that I had knowledge – and appreciation of – the complex Yemeni reality. In some cases this was not important, but in quite a few interviews I felt that this was quite important.

The interviews I was able to secure, the data I was given and the subsequent presentation of that data might be biased. First, fieldwork is occasionally accused of being biased as the researcher influences the data more than in other types of research. I argue that the likelihood that one is getting truthful answers generally increases with time spent in the field (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 11). Moreover, due to the variation of the people I interviewed, the overlap in central points and subsequent discussions with Yemen specialists, the study is replicable in the sense that another political scientist would have “been made aware of the meanings” relevant to the particular phenomenon under study (Wedeen 2010, 265). Second, interview data might be affected by memory problems or vested interests leading the respondents to either deliberately or unintentionally misrepresent facts. However, I did not ask people to recount political processes to be used as factual descriptions but largely asked about their perceptions and opinions – their interpretations of events.

4.3.2.2. The researcher's role and ethics

A few words are in order to describe me, a (relatively) young, Western female traveling and working alone on a PhD project in Yemen, and my role. Considering the general presentation of Yemen in the media, the first point to be made is that my freedom of movement was not as restricted as one might be tempted to think. Actually, being female did not prevent me from moving around Sana'a or entering relevant places. Rather, it allowed me to enter private homes more freely than males, and female foreigners are usually accepted into otherwise all-male situations such as qat chews.

However, the combination of being a student, female and a Westerner positioned me in the field. On the one hand, being a student and female made me less threatening, which can increase people's willingness to share details.¹³⁹ On the other hand, there is a danger of not being taken seriously. I tried to create a certain rapport with informants, usually by telling a bit about myself, emphasizing that I had been to Yemen multiple times since 2005. This would frequently lead to juxtaposition between the situation in 2013/2014 and 2005, often with focus on the deteriorating security situation. This functioned as a natural stepping stone for continued dialogue on the ongoing political situation, but it also seemed to give me some credibility as a person with a serious interest in Yemen. This was in some cases helpful in terms of distinguishing me from Westerners who come to Yemen and think they know it all after two days in a luxury hotel.¹⁴⁰ As Jette Fog argues, a lot of the communication in interviews is non-verbal. The fact that I had some prior knowledge of the Yemeni context helped me avoid some of the obvious pitfalls (although definitely not all of them) but it also helped the flow of the interviews as the fact that I had some knowledge led the respondents to occasionally hint at more than articulate a point, which I, at least sometimes, was able to catch, making it a more fluent conversation (Fog 2004, 41).

The fact that I was a student was more defining than the fact that I'm female. For example, I was treated as a guest in most interviews. This was most outspoken if we met in someone's private home, but also at meetings in offices, which would in some cases lead to an invitation for lunch, or in cafés where the interviewee in about half the cases picked up the tap for both of

¹³⁹ In one instance where I was recommended to contact a specific person, I was encouraged to emphasize that I was doing research and not mention that it was for a PhD. In another instance, the respondent seemed to show me extra kindness as he had himself finished a PhD and remembered the process as cumbersome.

¹⁴⁰ I was commended for my interest in Yemen many times, especially the fact that I travelled to Yemen to speak to Yemenis instead of conducting my research from the safety of my desk.

us.¹⁴¹ Although I'm clearly not a person of power, the fact that I'm a Westerner did facilitate interviews and does in the Yemeni context place me among other Westerners who usually work for NGOs, embassies or the UN-system. Christian Lund describes how, during field work on rural land conflict in Niger, people queued up and demanded to have their narratives recorded, which made him wonder if, despite his openness about being "inconsequential", it is not so that in some contexts the mere presence of a (Western) researcher is never inconsequential (Lund 2014).¹⁴² My experience was not as explicit but I still felt that I was, in some instances, treated as someone who could potentially be an asset despite my current low position.

Finally, doing research in a relatively difficult social and political situation requires that trust is established and that information is treated respectfully. Social norms in Yemen led respondents to treat me with great kindness and hospitality and the conversations that followed were generally quite blunt and critical of both past and current political events.¹⁴³ Robert Stake formulates it as "something of a contract" between researcher and respondent, a moral obligation which I seek to honor in the way I present my interpretations of the data I was given access to but also in a general promise of anonymity for all respondents (Stake 2000, 447).¹⁴⁴ The difficult security situation in Yemen in which I was conducting my field research obviously also influenced what I could do. First of all, my safety was commented on in most of the interviews. I lived in a normal house in the Old City in Sana'a and used taxis to get around.¹⁴⁵ This underlined my status as a student.¹⁴⁶ Second, although I had no bad experiences at check points or in the streets, it did put a

¹⁴¹ I wore an old, slightly too small, abaya when I was in Yemen. During my last visit to Yemen, where I conducted several interviews in cafés where affluent Yemenis meet, I became aware of how scruffy my appearance was compared to the Yemenis there. This was increased by only having one abaya and living in the Old City, which is dusty. I was told that the quality of one's abaya was a giveaway for social status.

¹⁴² See also Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, *Interpretive research design: Concepts and processes*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012) 60-63 for this point

¹⁴³ In one interview, my request to tape the interview was declined by arguing that we were just having a conversation.

¹⁴⁴ In some cases, respondents would emphasize when they said something I should "keep to myself" but I also spoke to a respondent who would like to be quoted.

¹⁴⁵ Usually the same taxi which I could call, which was helpful if I was going somewhere a little remote. Occasionally, I took a taxi from the street going home. I had no problems, but the reactions I got demonstrated that it was not a frequent occurrence to see a foreigner in public transportation. Generally, I did not wear the niqab, that is, conceal my face, but it was an option if I felt it was safer.

¹⁴⁶ In terms of doing research, living in the Old City had the advantage of me being able to go outside and take a walk. The Old City was considered safe. On the downside, I lived in a house without a generator so electricity would regularly disappear.

strain on me as otherwise normal things such as going shopping suddenly becomes situations of increased risk.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, during both my visits several large terror attacks were carried out in close proximity to where I lived, which underlined the precariousness of the security situation.¹⁴⁸

4.3.3. Data processing: interviews

This section outlines how the interview data was analyzed. Of the 28 interviews, 17 were recorded and subsequently transcribed, whereas the rest was recorded using notes.¹⁴⁹ The quality of the recordings varies as some interviews were done in cafés with background noise. Moreover, the interviews were done in English, which is not the first language of the researcher or the respondent. Hence, quotes from the interviews have been edited to make them comprehensible outside of the verbal context, specifically by adjusting grammar.

The analysis of the interviews was a back-and-forth process, i.e., data analysis was not a separate process but happened in a dialectic interplay with data collection. This was facilitated by the space of time between the two rounds of field work in Yemen (November- December 2013 and October-November 2014). Moreover, because state-building is a large, unwieldy process, the interviews were aimed at providing data to the smaller cases, which was selected to be able to demonstrate how internal actors embed external intervention in the local context. This means that the interviews cover different aspects of the state-building process, which would not necessarily come out if the interviews were analyzed independently. Hence, the analysis of the interviews focused on specific themes, which all relate to state-building but in different ways. For example, several interviews focus on decentralization and its role in state-building. Two interviews focus solely on understanding the legal set-up of decentralization after 2000 when the current Local Administration Law was formulated, the role of the Ministry of Local Admin-

¹⁴⁷ It is in no way a unique observation or limited to Yemen that fieldwork can be stressful (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015)

¹⁴⁸ For example, the defense ministry including a hospital was attacked on 5 December 2013. This was about 1 km. from where I was living so the initial explosion was quite powerful and we could hear the ensuing gun fire. More than 50 people died. I didn't know how serious it was but I had an interview so while gunfire was still being exchanged I drove across the city to do the interview. If an attack of similar magnitude had happened in Denmark, I'm sure my reaction would have been different. There were also regular assassinations of political figures, I for example drove pass a car riddled with bullet holes from when a member of the NDC had been assassinated, and several of the people I spoke to had received death threats.

¹⁴⁹ One interview was not transcribed as it functioned more as a background interview.

istration and the implementation of laws and policies. This is supplemented by parts of other interviews that touch upon decentralization but from different perspectives where it is part of a different conversation, for example related to federalism as a potential solution to the on-going political instability in Yemen. The core categories were linked to the subcases which were outlined in section 4.2.1. Hence, it is not only important what the respondent said but also in what context it was said, meaning that the same words can be interpreted in different ways depending on context. The example of decentralization is useful. The context in which decentralization varied from being related to on-going debates on the number of regions in a future federal Yemen, the experience of local councils from 2000 and onwards, the Local Development Associations which were a bottom-up decentralization structure in the 1970s and finally, the Yemenis' ability and desire to live free from central government interference. It is thus highly important to understand the context of the use of decentralization to understand its meaning.

I have listened to the interviews repeatedly to identify interesting themes, which were then investigated in the secondary literature and, if mentioned repeatedly, incorporated into the theoretical framework. As Fereday and Muir-Cochrane argue: "Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon. The process involves the identification of themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data". It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (Muir-Cochrane and Fereday 2006, 3-4). In my experience, listening to interviews stimulates the memory of the interview situation, which can nuance quotes or help to remember them in the context in which the specific point was made. The interview data is presented throughout the empirical chapters in quotes to illustrate findings. The focus is on revealing the respondents' reflections as they conveyed them in their own words, thereby strengthening the credibility and validity of the research. This maintains a strong link between data interpretation and the words of the respondents (Muir-Cochrane and Fereday 2006, 3).

4.4. Conclusion

Any research design entails a number of ontological presuppositions, and whether they are made explicit or remain implicit, they influence how research will be carried out and what goals the research strives to reach. This chapter has outlined the broader epistemological, ontological and methodological context and how the study is situated within this context. The chapter has introduced the different kinds of data which are used to investigate dif-

ferent parts of the study, i.e. the conceptual analysis of the fragile state concept, which focuses solely on documents and second, the analysis of the strategies that internal actors used to embed external intervention in the Yemeni context. The case of Yemen and the selected sub-cases within Yemen are used to illustrate the concrete strategies of embedment that internal actors apply. State-building is on the one hand a national process which calls for large-N analysis and identification of variables across time and/or geographical space but it is also a very concrete process. It is the former approach to state-building that this study takes. The next chapter focuses on the fragile state concept, investigating its emergence and spread, and potential implications of its use.

PART III.

THE FRAGILE STATE CONCEPT

Part III consists of chapter 5 and zooms in on the emergence and use of the fragile state concept. This answers the first sub research question: *“How has the fragile state concept emerged and what are the implications of its use?”*

Part III shows, through a conceptual analysis of the fragile state concept using official UN documents from 1989 to 2014 and selected key policy documents from the UN, OECD and the World Bank, that although the fragile state concept is frequently used by especially Western states, there is little agreement on its definition. This chapter argues that this is an inherent part of the fragile state concept as it is an essentially contested concept. This means that the proper use of the fragile state concept will continue to be disputed. Consequently, the main attraction of the concept lies not in its descriptive qualities but in its ability to influence reality. The chapter argues that the use of the fragile state concept creates a hierarchy of states where the fragile state becomes amenable to interventions from “stronger” states. These interventions are referred to as state-building interventions.

In sum, the chapter does not attempt to refine current conceptualizations and measurements of state fragility but instead focuses on how the fragile state concept reached universal applicability and secondly the potential implications of its use. This way, Part III sets the scene for part IV of the thesis where the theoretical framework is applied to the case of Yemen.

Chapter 5.

The fragile state concept: the power of definition

The importance of undertaking an empirical study that proceeds from this conceptualization is that analysis moves away from the conventional why questions to how questions. Analysis examines not only how social identities get constructed, but also what practices and policies are thereby made possible (Doty 1996, 4).

There has been a proliferation of concepts such as “failed”, “weak”, “collapsed” or “shadow” just to mention a few, to describe current states. The popularity of these concepts underlines that the starting point for discussions on political order is the state. Tellingly, in these states the most important characteristic is what is missing, i.e. the state. This chapter zooms in on the fragile state concept through an investigation of the concept’s emergence, use and the consequences of its use.¹⁵⁰

There is a growing literature that asserts that the fragile state concept is too broad and therefore offers little analytical leverage in terms of better understanding the challenges of the developing world (Call 2008, 1492; Ezrow and Frantz 2013, 1323; Hoehne and Hagmann 2009; Lambach 2007, 34; Lemay-Hébert 2009, 22). This chapter focuses on a neglected aspect of this critique, namely the subjective and political character of the fragile state concept (Bhuta 2012, 134). It is argued that the fragile state concept affects the social world by legitimating and naturalizing certain actions and a preferred political order (Guzzini 2013, 6). The chapter investigates *how* the fragile state concept is produced and used to describe certain states and what the potential consequences of the use of the fragile state concept (Doty 1996, 4). This contributes to research on fragile states where the focus is on refin-

¹⁵⁰ The fragile state concept is understood as a negation of the “state” concept, which is generally considered what W. B. Gallie has called an “appraisive concept” (Gallie in Collier, Hidalgo, and Maciuceanu 2006, 216). Connolly defines essentially contested concepts as being appraisive in that “the state of affairs it describes is a valued achievement” (Connolly 1993, 10). However, I believe that his analysis can include negative concepts. The fragile state concept is constructed by adding the adjective “fragile” to describe specific features in the noun (state), but the two words, once combined, enter into a mutual constitution of meaning where the adjective contributes to the meaning of the noun and the noun to the meaning of the adjective (Brænder, Kølvråa, and Bagge Laustsen 2014, 61-62). Hence, “fragile” is not only used to describe a specific form of state but also to give “fragile states” a negative valuation.

ing the fragile state category or identifying the reasons for fragility as measured on some seemingly objective, usually quantitative, indicators (the *why* question).¹⁵¹ However, although the Weberian ideal state is the referent used to define some states as fragile, there is a host of different conceptualizations of state fragility (Lambach and Debiel 2007, 34). Accordingly, there is no universally accepted group of fragile states as different indicators are used in different rankings.¹⁵² Yet, still the fragile state concept is frequently used as if it refers to a well-defined group of states with similar problems, solvable through externally backed state-building. Hence, this chapter argues that the use of the fragile state concept is a way of constructing problems in a certain way that makes possible certain answers to these problems, in this case state-building interventions (Chandler 2010, 9).

This points to the importance of questions of power as power plays a central role in (re)creating particular relationships and dispositions (Doty 1996, 4). In this view, the fragile state concept is the latest modifier to (re)construct and reassert a hierarchical relation between non-Western states and idealized Western states (Thiessen 2015). The fragile state concept becomes inscribed in an asymmetrical relationship where it is used to designate an “other” (Doty 1996, 3). This study focuses predominantly on how non-fragile states have created and use the fragile state concept. This largely excludes alternative voices such as the so-called fragile states themselves. This is not to say that these voices have no importance but the focus here is on how the non-fragile world’s representation of some states as “fragile” enables certain practices and policies that would not otherwise be possible, specifically in relation to state-building interventions.¹⁵³

The analysis has three steps; first the conceptual framework, which builds on Reinhart Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* and William E. Connolly’s analysis of “essentially contested concepts”, is developed. Second, the emergence and diffusion of the fragile state concept is analyzed by investigating how much the concepts are used and in what contexts in UN documents from 1989-2014. Third, and finally, an analysis of central policy documents from the UN, OECD and the World Bank explores the meaning of the fragile

¹⁵¹ It is not uncommon to see the lack of shared definitions or understanding of the most central aspects of state fragility brushed aside by the observation that most indexes do not vary that much in terms of which countries appear at the top (Carment and Yiagadeesen 2014, 4). However, if one takes a look at the various rankings, the term “fragile” is used for approximately 100 different countries, whereof about half figure prominently in several rankings (Boege et al. 2008, 17).

¹⁵² The use of indicators and rankings in relation to state fragility is discussed in section 5.5.

¹⁵³ See Roxanne Doty for a similar point (Doty 1996, 10).

state concept in more detail and the stated goals of interventions in “fragile states”. This discussion of what the document sees as suitable solutions to the problem of state fragility feeds in to the discussion of the consequences of the use of the fragile state concept. This chapter does *not* investigate all the cases where the fragile state concept has *not* been applied, nor have I tried to identify and compare to potential interventions in non-fragile states that were similar to states referred to as fragile on some “objective” indicators to investigate whether the act of being named “fragile” indeed had an independent effect on otherwise identical cases.

5.1. Analytical framework: *Begriffsgeschichte*

No history can ever be reduced to the language in which
it is recorded, but neither is it recognizable without
such a linguistic record
(Koselleck 2011, 27).

Reinhart Koselleck is generally recognized as the foremost proponent of *Begriffsgeschichte* (the history of concepts) (Koselleck 1985; 1989; 2002; 2011). *Begriffsgeschichte* takes as a starting point that the period 1750-1850, referred to as the *Sattelzeit*, saw deep-seated societal-political changes that went hand in hand with fundamental changes in applied concepts so that basic social and political concepts acquired meanings that no longer need to be translated to be understood today (Koselleck 2002, 5; Olsen 2012, 171). The methodology of *Begriffsgeschichte* emphasizes the invention and development of fundamental concepts.¹⁵⁴ Koselleck has defined concepts by distinguishing between words and concepts where a concept must retain multiple meanings that extend beyond the meaning of the word to which the concept is tied. Indeed, a word becomes a concept when “the full richness of a social and political context of meaning, in which, and for which, a word is used, is taken up by the word” (Koselleck in Olsen 2012, 172). The word *state* illustrates how a word turns into a concept when more elements enter into the word. According to Koselleck, “state” becomes elevated into a concept when its semantic content is expanded by adding words such as “domination, territorial sovereignty, administration, citizenship, legislation, adjudication, administration, taxation, and military force, to name just the most common ones” (Koselleck 2011, 20). This also means that concepts are inherently defined by combining an abundance of meanings. Thus, changes in the meaning of concepts cannot be reduced to the change of one meaning of a word to another meaning. Rather change must occur in the entire makeup

¹⁵⁴ The unit of analysis is concepts and not discourses or ideologies (Richter 1986, 620).

and interaction between all the words that constitute the concept (Koselleck 2011, 20). Drawing on Saussure, Koselleck acknowledges the need to alternate between synchronic analysis, the non-historical analysis of language at a specific time, and diachronic analysis where the historical development of a language is traced. Hence, focusing on diachronic analysis, *Begriffsgeschichte* allows the researcher to assess change and persistence in the meaning of a concept over time, including the relationship between the concept and political, social or economic structures (Koselleck 2011, 17-18). Furthermore, diachronic analysis makes it possible to identify the omission or addition of concepts in the semantic field (Richter 1986, 622-623). A central part of the methodology is that understanding the history of concepts, means understanding how these concepts both restrict and enable certain alternatives for action (Koselleck 1989, 317-318). The meaning of concepts is shaped by the historical context in which they are developed, and this process includes a “struggle over the ‘correct’ concepts” as the control over the meaning over key political words is used to legitimate a preferred political order (Freeden 1996, 117). For example, a certain conceptualization of what “the state” means, impacts the available space of action for territorial entities. Additionally, although new concepts may be coined, such as “fragile state”, their meaning will be “virtually laid out in the pre-given language at the time” (Koselleck 1989, 318). Hence, the meaning of “fragile state” will be a reflection – a negation – of the meaning of “state”. This means that concepts such as “fragile state” not only describe *a reality* but participate in defining it. In the words of Koselleck, “Concepts no longer serve merely to define certain states of affairs; henceforth concepts are made to reach into the future. Increasingly this future was conceptualized. Before positions could be won, they had first to be linguistically formulated” (Koselleck in Richter 1986, 619). In fact, words have what Koselleck has called “autonomous power” as they are a necessary part of human experience – without common concepts there is no political action, no social activity and no economic action (Koselleck 1985, 173-174; Koselleck 1989, 312). Thus, in *Begriffsgeschichte* concepts are neither completely determined by social or political history, nor are they unaffected by the context (Freeden 1996, 119; Richter 1996, 11). Consequently, *Begriffsgeschichte* directs attention to the implicit danger of uncritically ascribing the same characteristics to translations of seemingly identical concepts. Again, this point can be illustrated with the example of “the state”, which can be used as a translation of the Greek *polis*, the Chinese *kuo*, the Latin *civitas* or *imperium* or *res publica*, the Florentine *stato* or the French *état* without really knowing if there is a body of concepts that is

common to all of them (Pocock 1996, 54).¹⁵⁵ The point being that although these concepts might all be translated as “the state”, the actual substance of the different types of political entities might vary substantially. Different or new situations may be described by rediscovering older concepts, stretching the meaning of existing concepts or inventing new concepts or what Koselleck refers to as “hyphenated concepts”. One example is the invention of the fragile state concept as a reaction to how existing concepts, specifically “state” did not adequately describe new experiences (Koselleck 2011, 21). The hyphenated concept of fragile state is constructed from the “state” concept. In Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* the concept of the state is embedded in its original linguistic setting, which cannot change from day to day or in every new situation (Koselleck 2011, 31). Hence, it would be wrong to assume that the state concept would have the same meaning across temporal and territorial spheres (Koselleck 2007, 80).

Summing up, *Begriffsgeschichte* is useful in several ways; first it points to the historicity and contextual boundedness of concepts, thus providing a framework for understanding how the idea of the Weberian state is linked to the European experience. Second, it points to the political nature of concepts. The use of specific concepts both restricts and enables certain actions and thereby partakes in constructing a specific reality.

5.2. Analytical framework: essentially contested concepts

Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* provides a helpful starting point for the conceptual analysis through its focus on the changing meaning of concepts over time. Yet, in addition to the diachronic perspective, William E. Connolly’s analysis of “essentially contested concepts” in politics can strengthen the synchronic analysis (Connolly 1993). William E. Connolly’s analysis builds on W.B. Gallie’s argument that essentially contested concepts are “concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users” (Gallie 1956, 169).¹⁵⁶ Essential con-

¹⁵⁵ J.G.A. Pocock belongs to an Anglo-American tradition, the so-called Cambridge School, which also focuses on the history of concepts. A brief overview of similarities and differences between the German tradition, which Reinhart Koselleck represents, and the Anglo-American tradition can be found in Valkhoff (2006).

¹⁵⁶ Gallie posits that essentially contested concepts should be differentiated from confusing terms, which conceal the perfectly consistent use of two or more concepts, which only needs to be discriminated. In other words, in determining whether a concept is essentially contested one must ask whether there is a single meaning of the concept that can be con-

cepts are not just concepts where there is confusion about their proper usage but concepts with multiple meanings and strong normative inferences, which means that there will be endless disputes about their proper use (Collier, Hidalgo, and Maciuceanu 2006). William E. Connolly specifically takes as his point of departure the contestability of key political concepts and the normative implications of conceptual decisions in empirical inquiry (Connolly 1993, vii). However, essentially contested concepts have both normative and descriptive dimensions, which cannot be separated (Connolly 1993, 11, 22). This is highly relevant as this type of concepts is often used as if they were objective. In this chapter this is most clearly seen in section 5.5. on the use of fragile state rankings. According to Connolly, the language of politics is not a neutral medium but instead channels political thought and action in certain directions. This is in line with the thinking of conceptual analysis where Koselleck stated that "... a 'we' group can become a politically effective and active unity only through concepts which are more than just simple names or typifications. A political or social agency is first constituted through concepts by means of which it circumscribes itself and hence excludes others, and therefore, by means of which it defines itself" (Koselleck 1985, 155-156). Hence, the use of certain concepts can affect social and political change because words and action cannot be separated. This has two aspects; first that the description of things takes place from a specific position. Connolly highlights how "to describe is to characterize a situation from the vantage point of certain interests, purposes, or standards" (Connolly 1993, 23). This means that concepts have specific characteristics in part because of the point of view from which they are formed. The second aspect points to how words and reality cannot be separated. Connolly uses the example of "mistake". In order for us to define something as a mistake, we have to describe the action from a certain point of view where the action gains the characteristics associated with the category of "mistakes". Once others have accepted my account of a concept, they have accepted my version of reality, which will then guide actions (i.e. how they respond to the action is influenced by having accepted that it was a "mistake") (Connolly 1993, 25-30). Here this point is transferred to the fragile state concept, which, just like "mistake", does not have a universally agreed on core meaning. Instead, in this view, the fragile state concept is used to discursively establish a hierarchy of states. This is inspired by a Foucauldian worldview that emphasizes the interaction between power and knowledge. Stefan Bächtold contends that the specific use of concepts "prescribes and legitimizes certain ways to act, while subjugating and de-

tested. To this end Gallie puts forward seven criteria for evaluating the contestedness of concepts (Gallie 1956, 171-177).

legitimizing others” (Bächtold 2014, 2). Language or the use of certain concepts such as the fragile state concept exemplifies the “rules of the game” and thereby defines which arguments have legitimacy. Foucault links the claim of truth to power as “Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements.” Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with the systems of power which produces and sustains it, and to effects of power which induces and extends it. A ‘regime’ of truth” (Foucault as cited in Rabinow 1991, 74). The power of the discourse on fragile states can then be seen as a continuation of domination, moving from the white man’s domination over Africa to the West’s domination over the Orient (Said 2003). Power arises from the ability to tell not *a* truth, but *the* truth of fragile states and the project of defining some states as fragile becomes a project of domination, restructuring, and authority (Said 2003, 3). Foucault questions the naturalness of discourses and concepts and problematizes knowledge as a neutral speak position by showing how especially social science cannot be separated from moralizing projects. Discourses have the capacity to naturalize by presenting a certain version of reality as a description of facts, which then becomes truth (Doty 1996, 10). In this sense, social science creates and reproduces regimes of truth, which regulate interactions. In the case of the fragile state concept, some states are excluded from the “good company” by pointing to their deviancy from the ideal of the Weberian state. The fact that particular meanings and identities have been taken to be largely fixed and true is indicative of the link between power and knowledge (Doty 1996, 7).¹⁵⁷

Summing up, essentially contested concepts do not have a universally agreed on meaning, and their use in a specific situation will therefore always take place from a specific position. Language influences the possible space of action and makes possible or impossible certain actions. The next section will first identify the use and meaning of the fragile state concept before I move on to discussing the potential consequences of the use of the fragile state concept.

¹⁵⁷ Foucault argues that all statements relate to other statements; that is statements on fragile state relate to a number of related statements including statements on well-functioning states. In his words: “there is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them: it is always part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play” (Foucault 1994, 99).

5.3. Conceptual analysis of the fragile state concept

This section analyzes the prevalence and use of the fragile state concept in official UN documents between 1989 and 2014. The official UN archive provides a unique entry point into when and how states use the concept, and how the use of the concept has developed over time. The UN is both a vital international actor and a reference point for international action, so discussions in the UN are a central arena for the spread and use of essentially contested concepts related to international action. The analysis of the fragile state concept is supplemented with a brief investigation into the “failed state” concept.¹⁵⁸ The failed state concept can be seen as the precursor to the fragile state concept. It was used more in the beginning of the period, and the investigation shows that as the fragile state concept became more used, it largely overtook the characteristics formerly associated with the failed state concept.

The population of documents was identified through a basic search on “fragile state(s)” or “failed state(s)” in the UN archive.¹⁵⁹ The use and context of the use of fragile state were examined in each document. This was collected in overview documents containing the document symbol, the date, the title of the document and the sentence/context of the use of the failed state(s)/fragile state(s) concept. A number of documents did not refer to “fragile state(s)” as such but instead the fragile state(s) of something. This was not an issue with regard to the failed state concept. Tracing how much a concept is used indirectly points to its political importance, and the context in which it is used informs the analysis of the consequences of the use of the concept in section 5.6.

¹⁵⁸ It was also investigated how much the term “least developed country” (LDC) was used as a reference point. LDCs is UN terminology for the least developed countries in the world based on socioeconomic indicators. There is substantial overlap between the group of states referred to as fragile and least developed, but the “least developed” terminology puts more emphasis on economic indicators and is therefore used more in reference to financial aid, whereas the fragile state concept to a higher degree is a governance concept (E/2011/SR.5 (2011)). The term is consistently used more than the fragile state concept at around 1000 hits per year for the last 15 years.

¹⁵⁹ The Official Documents of the United Nations: <http://documents.un.org/> The search was conducted in the UN ODS database. It was restricted by adding the relevant dates in the appropriate fields (publication date) and making a Boolean search for “failed state” OR “failed states” and fragile state OR “fragile states” respectively.

5.3.1. The emergence of a concept: moving from failed to fragile

North-South relations have been constituted as a structure of deferral. The center of the structure (alternatively white man, modern man, the United States, the West, real states) has never been absolutely present outside the system of differences (Doty 1996, 170).

The fragile state concept was succeeded by the term “failed state”, which was introduced in the 1990s in the post-Cold War world. One of the first and most influential articles was Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner’s “Saving Failed States”, which in 1992 predicted how failed states would become the future great challenge (Helman and Ratner 1992). The failed state concept was used to describe the collapse of states such as Yugoslavia and Somalia, as well as states that had not (yet) collapsed but were experiencing conflicts and fragmentation (Call 2008; Gros 1996). After 11 September 2011, the failed state concept was widely used by American administrators and policy analysts, specifically linking the term to a security agenda and the threat of terrorism (Call 2011, 305; Ezrow and Frantz 2013, 1323).¹⁶⁰ However, especially the OECD and the World Bank began using the fragile state concept as an overarching concept for countries that do not live up to the Weberian ideal (Nay 2013, 327).¹⁶¹ Although sometimes used interchangeably with the failed state concept, the fragile state concept has gradually become more used, whereas state failure is more political or believed to only be an accurate description of states where central government has completely ceased to exist (Hameiri 2007, 127). Both the failed and the fragile state concept were used to facilitate a universalized analysis of “problem” states. As discussed in the introduction the fragile state concept came to encompass all sorts of economic, security and legitimacy related shortcomings. Consequently, being defined as fragile does not necessarily tell much about the specific state or what the remedies should be. This universalizing trend is seen in the steep increase in the use of the fragile state concept. Table 5.1 gives an overview of the number of UN documents that refer to “fragile state(s)” and “failed state(s)” respectively from 1989 until September 2014.

¹⁶⁰ Specifically the US National Security Strategy of 2002, which states that “America is now threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones” has come to exemplify the American policy discourse.

¹⁶¹ See Cammack et al. for a more elaborate discussion of the antecedents of the fragile state agenda (Cammack et al. 2006).

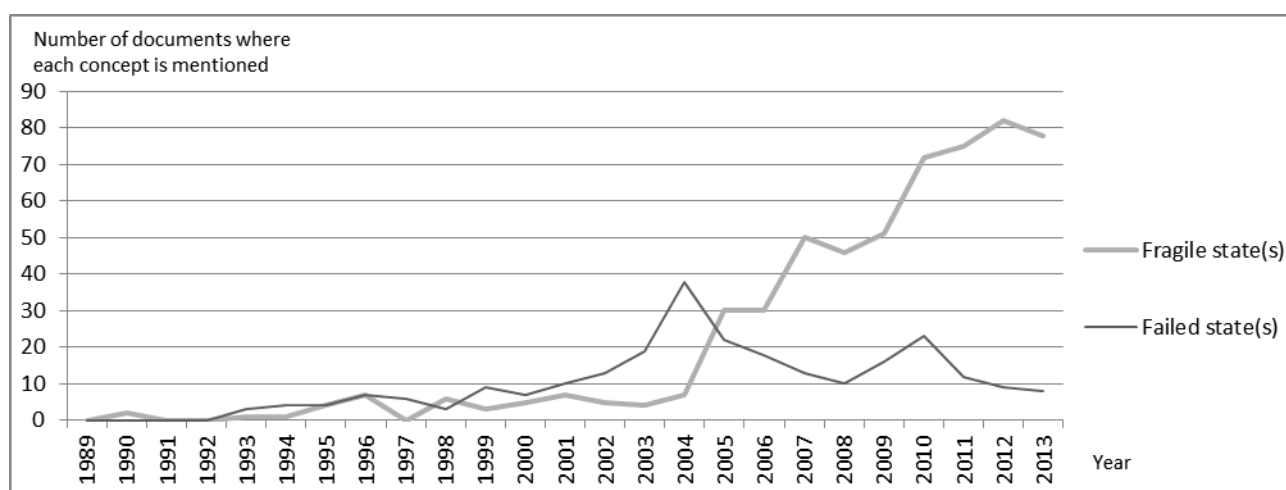
Table 5.1. Use of fragile and failed state(s), 1989-2014^{a)}

United Nations (all documents) Source: un.org	No. of documents (totals)	
	1989-2001 (1 Jan. 1989-30 Dec. 2001)	2002-2014 (1 Jan. 2002-1 Sep. 2014)
"Fragile states" OR "fragile state"	36	572
"Failed states" OR "Failed state"	53	210

a. The UN database is not completely updated prior to 1993 (source: Un.org).

The review of UN documents shows that both the fragile state and the failed state concept are used more frequently during the second period. Moreover, as figure 3.1 illustrates, the fragile state concept is used more than the failed state concept from the mid-2000s and onwards. There is an increase in the use of the failed state concept in the early 2000s, spiking in 2004 which corresponds with the American interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 2004 the use of the failed state concept declines whereas the fragile state concept becomes more and more used.

Figure 5.1. Overview over use of fragile/failed state(s), 1989-2013^{a)}



a. 2014 was excluded from the graph as the review does not include the full year.

5.3.1.1. The use of the failed state concept until 2001

When the numbers are disaggregated onto the specific years as done in table 3.2, it is clear that both concepts were used relatively little in the beginning of the period. The analysis here will focus on the use of the fragile state concept, but this section will include an analysis of the failed state concept to illustrate how the fragile state concept has merged with the failed state concept after 2001.

Table 5.2. United Nations: Use of failed and fragile state(s) pr. year, 1989-2001

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
No. fragile state(s)		2			1	1	4	7		6	3	5	7
No. failed state(s)					3	4	4	7	6	3	9	7	10

The failed state concept is first mentioned in 1993, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations defines the new concept as “an entire State that collapses or risks collapsing after the withdrawal of its super-Power support” (CD/PV.651 (1993): 3). This quote highlights two recurring aspects in UN documents from 1989-2001. First, failed state is used to describe states that “are unable to govern themselves” (A/48/PV.1 (1993)), i.e., chaotic, violent and without a legitimate government.¹⁶² However, the concept is also used to describe a rather large number of diverse states.¹⁶³ Moreover, early documents have more frequent (relative) and more outspoken criticism of the failed state concept than later documents. An example is when Mr. De Moura from Angola in a plenary session of the General Assembly states that “we [the government of Angola] are opposed to the doctrine that has been termed the *états en échec* – the failed States – according to which these countries are not able to resolve their problems by themselves and, therefore, need new ‘tutors’” (A/48/PV.7 (1993)). The rejection of the failed state concept is linked to the potential consequences of the use of the concept, namely neo-trusteeship. Although it is not explicitly stated, the rejection seems linked to the experience of colonialism through a reference to “the legacies of the past”. Interestingly, the Americans also caution against the use of the failed state concept but with the aim of placing the responsibility of failed states with, in this case, African leaders, who are told that the legacies of colonialism in the form of imposed borders are no excuse for not being responsible leaders who lead their countries towards democracy and peace.¹⁶⁴ The discussion on Afghanistan is particularly interesting. Afghanistan is the

¹⁶² (ACC/1997/7 (1997); A/AC.96/914 (1999)).

¹⁶³ Egypt (E/C.12/2000/SR.12 (2000)), Somalia (A/51/PV.26 (1996); S/PV.3641 (1996); A/53/PV.12 (1998); S/PV.4166 (2000)), the former Yugoslavia (S/PV.4154 (2000)), Rwanda (A/49/PV.6 (1994)), the Democratic Republic of Congo (S/1998/1180 (1998)), East Timor (S/PV.4072 (1999); S/PV.4351 (2001)), Pakistan (E/CN.4/2001/SR.17 (2001)) and Haiti (E/CN.4/2000/68/ADD.3 (2000)).

¹⁶⁴ The American Representative, Mr. Holbrook, states that “Let us stand together to reject the notion that has gained some prominence among commentators that some states have become ‘failed states’. States do not fail, leaders do” (S/PV.4156 (2000)).

country most frequently referred to as a failed state¹⁶⁵ but in three distinct ways; those calling Afghanistan a failed state prior to 9/11, those arguing that Afghanistan should not be dismissed as a failed state prior to 9/11 and those calling Afghanistan a failed state after 9/11 linking failing states and terrorism (which did not happen before 9/11). Afghanistan is the only country on which divergent views are voiced as to whether and when it became a failed state. However, the overall picture is that the cause and the responsibility of state fragility lie with the failed state itself – it is internal.

Second, “failed states” are referred to as a major international problem that has emerged after the conclusion of the Cold War. Wars are primarily internal and driven by ethnic and tribal animosities, which some states are not able to contain, thus turning them in to failed states. Warlords and criminals prey on these states, and the task of piecing failed states back together is “extremely difficult” (A/50/PV.15 (1995)). Especially, the failed operation in Somalia casts a shadow over the UN’s confidence in terms of ability to turn failed states around.¹⁶⁶ Still, the UN specifically and international assistance in general are presented as a necessary part of the solution to save internal populations and contain international violence stemming from failed states. This is assumed to require long and costly missions, which will involve the United Nations in the internal affairs of the country concerned (CD/PV.651 (1993): 5). This way, the failed states discourse is used to legitimate strong states’ supposedly benevolent protectorate over states that are considered unable to govern themselves (A/48/PV.1 (1993): 4). Table 5.3 summarizes the different roles, as presented in the documents, of internal and external actors in relation to failed states.

¹⁶⁵ (S/PV.3705 (1996); A/52/PV.76 (1997); A/53/PV.84 (1998); S/PV.4039 (1999); E/CN.7/2001/2 (2000); S/PV.4414 (2001); S/PV.4414 (resumption) (2001); A/56/PV.89 (2001)).

¹⁶⁶ (S/PV.3641 (1996); A/53/PV.12 (1998)).

Table 5.3. The internal/external dimension of fragile/failed states in the UN documents

Focus Actors	Cause of fragility	Who to blame (responsibility)	Solution
Internal	"After two decades of civil war, Afghanistan is virtually a failed state. Its ethnic, tribal linguistic and ideological divisions are as intense as they are intractable" (S/PV.4414 (resumption) (2001): 23-24)	"The latest turn of events in Liberia indicates the limits of the international community's ability to help restore internal peace and stability in the failed state, where the warring factions are determined to use any means to seize power, even at the risk of destroying the whole country and holding the entire population hostage" (S/PV.3667 (1996): 9)	-
	Total no.: 3	Total no.: 9	Total no.: 0
External	"It is easy to dismiss Afghanistan as a failed state..." "...but the truth is that Afghanistan is neither a failed state nor engaged in a simple civil war. It is a country that was systematically ravaged by long years of foreign military occupation" (S/PV/.3705 (1996): 11)	-	"It is the prerogative and the obligation of States to ensure the protection of all citizens, especially in times of armed conflict. This is the fundamental public good that the State provides. But oftentimes Governments do not or cannot provide it. Sometimes this is a consequence of weakened State structures or failed States. In these cases, Council action to defend civilians in armed conflict will also diminish the threat to the States themselves" (S/PV.3977 (1999):31)
	Total no.: 5	Total no.: 0	Total no.:12
Combined/ unclear	2	0	2
Total	10	9	14

5.3.1.2. The use of fragile state until 2001

Initially, the fragile state concept was not a clear category but was used to refer to different situations of insecurity and vulnerability. The early references specifically refer to economic fragility, several times by small countries who

feel pressured in the global world,¹⁶⁷ the fragility of specific public sectors¹⁶⁸ or as an adjective describing a fragile peace,¹⁶⁹ a fragile democracy¹⁷⁰ or other fragile states i.e. fragile health,¹⁷¹ a fragile political agreement,¹⁷² fragile organization of a national army,¹⁷³ the fragile health of the banking system¹⁷⁴ or a fragile UN mission.¹⁷⁵ Of the 36 references to fragile state(s) only nine refer to fragile state understood as the entirety of a specific state. Additionally, four references refer to the fragile state of Africa in general. Instead of referring to specific states as fragile, states are more commonly referred to and described by their lack of and hence need for development. The countries are referred to as Least Developed Countries,¹⁷⁶ developing countries¹⁷⁷ or the developing world.¹⁷⁸ Hence, until 2001, fragile state is not an “essentially contested concept” as defined by William E. Connolly.

5.3.2. Summing up: the use of failed and fragile state until 2001

The review of the UN documents until 2001 shows that whereas the failed state concept was essentially contested from the onset, this was not the case with the fragile state concept until 2001. The fragile state concept was not used to refer to a specific group of states, but merely to refer to different situations of insecurity. The failed state concept was used to describe states where internal actors are responsible for state failure, whereas the solution lies with UN involvement or international assistance in general. The causes of state failure are both internal and external although Afghanistan stands out as the only state where the causes of its failure are debated.

¹⁶⁷ (A/45/358 (1990); S/21779 (1990), A/50/PV.27 (1995), S/1995/222 (1995), S/PV.3512 (1995), S/1996/373 (1996), E/1996/SR.14 (1996), A/55/PV.43 (2000), S/PV.4350 (2001), S/PV.4380 (2001)).

¹⁶⁸ (A/45/358 (1990)).

¹⁶⁹ (A/C.4/49/SR.9 (1994), S/1995/222 (1995), S/PV.3654 (1996), A/53/PV.14 (1998), S/1999/645 (1999)).

¹⁷⁰ (S/1995/222 (1995), A/53/355 (1998)).

¹⁷¹ (E/CN.4/1997/7/ADD.1 (1997), E/CN.4/1999/SR.29 (2000)).

¹⁷² (S/PV.3876 (1998)).

¹⁷³ (S/1998/944 (1998)).

¹⁷⁴ (E/2001/15 (2001)).

¹⁷⁵ (A/56/660 (2001)).

¹⁷⁶ (A/45/358 (1990), TD/B/48/18 (vol. I) (2001)).

¹⁷⁷ (A/53/PV.14 (1998), A/C.3/54/SR.17 (1999), A/55/PV.43 (2000), A/55/PV.88 (2000), E/CN.4/1999/SR.29 (1999), E/2000/66 (2000)).

¹⁷⁸ (A/51/172 (1996), E/1996/SR.14 (1996), A/52/871 (1998)).

5.3.3. The fragile state concept after 2001

For instance, fragile States are defined very broadly in terms of human security and peacebuilding, poor development performance and lack of State effectiveness. This is a reflection of reality: factors that may lead to State fragility are diverse and manifest themselves in a variety of forms. Moreover, the selection of indicators used to define fragile States reflects a combination of objective criteria and value judgements. As a result, several groups have been created around the concept of State fragility, and countries classified as fragile States differ among the World Bank, OECD and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the three entities that use this concept the most (E/2014/33 (2014): 25-26).

Gradually, the fragile state concept is more frequently used as table 5.4 demonstrates. Some of these references are still to the “fragile state of something” such as “fragile state institutions”, which could be considered part of the fragile state concept,¹⁷⁹ someone being in a fragile state,¹⁸⁰ the fragile state of security,¹⁸¹ the fragile state of coordination oversight¹⁸² and similar things, but the majority of references now refer to fragile state as a specific concept. Hence, in this period, fragile state emerges as an “essentially contested concept”.

Table 5.4. United Nations: Use of failed and fragile state(s) pr. year, 2002-2014

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
No. fragile state(s)	5	4	7	30	30	50	46	51	72	75	82	78	42
No. failed state(s)	13	19	38	22	18	13	10	16	23	12	9	8	5

There is no universal definition of fragile states but generally the concept is treated as if there were. There are a few instances where it is openly stated that not all states accept the self-explanatory use of the fragile state concept. Cuba’s delegation, for example, problematizes that the fragile state concept appears in reports from the Secretary-General although the term does not

¹⁷⁹ (S/PV.4739 (2003); CEDAW/C/PAR/5 (2004); A/59/PV.89 (2005); S/PV.5581 (2006); S/2006/822 (2006); S/2006/935 (2006); A/64/22 (2009); S/PV.6196, resumption 1 (2009); S/PV.6277 (2010); S/PV.6577 (2011); S/2011/370 (2011); S/2011/388 (2011); A/66/745 (2012); S/2014/242 (2014); S/2014/397 (2014); CCPR/C/SR.3075 (2014); A/HRC/27/50/Add.1 (2014)).

¹⁸⁰ (CAT/C/SR.736 (2007); CRC/C/SR.1320 (2008); CRC/C/SR.1322 (2008)).

¹⁸¹ (S/PV.5703 (2007))

¹⁸² (A.C.5/61/SR.38 (2007))

enjoy consensus among member states.¹⁸³ As the introductory quote, from an Economic and Social Council report, illustrates, the fragile state concept is used in a very broad way. The few references that operate with an explicit definition refer to the way the World Bank uses the fragile state concept for countries facing particularly severe development challenges, i.e. weak institutional capacity, poor governance, and political instability. This facilitates the use of the fragile state concept in a wide array of circumstances – as an overarching concept. The most striking feature is that conflict has become an integrated part of the fragile state concept.¹⁸⁴ State fragility is linked to conflict;¹⁸⁵ either in the sense that conflict-affected and fragile states are referred to as a specific group of countries¹⁸⁶ or in the sense that conflict leads to state fragility.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, state fragility is linked to general instability. For example, fragile states are discussed as being especially vulnerable to side effects of climate change such as food insecurity, forced migration and land

¹⁸³ (A/C.5/67/SR.17 (2013); A/C.5/68/SR.5 (2013)). In addition to the comments from the representative from Cuba, the point is raised several other times where it is not specified who is voicing the problematic (E/AC.51/2012/L.4/Add.32 (2012); A/67/16 (2012); E/2013/34 (Part II)-E/ICEF/2013/7 (part II) (2013)).

¹⁸⁴ (E/2007/SR.8 (2007)); A/C.2/65/SR.13 (2010); A/66/66 – E/2011/78 (2011)).

¹⁸⁵ In E/C.16/2011/3 (a note by the secretariat of the Economic and social council) this is described as the unfortunate consequence of a decision by the World Bank and OECD to combine the fragile state category with the “conflict affected” category into one institutional category (E/C.16/2011/3 (2011)).

¹⁸⁶ (A/60.PV.8 (2005); S/PV.5264 (2005); A/59/PV.107 (2005); DP/GP/1/Rev.1 (2005); A/C.2/60/SR.11 (2005); A/60/337 (2005); A/61/6 (prog. 4) (2006), S/PV.5494 (2006), E/ICEF/2006/14 (2006), S/PV.5627 (2007), S/PV.5766 (resumption 1) (2007), DP/2007/4 (2007), E/2007/15 (2007), A/62/190 (2007), A/63/6 (prog. 4) (2007), PBC/2/SLE/SR.2 (2008), A/63/179 (2008), A/62/921 (2008), DP/2010/3 (2009), A/64/298 (2009), A/64/173 (2009), A/CONF.214/PV.7 (2009), S/PV.6396 (2010), S/PV.6277 (2010), A/CONF.213/13 (2010), A/65/6 (prog. 14) (2010), A/HRC/14/24/add.8 (2010), E/2010/85 (2010), A/C.2/65/Sr.13 (2010), CEB/2010/6 (2010), S/PV.6687 (2011), S/PV.6479 (2011), S/PB.6472 (2011), S/PV.6533 (2011), S/PV.6581 (2011), E/C.16/2011/3 (2011), E/2011/44-E.16/2011/5 (2011), E/2011/SR.7 (2011), E/2011/SR.23 (2011), A/66/PV.72 (2011), S/2011/820 (2011), E/2012/11 (2012), A/HRC/21/38 (2012), A/67/290 (2012), A/67/499-S/2012/746 (2012), E/ICEF/2013/5 (2012), E/ICEF/2013/4 (2012), PBC/6/OC/SR.2 (2012), PBC/6/SLE/SR.1 (2012), E/2012/SR.34 (2013), E/2012/SR.26 (2013), E/2013/NGO/75 (2013), E/2013/15 (2013), E/2013/57 (2013), E/2013/39E/ESCAP/69/27 (2013), A/CONF.222/PM.1 (2013), S/2013/525 (2013), S/2013/525 (2013), PBC/7/OC/SR.2 (2013), TD/B/C.I/MEM.6/5 (2014), E/ICEF/2014/P/L.3 (2014), E/2014/83 (2014), A/69/5 (vol. III) (2014), A/68/944-E/2014/89 (2014).

¹⁸⁷ (S/PV.4739 (2003); A/59/PV.89 (2005); A/59/P.107 (2005), S/PV.5359 (resumption) (2006), E/2007/SR.8 (2007), E/2007/SR.13 (2007), A/64/228 (2009), S/PV.6360 (2010), E/ICEF/2010/P/L.16 (2010), S/PV.6705 (2012)).

degradation.¹⁸⁸ Fragile states are likewise linked to drug trafficking and, to some degree, other forms of organized crime. In some cases, the references describe fragile states as providing the fertile ground for organized crime,¹⁸⁹ but in other instances, fragile states are described as victims of illicit activities as they do not have the strength to protect themselves.¹⁹⁰ Hence, fragile states are, on the one hand, especially vulnerable to instability, but on the other hand, they are also seen as exacerbating insecurity and conflict. Table 5.5 provides an overview of how the fragile state concept is linked to three of the most relevant terms in relation to security.

Table 5.5. Conflict, terrorism and peacebuilding and relation to the fragile state concept^{a)}

Word	Example	Total no.
Conflict	"Conflicts that have been resolved break out once again due to a lack of attention on the part of the international community to post-conflict situation, which are often characterized by fragile state institutions and a precarious economic situation" (A/59/PV.89 (2005): 10)	282
Peacebuilding	"To that end, the Peacebuilding Commission must work to reinforce stability and the rule of law in fragile and conflict-affected countries, bearing in mind the principles of national ownership, partnership and mutual accountability" (PBC/6/OC/SR.2 (2012): 4).	101
Terrorism	"In our interconnected age, conflicts that start in fragile States can drag entire regions into violence, and such conflicts can turn already fragile States into incubators of transnational threats, including terrorism and trafficking in arms or drugs. Development and security are inextricably linked..." (S/PV.6360 (2010): 20).	5

a. The number gives an indication of the importance of the relevant concept in relation to the fragile state concept. However, it is counted from the document where the context of each reference made to "fragile state(s)" has been investigated and as such only records when the word was used in the immediate vicinity of the fragile state concept (the same sentence).

The humanitarian aspect of state fragility is less prevalent. In some cases, poverty and stability are linked, for instance when Mr. Frattini, the representative from Italy, argues in the General Assembly that: "One-third of people living below the threshold of extreme poverty reside in fragile and post-

¹⁸⁸ (FCCC/CP/2006/5 (2007); A/64/350 (2009); A/C.2/63/.SR.6 (2009); A/64/PV.47 (2010); E/2010/SR.13 (2010); S/PV.6587 (2011); S/PV.6587, resumption 1 (2011); CEB/2012/4 (2012); FCCC/CP/2014/2 (2014)).

¹⁸⁹ (E/CN.7/2009/3 – E/CN.15/2009/3 (2009); S/PV.6565 (2011); A/C.3/65/SR.5 (2011); A/C.3/68/SR.6 (2013); S/2011/388 (2011))

¹⁹⁰ (A/C.3/64/SR.5 (2009); S/2009/39 (2009); E/CN.7/2009/11 – E/CN.15/2009/11 (2009); A/64/PV.99 (2010); S/PV.6277 (2010); S/PV.6668 (2011); S/PV.6577 (2011); E/CN.15/2012/21 (2012); E/CN.7/2012/3-E/CN.15/2012/3 (2012); S/PV.6705 (2012); A/67/205-S/2012/715 (2012); A/66/745 (2012); S/PV.4990 (2004); S/2009/299 (2009); S/2009/39 (2009); S/PV.6577 (2011)).

conflict states. Hence, the role of peace and stability in fighting poverty cannot be denied” (A/65/PV.6 (2010): 37). However, more frequently the humanitarian aspect is subsumed by describing fragile states as those states that are furthest from reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).¹⁹¹ It is emphasized numerous times that no fragile state will have reached a single MDG in 2015.¹⁹² While the MDGs has been criticized for objectifying human suffering, the MDGs also shed light on the inability of the international systems to affect fragile states positively, and could consequently act as a tool of agency for so-called fragile states. Perhaps unsurprisingly, frequent references identify fragile states as an especially challenging development task that requires substantial resources and international attention. Finally, the review illustrates substantial interaction on the issue of fragile states between the UN, the OECD and the World Bank.¹⁹³ The UN documents show how these organizations apply and build on each other’s definitions and share lessons learned.

Summing up, the documents mention both external and internal causes for fragility, but later documents focus much more on climate change, drug trafficking and general economic crisis as external factors with a negative impact on state fragility. These factors were not mentioned until 2001. Responsibility for state fragility receives less attention, but the majority of references point to internal factors. However, the solution to state fragility receives most attention. Implicitly, the majority of the documents are based on the assumption that external actors can rectify state fragility, and all docu-

¹⁹¹ (DP/FPA/2005/18 (2005); A/62/PV.31 (2007); E/2007/SR.26 (2007); E/2008/SR.4 (2008); PBC/2/SLE/SR.2 (2008); E/2009/SR.5 (2009); A/65/PV.6 (2010); A/CONF.216/PC/2 (2010); E/2010/SR.44 (2010); E/2010/SR.46 (2010); S/PV.6587 (2011); E/2011/SR.7 (2011); E/2011/SR.7 (2011); A/66/277 (2011); A/C.2/66/SR.3 (2011); TD/L.418 (2012). I realize that the MDG have now been replaced with new goals, but the current analysis only deals with UN documents up until September 2014.

¹⁹² (S/PV.6299 (2010); S/PV.6479 (2011); E/2011/SR.23 (2011)).

¹⁹³ (E/2005/SR.11 (2005); A/59/PV.107 (2005); E/2006/6-E/ICEF/2006/3 (2006); DP/2006/17 (2006); S/PV.5494 (2006); DP/2007/4 (2007); A/62/PV.31 (2007); E/2007/71 (2007); E/2007/SR.13 (2007); PBC/3/CAF/SR.2 (2008); E/2009/SR.5 (2009); A/64/494 (2009); A/HRC/12/WG.2/TF/2 (2009); E/ECA/COE/28/5 (2009); A/65/293 (2010); S/PV.6299 (2010); A/65/287 (2010); S/2010/319 (2010); E/2010/SR.6 (2010); E/2010/104 (2010); A/HRC/16/45 (2010); S/PV.6479 (2011); E/C.16/2011/s (2011); E/C.16/2011/3 (2011); A/66/75-E/2011/87 (2011); TD/B/C.1/MEM.1/12 (2011); E/2011/SR.7 (2011); A/67/94-E/2012/80 (2012); A/67/499* – S/2012/746* (2012); A/66/PV.44 (2012); A/67/516 (2012); E/2012/34/Rev. 1 – E/ICEF/2012/7/Rev.1 (2012); PBC/6/OC/L2 (2012); A/C.6/67/SR.4 (2012); E/ICEF/2013/5* (2013); A/67/979-S/2013/480 (2013); S/2013/525 (2013); E/2013/SR.16 (2013); A/68/627 (2013); A/68(97-E/2013/87 (2013); E/2013/SR.42 (2013); A/69/63 – E/2014/10* (2014); E/2014/33 (2014); E/2014/SR.10 (2014); E/2014/33 (2014); E/2014/77 (2014)).

ments counted here are explicit about this premise. Moreover, *A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* was published in 2011 and from 2012 and onwards becomes a reference point for international discussions on state fragility.¹⁹⁴ In a sense, pointing to “the New Deal” becomes short-hand for an internationally sanctioned approach to state fragility. This also applies to so-called fragile states that have volunteered to become pilot-countries in the implementation of the New Deal. These countries are given special attention as potential models for helping states away from fragility. Table 5.6 provides an overview.

¹⁹⁴ The New Deal is referred to more than 100 times after 2011, thus indicating the impact of the document. It is one of the documents chosen for more thorough analysis, but it is short (4 pages) and written as bullet points (or catch phrases) meant to synthesize and improve relevant knowledge on how to work most efficiently in fragile states.

Table 5.6. The internal/external dimension of fragile states in UN documents

Focus		Who to blame (responsibility)	Solution
Actors	Cause of fragility		
Internal	“Despite its (Côte d’Ivoire) economic potential, years of political and military crisis and poor governance have taken a heavy toll on the country, transforming the once model African nation into a fragile State that continues to struggle for stability and prosperity” (A/68/654 (2013): 15)	“In fragile States characterized by governance deficits, both in terms of capacities and/or willingness to act, the relative importance of the role of UNICEF in providing more direct operational and technical support” (E/ICEF/2006/8 (2006): 17)	-
	Total no.: 27	Total no.: 8	Total no.: 0
External	“The combination of the global food and energy crises, enduring imbalances in the international economic system and the adverse impact of climate change had exacerbated the vulnerability of already fragile States” (A/C.2/63/SR.24 (2009): 10)	“While fundamentalist terrorism causes anxiety and pain in those regions and in other regions with close historical ties to us, the true threats to fragile democracies, freedom and peace in Latin America are the refusal to give our products access to the major markets of the so-called first world, our exclusion from the bodies where major decisions are taken and the destruction of the ability of nation States to take action” (A/60/PV.7 (2005): 2)	“That entails helping the national or transitional Governments of war-torn or fragile States to rebuild institutions of democratic governance and accountability, to pursue security sector reform and reconciliation and to promote a culture of respect for the rule of law and human rights” (A/62/PV.24 (2007): 22)
	Total no.: 23	Total no.: 2	Total no.:84
Combined/ unclear	1	0	23
Total	51	10	107

5.3.3.1. Who used the fragile state concept

A review of who uses the fragile state concept shows that the majority of references are by Western states. In the 572 documents from the period January 1 2002-September 30 2014, neither Russia nor China uses the fragile state concept, whereas Australia uses the concept on almost 20 separate occasions. In general, Western states such as United Kingdom (11), France (14), Canada (12), Netherlands (9), Australia (19) and the US (10) use the concept

most frequently. India (5) uses the fragile state concept to highlight the special vulnerability of fragile states, and South Africa (3) emphasizes the transnational character of negative externalities associated with fragile states. Moreover, representatives from Nepal (1), Solomon Islands (2), Liberia (1) and Sierra Leone (3) refer to their own states as “fragile states”. Referring to oneself as a fragile state is generally followed by a specific or general call to the international community to meet the special needs of fragile states.

5.3.4. Summing up: the use of the fragile state concept after 2001

This section has investigated *how* the fragile state concept emerged and became the most used concept to describe certain states. The concept emerged as an essentially contested concept from 2001 and onwards as it largely overtook the characteristics of the failed state concept, which became relatively less used in the period. Specifically, the fragile state concept is used to describe states that are insecure and unable to govern themselves. The causes of fragility are primarily located internally, whereas the solution depends on external involvement. The fragile state concept is primarily used by Western states but also in appeals by so-called fragile states for increased or continued financial support.

5.4. The conceptual definition of fragile state

This section focuses on selected policy papers from the UN, the OECD and the World Bank as these are primary sources for the development and proliferation of the fragile state concept (Nay 2013, 327).¹⁹⁵ As described by Oliver Nay, the fragile state concept spread among donors, especially in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building (Nay 2013, 327). Accordingly, policy documents do not passively pass on ideas developed elsewhere, as they are central focal points for espousing and creating shared understandings of the fragile state concept and which activities should be done in what order to “fix” fragility (Nay 2014, 210). This way, the policy documents provide a starting place for investigating *what* practices are made possible by the use of the fragile state concept.

This section begins with a discussion of the selection of the specific documents and the strategy used for analyzing them. Second, the way policy documents define fragile states is identified, followed by a review of the goals

¹⁹⁵ The field of state-building and state fragility is especially characterized by overlap between policymakers and academics (Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Tadjbakhsh 2010).

of interventions including how the OECD, the UN and the World Bank describe their internal partners.

5.4.1 Selection of documents

Table 5.7 lists the chosen documents according to title, author, genre, length and publication year. The selection includes texts from the UN, OECD and the World Bank as these organizations have operated as important sites for the construction, standardization, and dissemination of ideas of fragile states and state-building (Mahon and McBride 2009). The texts are chosen because they have been the most influential in defining and spreading the fragile state concept in policy circles and, subsequently, in academic work.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, the texts have been chosen to illustrate the development in the use of the fragile state concept. It has been prioritized to include the first coherent expression of each organization's understanding of the fragile state concept but the majority of documents focus on the currently most influential documents (Chandy 2011). The OECD plays a central role as a research organization and as a focal point in knowledge networks, which are vital in spreading international norms and concepts such as the fragile state concept (Porter and Webb 2008). Oliver Nay moreover highlights how the OECD is considered a “confidential setting in which ‘peers’ can build consensus-based agreements on the content of policy guidance” (Nay 2014, 218). The UN linked peacebuilding and state-building, both activities that were envisioned to hold a larger role for the UN after the conclusion of the Cold War (Heathershaw 2008a, 600). The World Bank has an economic focus and has very explicitly tried to place itself in between policy advice and academic research.¹⁹⁷ The Bank is recognized as an authoritative development expert and plays a central role in defining and disseminating policy ideas (Park 2009, 330).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ The fragile states literature is characterized by considerable overlap and cross-fertilization between professional and practitioner texts (Hameiri 2007, 124).

¹⁹⁷ The Task Force was established in November 2001 and was led by Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Paul Collier.

¹⁹⁸ The World Bank referred to fragile as Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) until 2005, but for clarity I will here only use “fragile states” (Nay 2014, 216; World Bank 2006).

Table 5.7. Selected policy documents for detailed conceptual analysis

No.	Title	Author	Genre	Length	Year
1.	An Agenda for Peace	Secretary-General, UN	Policy document	23 pp.	1992
2.	In Larger Freedom, UN report of the Secretary-General	Secretary-General, UN	Report	62 pp.	2005
3.	World Bank Group Work in Low-Income Countries Under Stress – a Task Force Report	World Bank	Report	53 pp.	2002
4.	World Development Report, 2011	World Bank	Report	416 pp.	2011
5.	Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations	OECD	Policy advice (10 principles)	4 pp.	2007
6.	Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: From Fragility to Resilience	OECD	Policy report	82 pp.	2008
7.	A New Deal for engagement in fragile states	OECD	Policy guidelines	4 pp.	2011
8.	Supporting statebuilding in situations of conflict and fragility	OECD	Policy advice	107 pp.	2011

5.4.2. How policy documents define fragile states

The starting point in the documents is that a capable state is necessary for security and development. However, the understanding of the state remains largely implicit, although clearly Weberian. The Weberian inspiration most explicitly finds its expression in the notion that only the state has the right to wield force (OECD 2008, 33; World Bank 2011, 149). Second, the state's role in delivering basic services such as health, education, water and sanitation, is highlighted (OECD 2008, 40; OECD 2011b, 33). But generally, the characteristics of the state are described using words such as efficient, accountable and legitimate, which say little about the actual structure of the state.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ See for example OECD (2008, 3) (the very first line of the foreword), UN (2005, 13) and World Bank (2011, 7). The earlier World Bank document places more emphasis on the potential of civil society. Civil society is, like the state, weak, but is viewed as more receptive and pro-Western than government (World Bank 2002, 11-13, 17, 26-27).

Table 5.8. Priority in organizational definition of the state

Organization	Monopoly of violence	Service delivery	Accountable
OECD	2008	2008, 2011	2008
UN			2005
World Bank	2011		2011

The fragile state concept, on the other hand, is used to describe a state that does not work.²⁰⁰ The OECD defines state fragility as situations “when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations” (OECD 2007, 2; OECD 2008, 16).²⁰¹ Likewise, the UN sees state fragility as a problem because fragile states are not strong enough to secure the security and prosperity of their people (United Nations 2005, 6). The state is seen as a prerequisite for economic growth (OECD 2008, 35, 41; OECD 2011b, 34; World Bank 2002) and security (OECD 2011b, 33). Indeed, “developmental, human security and international order goals require healthy states able both to fulfil key international responsibilities and to provide core domestic goods, including security” (OECD 2008). The World Bank documents illustrate a shift from a focus on poverty to a focus on violence. The 2002 report defines fragile states as having a per-capita income below the International Development Association (IDA) operational cut-off (GNI of \$875 in 2001), which matches a recurrent emphasis on poverty reduction (World Bank 2002, 1, 3). In the 2011 report, focus has shifted towards the link between fragility and violence.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ OECD (2008) mentions that states can be a source of insecurity and that states have been responsible for more violent deaths than insurgents, separatists and terrorists combined, but “weakness, collapse or absence” is still accentuated as a source of violence and lack of services (OECD 2008, 11).

²⁰¹ In World Bank (2002), fragile states are “characterized by very weak policies, institutions, and governance” (World Bank 2002, 1). In OECD (2011), fragile states are described as “those that have weak capacity to carry out basic functions of governing their population and territory, and lack the ability to develop mutually constructive and reinforcing relations with society” (OECD 2011, 11).

²⁰² Furthermore, in the 2011 report the terminology has shifted to “fragile situations” instead of states to recognize internal variance. Fragile situations are defined as “Periods when states or institutions lack the capacity, accountability, or legitimacy to mediate relations between citizen groups and between citizens and the state, making them vulnerable to violence” (World Bank 2011, xvi).

Table 5.9. Focus of the organizations – state fragility

Organization	Political will/capacity	Security	Economic growth
OECD	2007, 2008	2007, 2008, 2011a+b	2008, 2011
UN		2005	2005
World Bank		2002, 2011	2002, 2005

Fragile states are highlighted as one of the most serious international challenges to security, as they are presented as safe havens for terrorists and organized crime, and an impediment to development (OECD 2007; OECD 2008, 7, 11; OECD 2011b, 3, 15; World Bank 2011, 1, 5). Fragile states are a problem for their residents, but perhaps even more importantly, state fragility is verbalized as having adverse consequences for regional and global security and development (OECD 2008, 19; OECD 2011a; World Bank 2002, 10; World Bank 2011, xi). Generally, the policy documents see state fragility as the result of limited institutional state capacity, although the will of internal political elites is also emphasized. Consequently, the solution is to build stronger Weberian state institutions.²⁰³ It is mentioned several times that the path away from state fragility should take into account the local context, for example: “investment in recreating or building new institutions that mimic the ideal Weberian form is often bound to fail” (OECD 2008, 39), but as the quote also illustrates, a Weberian state is the ideal.²⁰⁴ Moreover, despite a couple of references to the need to adapt to local conditions, there is no specification of what this means or how it should be done (World Bank 2002, iv; World Bank 2011, 8, 46). Instead, focus is on improving the capacity of state institutions and international actors’ ability to work on this in the most effective way.

5.4.3. How policy documents define the goals of interventions in fragile states

Whereas the documents all point to fragile states as one of the currently most pressing challenges, there is far less agreement on the main goals of interventions. On an overall level, the goal is, as already mentioned, to strengthen

²⁰³ OECD (2008, 14) specifically shines a light on the importance of mechanisms that can reconcile state and society (governance) and distinguish this from understandings of state-building that focus more narrowly on institution-building. However, in the document it is difficult to see what difference this supposed change of focus makes.

²⁰⁴ OECD (2008, 38-39) for example also states that “As noted, most efforts to invest in public administrative capacity rely on an explicit Weberian model of the ideal institution”.

the state (OECD 2007; OECD 2008, 24). In addition, the documents share a second focus area, namely support for the separation of private and public spheres. In fact not just the separation of the two spheres but the need to strengthen private enterprise vis-à-vis the state (OECD 2008, 24; United Nations 2005, 13; World Bank 2002, 18, 22; World Bank 2011, 122). The documents recognize that the use of non-state structures might increase the need for monitoring, substitute for government spending or risk further undermining state capacity (World Bank 2002, 27, 36). But regardless, as fragile states are perceived as having governments that “can neither lead reform nor deploy aid resources effectively” it can be the best option in fragile states (World Bank 2002, 9).

However, there is also some variation as the OECD documents emphasize accountability and state/society relations, for example: “overarching priority must be a form of political governance and the articulation of asset of political processes or accountability mechanisms through which the state and society reconcile their expectations of one another” (OECD 2008, 8) or “states that (i) are capable, accountable and responsive, and (ii) are rooted in an ongoing nonviolent and robust exchange with society about the distribution of political power and economic resources and the adaptation of society and institutions” (OECD 2011b, 22).²⁰⁵ The World Bank emphasizes the need to improve confidence in state institutions and then provide citizens with basic services. The Task Force report from 2002 highlights provision of services to poor people such as health and education, whereas the World Development Report from 2011 points to security, justice and jobs (World Bank 2002, iv, 11; World Bank 2011, 45). The UN documents emphasize the need to stop human suffering, including human rights violations and poverty (United Nations 2005).

The belief in a developmental ladder to better statehood, where countries gradually move up the steps towards the ideal of the European Weberian state, undergirds especially the OECD and World Bank documents. For example, the 2002 Task Force report states that “If, therefore, there is some generally efficient sequence to reform, LICUS are distinctive because they are at an earlier state of that sequence. That is, they should be fixing things that other low-income countries have already fixed” (World Bank 2002, 11). This way, state fragility is a deviancy, something to be fixed, as the role of external actors is to “help countries restore normalcy” (World Bank 2011, 106).

²⁰⁵ The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States point to five goals: legitimate politics, security, justice, economic foundations and revenues and services (OECD 2011a).

5.4.4. How policy documents describe the interaction between external and internal actors

In some documents, especially OECD documents, it is mentioned that state-building is a domestic process (OECD 2008, 8, 12, 46; OECD 2011b, 20; World Bank 2002, 18). However, perhaps unsurprisingly, the documents generally focus on increasing the efficiency of external intervention. Hence, local actors are primarily categorized according to their potential as partners and agents of change on behalf of the organization in question. The documents share a common concern with identifying domestic actors that share the donors' perception of necessary reforms. Moreover, the relationship between the organization and the national government is described in ambiguous terms (OECD 2008, 24). On the one hand, the government is described as the main partner whose capacity must be built, but on the other hand, governments of fragile states are described as incapable of and/or uninterested in leading reform (OECD 2007; OECD 2008, 26, 40; OECD 2011b, 60; World Bank 2002, 9, 23-25; World Bank 2011, 255). Simultaneously, it is implied that the weak government in fragile states means that non-state actors have substantial influence and therefore have to be incorporated or may be necessary partners, at least for a while, but that non-state actors also have to be regulated to ensure that their priorities align with those of the donors and the government (OECD 2007; OECD 2008, 41; OECD 2011b, 12, 32-34; World Bank 2002, iii, 16). The lack of, or at least the perception of a lack of, capable and reform-eager actors has led to a focus on accountability mechanisms. Establishing accountability is considered a major problem, both for government and non-governmental actors, and therefore an area where there is a need to implement new mechanisms (OECD 2011b, 33; United Nations 2005, 6; World Bank 2002, 36; World Bank 2011, 84, 201). The result has been an increase in monitoring mechanisms, which are believed to put a strain on fragile states (OECD 2008, 48; OECD 2011a; OECD 2011b, 79; World Bank 2011, 280). Interestingly, for example in *A New Deal for engagement in fragile states*, these oversight and accountability measures are described in a section named "trust", the idea being that more oversight will increase confidence in country systems (OECD 2011a). The documents acknowledge that changes within fragile states depend on centrally placed internal actors, but the documents focus on external actors and control to secure the implementation of donors' intentions.

Table 5.10. All organizations – role of external and internal actors

Type of actor	Role	Type of actor	Main concern
Internal	Partner/spoiler	State/non-state	Monitoring
External	Savior	"Us" (the non-fragile)	Increase efficiency

5.4.5. Summing up: the state of the art or the art of definition

This section has discussed how policy documents from the UN, OECD and the World Bank define fragile states, present the goals of state-building interventions and how the interaction between internal and external actors is envisioned. Although the documents are either very unspecific or point in slightly different directions in regard to the definition of fragile states and the goals of interventions, the documents make it clear that fragile states need to change and become more like the well-functioning Western states. This is not just to provide domestic goods but to secure international stability. Both internal and external actors are envisioned to play a central role, but whereas internal actors are recognized as necessary partners, there is a lack of faith in both their ability and will to implement real change. External actors must therefore intervene and oversee change. The focus is on making external actors more efficient in implementing change. This is among other things done by improving accountability measures, which will allow external actors to better monitor the progress of internal actors.

5.5. The indicators of power in a binary world: indexes of fragile states

At a conceptual level, the idea of a "fragile state" remains murky: What exactly are "weak institutions" and how do we recognize and measure them? Despite the conceptual or theoretical vagueness, aid agencies have managed to produce operational criteria for identifying fragility (Fearon 2010, 2).

Rankings provide a way of ordering the diverse group of fragile states, based on indicators that function as accountability measures as they can "objectively" document progress or decline in fragility. Rankings are visual representations of the hierarchical relation between fragile and "healthy" states – between Western and non-Western states – which echo the division between the colonized and the colonizers during colonialism (Jones 2013; Morton and Bilgin 2002). Rankings are perhaps the most preeminent example of

how the diagnoses of state fragility “carry an air of objectivity and precision” in which quantification makes it possible to “render qualitative and indeterminate social phenomena into finite and exact numerical form” (Jones 2013, 60-63). This way the hierarchical division of the world’s states is not only sustained but also naturalized. In rankings, Western states define appropriate indicators to measure the quality of state and then use those measures to evaluate the quality of state and potential progress or decline. Consequently, rankings exemplify how knowledge and power are used to structure the world and legitimate actions through seemingly objective criteria.

The number of indexes has risen sharply in the last decades, which has led to a growing literature that evaluates the relevance of existing indicators (Cage 2013; Cooley 2015, 9; Löwenheim 2008, 256; Merry 2011, S83).²⁰⁶ This development correlates with a general development toward the privileging of abstract and quantifiable data (Rosga and Satterthwaite 2009, 256). Yet, as research focusing on numbers as signs and symbols would emphasize; to grasp the meaning of any set of numbers, it is crucial to appreciate who created those numbers, for whom, and why (Lampland 2010, 383). Here, I focus on fragile state rankings as an arena where ideals of objectivity, precision and quantification combine with the normative ideal of the Weberian state to create a powerful organizing structure.

Rankings must have some conceptualization of what a state is and how to measure its performance (Sanín 2011, 24). Alexander Cooley argues that a line can be drawn from European state formation history where increased standardization was used as a tool to gain control over populations and territory to the spread of rankings and indices as tools of standardization and classification on a global scale (Cooley 2015, 9; Spruyt 1994). The Weberian ideal state thus provides the “tools of statecraft”, which legitimate and naturalize fragile state rankings as objective representations of the world of states while simultaneously providing the normative ideal against which states are measured in those rankings. In this sense, rankings reproduce structural inequalities and biased policy agendas through seemingly objective overviews over states (Cooley 2015, 18; Löwenheim 2008, 256). These numerical measures simplify and produce a world knowable without the detailed particulars of context and history (Merry 2011, S84). As Theodore Porter has observed in his seminal study of the relation between objectivity and quantification: “Perhaps most crucially, reliance on numbers and quantitative manipulation minimizes the need for intimate knowledge and personal trust. Quantification is well suited for communication that goes beyond the bound-

²⁰⁶ There are also a number of policy-oriented documents meant to provide overview such as (Cammack et al. 2006; Fabra and Ziaja 2009).

aries of locality and community” (Porter 1996, ix). The purpose of rankings is exactly to de-contextualize and simplify reality – to make states look similar – to allow comparisons between them. In for example the *Principles for good international engagement in fragile states & situations* it is the fact that the “challenges faced by fragile states are multidimensional” that “underlines the need for internal actors to see clear measures of progress in fragile states” (OECD 2007, 2).²⁰⁷

Rankings are inherently relational as states are assigned a rank in comparison to other states. Moreover, indicators are political as they are rooted in particular conceptions of problems and the appropriate solutions to those problems. They are a preeminent example of how descriptions of the world take place from a specific position but are treated as if it were an objective representation of the world as it is. This way, rankings espouse a certain worldview – a Weberian state ideal – which is then deconstructed into different indicators depending on the preferences of those who are making the ranking. Almost without exception this will be states with political and economic power, the OECD countries, which are the least fragile states in the world (Call 2008, 1499; Merry 2011, S88). Consequently, rankings not only highlight but also deepen differences of status and power by stigmatizing the states that perform poorly and objectifying the superiority of those who perform well (Cooley 2015, 13).²⁰⁸ These power relations are reflected in a number of ways, and I will emphasize what Oded Löwenheim has referred to as the “responsibilization” of states and what can be called the “technicalization” of states.

First, rankings are an example of a situation where self-checking practices become evidence of accountability from the perspective of the state (Merry 2011, S88). Instead of pressuring states to conform based on ambiguous and contextualized reports, numerical representations of states facilitate evaluations of states’ relative placement vis-à-vis other countries including their potential improvement or deterioration in a seemingly objective sense. The indicators themselves become benchmarks of success as each state’s relative

²⁰⁷ The OECD is aware of the problems of governance indicators. As summed up in a report from 2006 on the uses and abuses of quality indicators: “More than users seem widely to perceive, however, even the most carefully constructed of these indicators lack transparency and comparability over time, suffer from selection bias, and are not well suited to help developing countries identify how effectively to improve the quality of local governance” (Arndt and Oman 2006).

²⁰⁸ The relativity of indexes poses distinct problems; i.e. does it make sense to describe sixteenth century England as a “fragile” state (North, Wallis, and Weingast 2009) or to give Switzerland in the 1960s, where women could still not vote, a perfect democracy score (Sanin 2011, 25)?

progress is easily monitored (Rosga and Satterthwaite 2009, 273).²⁰⁹ The responsibility to monitor and report on progress befalls the state being monitored (Merry 2011, S88). This way, individual states' responsibility for their position on the rankings is placed with the examined state itself (Löwenheim 2008, 256).²¹⁰ Laura Zanotti draws a parallel to the patients of Foucauldian clinical institutions as disorderly states' individual performance is monitored and assessed with comparison to a given population, on a scale from normalcy to deviancy. This process is both standardizing as the goal is the same for all and individualizing as each state is responsible for its self-improvement (Zanotti 2005, 473).

Second, the "technicalization" of states. The underlying image of the state in state-building concepts is characterized by its technical, functional nature. This way, the categorization or ranking of states rests on the notion that all states can and should function in essentially the same way. The state is understood as a set of institutions that can be built and strengthened by external actors or, alternatively, taken over temporarily by international administrators (Bliesemann de Guevara 2008, 348). In this view, poorly functioning states, the fragile states, can be fixed through what is presented as technocratic solutions (Bøås and Jennings 2007, 477). Consequently, the inherently political nature of policy reforms is ignored by framing the reforms as technical and, as argued by Charles Call, the result is that "issues of the rules of governance are neglected or relegated to a backseat" (Call 2008, 1497).

A final and central cause for caution is that even if one believes that rankings are the best way to provide characterizations of states, they are often based on dubious data. This is partly due to the lack of clear definitions since

²⁰⁹ Another critique points to the tendency of making indicators the target of reform instead of the actual reform. In other words, the incentive to demonstrate progress on indicators might become greater than the incentive to actually implement reform. For example, gender equality in schools will often be measured by the relative number of girls enrolled in school, but in reality this number might not directly measure the actual gender equality of education (Rosga and Satterthwaite 2009, 286). The UN documents illustrate this point as well. In A/66/258 (2011), a report from the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, it is described how "The education for all fast track initiative, launched in 2002 to help low income countries achieve free, universal basic education and ensure accelerated progress towards Goal 2 of the MDG, has been successful in leveraging funds for country education sector plans and the development of plans, including in several fragile states" (A/66/258 (2011)). Hence, success is not formulated as having resulted in actual improved level of education in fragile states but in the fact that now more states have development plans for their educational sectors.

²¹⁰ Rosga & Satterthwaite argue that the standardization and objectification of data have led to an evasion of the thorny issue of who makes the final decisions on which indicators to use and how those indicators will be used in relation to human rights (Rosga and Satterthwaite 2009, 304).

no amount of data can compensate for conceptual ambiguity (Bhuta 2015, 85; Fearon 2010, 27). Another problem is related to indicators that are not directly observable or contested, for example legitimacy, which I will discuss in the next chapter (Bhuta 2012; Gutiérrez et al. 2011, 29). Other approaches, e.g. subjective perception indexes or focus on policy measures, are problematic as perception cannot be assumed to be a linear representation of reality, just as policy measures cannot be equated with effective policy (Bhuta 2015, 103). Furthermore, in the case of fragile states, the lack of clear definitions is accompanied by a general lack of (trustworthy) data (Sanín 2011, 27).²¹¹ And finally, although the aggregated rankings can create some overview, it is not clear how different indicators should be evaluated against each other, for instance looking at the Fund for Peace fragile state index, how would one compare the “Brain drain of professionals, intellectuals and political dissidents fearing prosecution and repression” indicator with the “Outbreak of politically inspired (as opposed to criminal) violence against innocent civilians”, or what exactly does a difference between a “5” or a “7” on a given index imply (Bhuta 2015, 99, 106; Gutiérrez et al. 2011, 11)? This is especially problematic as most rankings include a large number of indicators of different kinds. In the words of Sanín, “indexes include *correlates* of fragility (such as high infant mortality, for example), possible *causes* (such as the lack of democracy), and predicated *consequences* (such as humanitarian disasters)” (Sanín 2011, 24, accentuated in original). As Charles Call points out, “these characteristics reflect very disparate social realities, and thus require diverse policy responses” (Call 2008, 1495). Whether one shares Sanín’s classification, it is clear that weighing and comparing the relative importance of very different types of indicators influences the usefulness of a catch-all fragile state concept as very different states are lumped together and subjected to a single remedy; more state.

Rankings are neither objective representations of a “real” world or objective as they themselves represent normative claims about what characterizes good and bad political orders (Bhuta 2015, 110-111). This should not be obscured by what could be called the “superiority of the numerical”. As representations of states, these rankings partake in the construction of the state and become part of the reality of the state itself. In the words of Isabel Rocha De Siquera, “the indicators and indices of ‘state fragility’ are more than instruments used to control, contain and mold; rather, they have power in themselves, as they are reproduced and applied in ways not originally envis-

²¹¹ A further development of the problem with data argues that technical questions such as availability of data and identifying quantifiable data end up playing a determinate role in choice of indicators (Rosga and Satterthwaite 2009, 282).

aged, with consequences that are often different or more powerful than anticipated” (Rocha De Siqueira 2014, 269). Indicators underline who the winners and losers are among the group of states. The next sections investigate, in more detail, some of the consequences of the use of the fragile state concept.

5.6. The consequences of the use of the fragile state concept

This section takes its point of departure in the review of the UN documents and the analysis of policy documents to answer the second part of the sub research question, what are the potential implications of the use of the fragile state concept? The focus on representations highlights the constructed and political nature of the opposition between fragile and non-fragile states, which is used to understand the world and justify certain policies (Doty 1996, 3). The fragile state concept not only structures the social world but also influences the scope of action for different actors (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 42). Basically, as Barakat and Larson argues, the “assignment of a state to the ‘fragile’ category allows a layer of understanding, albeit superficial and simplified, and a means to qualify a particular type of foreign policy toward that state” (Barakat and Larson 2013, 22). The following sections investigate how the representational practice of creating and applying the fragile state concept impacts the space of action for both internal and external actors in state-building interventions.

5.6.1. Fragility as an internal problem, solvable through external intervention

State fragility is more often than not seen as the result of internal factors, frequently pointing to lack of capacity in the fragile state or a lack of political will to improve the state. This is for example clearly seen in the influential DAC definition of fragile states: “States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations” (OECD 2007, 2). In other words, state fragility is framed and dealt with as an *internal* problem. This means that global and historical inequalities such as colonialism are seldom included in discussions about the roots of fragility. What Pinar Bilgin and David Morton refer to as the “mutually constitutive relationships of the two worlds” is ignored (Morton and Bilgin 2002, 74). In this view, states are de-historicized to allow a detached, instant evaluation of how well the state in question approximates

Weberian benchmarks (Hameiri 2007, 138). The ahistorical understanding of the state facilitates the naturalness of the Weberian state as an ideal. The argument is often supported by pointing to the dominance of the state as an empirical reality, overlooking that empirical statehood varies immensely.²¹² The OECD states are associated with greater levels of economic development and peace, but outside these relatively few countries, the state often perpetuates rather than prevents violence. Relatively, the state found in OECD countries is an anomaly.

In the *World Bank Task Force Report* from 2002, it is stated that external actors can only effect change that is either allowed or supported by domestic, powerful groups. Moreover, if change is to be sustained, it must come predominantly from within and build on a broad consensus among the people in the country who are disadvantaged by the status quo (World Bank 2002, 18). However, it is argued that specifically in post-conflict situations donors have “tremendous leverage over government decisions about reform because of huge financial flows and the presence of troops from donor countries” and that in those situations donors should use that leverage to effect government reform, specifically in the area of representative institutions (World Bank 2002, 23). This is echoed in the *World Development Report* from 2011, which states that societies cannot be transformed from the outside as external actors cannot restore confidence and transform institutions. But this statement is followed by examples of what external actors can offer (World Bank 2011, 106-107, 37). Moreover, the 2002 *Task Force Report* underlines that fragile states pose a special challenge in the form of “an atypical need for leadership on the part of the development agencies” (World Bank 2002, 17). Development agencies should relieve the central government of the burden of performing some tasks and then, in the longer term, assist by “providing government with model systems that are already running effectively” (World Bank 2002, 30). This seems to echo a rather controversial article from 2004 by Stephen Krasner, in which he argued that, “In the future, better domestic governance in badly governed, failed, and occupied polities will require the transcendence of accepted rules, including the creation of shared sovereignty in specific areas” (Krasner 2004, 85).

This way the fragile state terminology defines some states in need of help, and at the same time provides the solution; externally assisted state-building. Indeed, the international community must step up as these states do not have the capacity to fix themselves (Easterly 2006, 237-240). The fragility discourse frames the problem as internal, and not as the result of any

²¹² In OECD (2011, 20) it is mentioned that in reality all states do not look alike or are organized around the same principles, laws or norms.

actions made by the international community, whereas a solution requires external involvement. Though the importance of internal actors is recognized, change is seen as a result of external actors' ability to transform internal actors, policies and organizations.

5.6.2. Fragile states as a distinctive recipient of aid

State fragility is often linked to limited resources and lack of capacity (Chandler 2006, 2). The UN documents illustrate that the dominant perception is that fragile states require international assistance to be lifted out of fragility. Yet, because the fragile states are simultaneously defined by their lack of capacity, donors are wary about distributing aid to states defined as fragile. This has three key implications; first of all, fragile states are among the poorest states in the world, but as stated in one UN document; "Despite bilateral donors emphasis on the importance of assisting the countries with the most pressing needs, such countries, also called emergency-affected fragile states – receive app. 43% less funding than they would need based on the size of their population, their degree of poverty and their level of political and institutional development" (A/HRC/8/10 (2008): 17). Fragile states receive less aid than would be expected based on their level of poverty.²¹³ One plausible explanation is that fragile states lack the capacity, and possibly the will, to implement, or at least create the façade of implementing, the advice of the donors. Most donors, unsurprisingly, prefer to support states with a certain level of capacity to provide data on progress. As argued in one document "... the dominant paradigm of aid was based on the assumption that assistance was most effective in States with stronger policies and institutions, as a result of which international financing continued to bypass fragile States" (CRC/C/SR.1351 (2008): 5). This presents a dilemma; on the one hand, fragile states are presented as unable to govern themselves without international assistance, but on the other hand, international donors are hesitant to support fragile states as they by definition lack the institutions donors depend on for implementation.

Second, because state fragility is an essentially contested concept with multiple meanings, donors have very wide boundaries in terms of how to evaluate fragile states. As lack of capacity and potentially unwillingness to implement reforms has been identified as characteristics of fragile states, donors can use aid to discipline fragile states on a wide range of indicators. This way, how a state is evaluated on specific indicators associated with state fragility is relevant for the state's access to aid (Bhuta 2015, 87). The degree

²¹³ (CRC/C/SR.1351 (2008); E/2010/93 (2010); A/62/PV.31 (2007); A/HRC/8/10 (2008)).

to which the fragile state is considered cooperative with main (Western) donors can thus impact level of aid, independent from actual poverty levels. One prominent example is the US government Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) where eligible states receive aid based on how well they perform on specific indicators selected by the MCA from other organizations such as Freedom House and the World Bank (Merry 2011, 590). As President Bush explained at the announcement of the MCA, it would be “devoted to projects in nations that govern justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom.”²¹⁴ The US very clearly provides more aid to states that is considered political partners, most notably this has been seen in relation to the American “war on terror”. Aid has not eliminated poverty but it is a major domain for disciplinary techniques (Doty 1996, 129).

Third, international donors will be inclined to construct parallel structures to secure the effective use and absorption of donor funds. These parallel structures can take the form of separate organizations or the employment of consultants into the fragile states government structures. This way, donors circumvent internal structures which lack capacity and/or willingness to implement reforms and are able to demonstrate faster improvements on quantitative indicators. The side effect is that long-term political and social changes are sidelined. Donors have recognized that this is problematic as the professed aim of state-building is to strengthen the very structures that are sidelined to make the intervention effective. The solution has become to focus on local ownership but as fragile states are defined by lack of capacity and/or willingness of internal actors to lead transformations, ownership is difficult to implement and thus becomes more of a vision to strive towards than a practical objective within international funding (Narten 2009, 253). As Jens Narten continues to argue that local ownership is difficult to achieve in state-building interventions because “a certain degree of external intrusiveness is needed to fill a potential vacuum of domestic authority” (Narten 2009, 255). Hence, when intervening in a state defined as fragile, the ideal of ownership *should* be modified.

In sum, access to aid is problematic for fragile states because of their lack of resources and limited capacity. This makes them an unpredictable partner for donors. Accordingly, and perhaps slightly counterintuitively, the consequence of being defined as a fragile state can be negative for the state’s ability to attract aid.

²¹⁴ The MCA was to be supervised by a new governmental cooperation, the Millennium Challenge Cooperation (MCC): <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/developingnations/millennium.html> (Last accessed 7 April 2016).

5.6.3. Fragile states as places where interventions strengthen sovereignty

In less interconnected eras, state weakness could be isolated and kept distant. Failure had fewer implications for peace and security. Now, these states pose dangers not only to themselves and their neighbors but also to peoples around the globe. Preventing states from failing, and resuscitating those that do fail, are thus strategic and moral imperatives. (Robert Rotberg 2002).

The traditional description of the international system as a system of equal sovereign states as the representatives of the will of their constituencies is modified in relation to fragile states. This is because the fragile state is a threat to its own populations *and* international security. Hence, being categorized as a fragile state can justify political interference in the internal affairs of war-torn or poor countries, legitimated through the need to protect the population of the so-called fragile state, formalized in the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, or the need to protect international security, which has been asserted most strongly in relation to the American “war on terror” (Nay 2013, 330).²¹⁵ This way, a state labelled as fragile is more amenable to intervention (Bøås and Jennings 2007; Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 304).

First, the most coherent and influential formulation of intervention to save the population from suffering is the “responsibility to protect” (R2P) doctrine (Chandler 2004; Hehir and Pattison 2015). The R2P doctrine places an almost ethical responsibility on the international community to act on behalf of individuals in cases where states are perceived as unwilling or unable to protect them (Tadjbakhsh 2010, 116).²¹⁶ The R2P doctrine builds on the

²¹⁵ The point is raised in one UN document: “The end of the Cold War and the growth in the number of fragile States brought about a further shift in thinking about sovereignty and national security. No longer could people say, “What’s happening in your country has nothing to do with us”. It has become apparent that issues such as population displacement and pandemic disease are international concerns which cannot be regulated under the Westphalian concept of sovereignty” (A/63/729 (2009): 11).

²¹⁶ The three pillars of R2P read: 1) The State carries the primary responsibility for protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and their incitement; 2) The international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility; 3) The international community has a responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>, Last accessed 7 April 2016).

notion that the state has a responsibility to protect citizens within its jurisdiction, in addition to a responsibility to the wider system of states (Cunliffe 2007, 39). This way, R2P provides normative support to state-building interventions, which aim at strengthening state institutions so the state can perform its tasks; including maintaining a monopoly of violence. This is a general trend where interventions are justified by reference to humanitarian goals, i.e. protecting citizens when the state is unwilling or unable, and the need to build the capacity of the state so that it can undertake its proper functions (Hameiri 2007, 123). It is the responsibility of the fragile state to demonstrate that it is capable of protecting its citizens, and the starting point is that both governmental and non-governmental actors have high levels of opportunistic behavior, whereas the motives of external actors to engage in state-building interventions are not questioned (World Bank 2002, 12, 14). The burden of evidence, so to speak, is on the fragile state and not on the actors intervening (Chandler 2004, 65). The implications are potentially extensive. Michael Ignatieff speaks of a new form of humanitarian empire “in which Western powers, led by the United States, band together to rebuild state order and reconstruct war-torn societies for the sake of global stability and security...” (Ignatieff 2003, 19). There is a growing literature pointing to how the current wave of Western humanitarian and peace interventionism has revived the liberal notion of trusteeship (Duffield 2009, 7).²¹⁷ Perhaps the most influential formulation of this has been Stephen Krasner’s concept of “shared sovereignty” arrangements as a solution to the problem of fragile states. Shared sovereignty entails “the creation of institutions for governing specific issue areas within state-areas over which external and internal actors voluntarily share authority” (Krasner 2005, 15).²¹⁸ There is a clear commonality to the sentiment expressed in Article 22 in the Covenant of the League of Nations, 28. April 1919: “To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant” (The League of Nations 28 April 1919). It continues that this tutelage is best entrusted to advanced nations by reason of resources, experience and geographical position that can and are willing to accept the responsibility. The

²¹⁷ Mark Duffield refers to “an external and educative tutelage over an otherwise superfluous and possible dangerous population” (Duffield 2009, 9).

²¹⁸ See also (Kraxberger 2007, 1062).

comparison highlights that state-building interventions can be viewed as the most current way of framing breaches of sovereignty as being in the interest of those being intervened in (Bickerton 2007, 99).

Second, to cite Charles Call, “the West, especially the US, has strategically deployed the terms ‘failed state’ or fragile state to justify intervention in areas previously deemed sovereign, generally through perceived links to transnational security threats like terrorism and drug trafficking” (Call 2011, 304). The American National Security Strategy from 2002, for example, has been quoted ad nauseam to illustrate the increased focus on fragile states as security risks.²¹⁹ Fragile states are threatening qua their weakness which, according to this narrative, makes them safe havens for terrorists, drug traffickers and international criminal networks.²²⁰ The policy documents describe fragile states as a threat to global security in a variety of ways; from regional problems with direct spill-over of conflict to neighboring states and adverse effects on economic development to global issues of terrorism, drug trafficking and environmental degradation (World Bank 2002, 10; World Bank 2011, 1). Therefore, the inability of fragile states to uphold the monopoly of legitimate violence is a threat; not just to the people living in fragile states but to international order (Duffield and Waddell 2006; Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Krasner 2004; Paris and Sisk 2009; Rotberg 2002). Francis Fukuyama captures the sentiment well: “weak or failed states are the source of many of the world’s most serious problems, from poverty to AIDS to drugs to terrorism” (Fukuyama 2004b, ix). Hence, the collapse of state institutions is at least as threatening as the traditional threats of opposing militaries (Call 2008; White House 2006). This move not only designates all fragile states as potential security threats, but the sphere of what constitutes a security threat is likewise enhanced to include a broad range of issues in addition to military capabilities. This has led David Chandler to argue that the agency of non-Western subjects is now placed at the center of security practices, which means that “when military intervention takes place, it is discursively framed as an act of facilitating, empowering or capacity-building the vulnerable subjects on the ground” (Chandler 2012, 225). Hence, the meaning of military intervention has shifted from undermining sovereignty to a story of enabling or empowering fragile states and the people of those states.

²¹⁹ The NSS states that: “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones. We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few” (White House 2002, 1).

²²⁰ (Chandler 2006, 2; A/59/PV.107 (2005); A/C.3/62/SR.6(2007); S/PV.5615 (2007); S/2009/299 (2009); S/PV.6080 (2009); S/PV.6360 (2010); S/2011/388 (2011); E/CN.15/2012/21*(2012)).

Both the R2P and the security framing of fragile states can potentially legitimize intervention and consequently challenge the inviolability of the non-intervention norm. Again, David Chandler formulates the point succinctly in a response to dominant “theoretical approaches to state sovereignty, which redefine sovereignty as state capacity rather than as political independence; recasting intervention as strengthening sovereignty rather than undermining it” (Chandler 2006, 26). Once defined as a fragile state, state sovereignty is no longer considered an absolute barrier to external intervention. The basic idea of external intervention as a path to change in fragile states is not questioned, although there is an emerging understanding that external intervention can potentially have negative effects (United Nations 1992). It is, however, perceived as much more problematic if the international community does *not* act.

5.6.4. What kind of interventions in fragile states

The fragile state concept is used to describe states that lack capacity, suffer from poor political leadership and weak democratic institutions. The solution to state fragility is seen as strengthening the central state, including its coercive²²¹ and administrative capacity²²² after having had elections.²²³ Elections are important for Western donors in the early phase of the intervention to secure that the central state is led by an internal partner chosen in a legitimate way which is amenable to a partnership (Swedlund 2015).

The documents presented here see the central state as key to solving developmental problems. The state is understood through binaries; state/non-state, modern/traditional, and the purpose of the state-building intervention is to strengthen Weberian state institutions so that they become able to penetrate society and extend control over alternative institutions which are associated with corruption and lack of accountability.²²⁴ As established from the outset in the OECD document “Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility”: “States are the principal institutional and organiza-

²²¹ (S/PV.5570 (2006); A/61/PV.28 (2006); A/62/PV.24 (2007); A/62/PV.27 (2007); S/PV.5766 (2007); A/62/121 (2007); A/64/112 (2009); S/PV.6472, resumption 1 (2011); A/66/133 (2011); A/67/970-S/2013/480 (2013)).

²²² (A/62/121 (2007); A/64/228 (2009); S/PV.6668 (2011); E/2012/11 (2012); E/C.2/2011/2/Add.7 (2012); A/66/75-e/2011/87 (2011); A/66/PV.44 (2012); CAC/COSP/2013/17-CAC/COSP/WG.4/2013/4 (2013); A/CONF.222/PM.1 (2013); S/2014/213 (2014)); (E/ICEF/2008/P/L.23 (2008); E/ECA/COE/28/5 (2009); E/2008/14 (2008); PBC/2/SLE/SR.2 (2008); A/67/205*-S/2012/715 (2012)).

²²³ (S/PV.5025 (2004); E/CN.4/2005/121 (2005)).

²²⁴ (E/2010/93(2010); S/2011/820 (2011); S/2014/242 (2014)).

tional units that exercise political and public authority in modern times” (OECD 2011b, 20).

However, this agenda is currently being challenged from two separate developments. First, the fragile state concept arose and was initially spread through the UN, OECD and World Bank as described in this chapter. However, since the concept is essentially contested it has since then been used to legitimate very different types of interventions. Consequently, although the literature on state-building tends to focus on UN-led state-building missions following a peacebuilding operation, state-building interventions cannot be distinguished by who is intervening or in what way. This means that the fragile state concept is used by a wide variety of actors to legitimate very different types of interventions.

Second, actors such as the UN and others have increasingly begun to realize that systems and processes associated with the Weberian state do not work as anticipated in fragile states. Still, as Peter Albrecht notes this would be a “banal – indeed irrelevant” observation were it not for the fact that these processes remain at the center of attention for external actors working in fragile states (Albrecht 2015a, 283). As Mohammed Ayoob observes: “In most Third World states there are competing locations of authority; these are usually weaker than the state in terms of coercive capacity but equal to or stronger than the state in terms of political legitimacy in the view of large segments of the states’ populations” (Ayoob 1995, 4; OECD 2008, 39). Indeed, actors such as traditional leaders and vigilante groups are estimated to deal with an estimated 70 to 90 percent of local disputes in Africa and Asia (Albrecht 2015a, 279). This has not escaped the attention of international donors, but the dominant focus is on the central state (OECD 2011b, 69). This way, the fragile state concept support a notion of the state, the Weberian ideal type, that has a limited empirical presence in fragile states and is often associated with serious infractions on the local population. This might even be why external actors, most notably the UN intervened in the first place. Consequently, external perceptions of who can be legitimate political actors come to take precedence. This is also seen in the UN preference for the extension of central control over support to secessionist movements. In these cases federalism is pushed as a political solution that preserve territorial unity while, supposedly accommodating internal differences.

In sum, UN-led state-building interventions tend to emphasize the need for central Weberian state institutions over support to other actors which might have more legitimacy in the local context. At the same time there has been a diversification of so-called state-building interventions as the ambiguity of the concepts allows diverse actors to frame interventions as state-building.

5.6.5. Opportunities created: the agency of fragile states

Development discourse is overflowing with buzz-words such as “ownership”, “partnership” and “endogenous change” so why insist on rehashing “old” notions of inequality and hierarchy? For one, external actors not only define when and how a state-building interventions is appropriate, but also which internal actors that they will work with. Hence, the embrace of terms such as ownership and partnership disguises that internal and external actors can have quite different views about appropriate activities and that state-building interventions, due to the weakness and incapacity of internal actors, will ultimately reflect the choices of the external actor (Whitfield and Fraser 2010, 342).

However, the labelling of states as fragile should not only be understood as an act of domination as the fragile state agenda also creates opportunities for those states designated as “fragile”. The fragility concept can be used by the fragile state to argue for greater leeway in fulfilling donors demands, presenting itself as trying but being up against substantial challenges that require the donors to show some flexibility (Fisher 2014). Moreover, the so-called “war on terror” has provided elites of fragile states with the opportunity to present themselves as a bulwark against terrorism and general disorder. This has been used to legitimate large military budgets and lobby external actors for arms and military support. Not infrequently have these resources been used to maintain the regime (Fisher 2014, 322). Although external actors have, at least occasionally, been aware of this, the preference for stability has often won out. Roxanne Doty describes how the hierarchical relationship between the North and the South enables a continuance of security assistance despite the regimes’ transgressions. The continued relationship is more important than the risk of alienating the unpredictable and undeveloped southern states with too strict regulations (Doty 1996, 140).

According to Morten Bøås and Kathleen Jennings, state elites might encourage that decisions about distribution of resources are taken outside or in-between state structures if the networks of power on which the regime’s power relies are likewise primarily found outside the state structures (Bøås and Jennings 2005, 386). This way the government can use resources meant to increase the capacity of the central state to fund its own patronage networks. William Reno similarly investigates four case studies to argue that rulers of weak states use their access to the global economy as representatives of their states to contract a wide range of roles for external actors, thus making sure that internal rivals do not have access to external skills or resources. According to this argument, external actors can end up tacitly supporting rulers’ attempt to stay in power by replacing collapsing state institu-

tions and providing rulers with resources to discipline political networks (Reno 1999). These rulers are less dependent on high levels of internal legitimacy as they can rely on external legitimacy, a distinction I will elaborate on in the next chapter.

The state is the dominant form of political organization, the compulsory model, as argued by Sami Zubaida (Zubaida 1989, 121). Hence, states can object to the fragile state discourse or the categorization of specific countries, but the overarching logic is seldom challenged directly. Instead, many of the so-called fragile states have become adept at manipulating and adjusting the demands and requirements of donors to better fit their own political agendas. This way, fragile states can sustain a certain level of aid without actually changing existing practices (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 35). The opposite might also be the case, however. When a state has successfully emerged from state fragility, it might fall out of attention in the donor community. The UN documents illustrate that this is a problem that the UN system is aware of. In this case, the former fragile state might attempt to frame its transition as a reason for further investments. For example, the representative of Sierra Leone, one of the perceived UN peacebuilding success stories, argues that, “It is acknowledged that Sierra Leone is a success story in peacebuilding and we therefore renew our call on the international community to continue to invest in success in the spirit of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States ...” (S/PV.6739 (2012): 8).

Hence, the use of the fragile state concept can also create some leeway for internal actors, especially but not exclusively representatives of the central state, as external actors depend on their cooperation.

5.7. Conclusion

The fragile state concept is one of few policy categories that have been fully integrated into policy doctrines on security and development. It is widely used in both policy and academic circles because of its perceived importance (Chandler 2006, 3; Nay 2014, 211). This chapter has not set out to deny that some states are more peaceful and more prosperous than others or to argue that the fragile state concept and the state-building literature has “invented” a problem (Hameiri 2007, 123). Instead, the chapter has shown, through the analysis of UN documents and policy documents, that the fragile state concept is an essentially contested concept and as such political. The ambiguity of the fragile state concept makes it a poor descriptive category, but it facilitates a specific type of intervention, the state-building intervention.

The conceptual analysis points to the political and contested nature of the fragile state concept. It is political from the onset in the sense that it is

used in a relative sense, i.e. fragility is measured against a Weberian ideal type state, but it is also political in the sense that it undergirds a perception of reality where internal actors are the main cause of fragility whereas external actors are the solution. This legitimizes and normalizes a hierarchy between states. Labelling some states as “fragile” is not just a rhetorical exercise but is used to delineate acceptable policy options against these states (Bøås and Jennings 2007, 478). This way the fragile state concept creates and reinforces an “A” and a “B” team of states (Heathershaw 2008b, 609-612; Morton and Bilgin 2002). Within this understanding, the European state is the template and the measuring stick used to evaluate “the rest” (Bøås and Jennings 2005, 387; Wesley 2008, 370, 373). The use of the fragile state concept thus reflects asymmetrical power relationships in international politics (Nay 2014, 228; Schlichte and Migdal 2005, 11). Moreover, as the document analysis demonstrates, the solution to the problem of fragile states is largely envisioned to entail external intervention. The last part of the chapter discusses the implications of the use of the fragile state concept for the states being referred to as fragile. The use of the fragile state concept weakens state sovereignty and places fragile states in a subordinate relationship to external actors. However, as pointed to in the last section, internal actors have agency and will therefore seek to embed the external intervention in the local context. This will be further explored in the rest of the study.

PART IV.

STATE-BUILDING: THE CASE OF YEMEN

This part of the thesis, part IV, focuses on the Yemeni case. It answers the question: *How have internal elite actors shaped state-building interventions in Yemen?*

Part IV consists of three chapters. Chapter 6 presents the Yemeni case by providing a brief overview and analysis of the Yemeni state and state-building history and second, by analyzing Yemen's emergence as a "fragile state". This links the conceptual analysis from chapter 5 to the Yemeni case, and aims to show how Yemen was increasingly, during the 2000s, characterized as fragile, specifically linked to the threat of al-Qaeda. This way Yemen's sovereignty was made increasingly contingent and a matter of international security.

Chapter 7 and 8 each focuses on two periods where Salih and finally Hadi have been trying to either gain or maintain power. Each section begins with a brief review of the resources, military and economic, as well as level of internal legitimacy, of Salih and Hadi respectively. It then evaluates their level of external legitimacy. These factors are seen as decisive for the strategies that they have applied to seek to embed the intervention in the Yemeni context. These strategies are investigated in five sub-cases that function as micro-cosmoses of state-building.

The application of the theoretical framework to the empirical case shows how internal actors seek to embed external interventions in a way that not only increases their power vis-à-vis alternative elite actors but also weakens their dependence on individual external actors. Specifically, Salih sought to offset the Saudi Arabian influence by increasing bonds to extra-regional actors. Moreover, the case shows that external legitimacy cannot replace internal resources and legitimacy, and that although lack of internal resources increases dependence on external actors and thus internal willingness to be cooperative, it weakens the internal actors ability to embed the external intervention in the local context.

Chapter 6.

State-building in Yemen: presenting the case

Yemen is not a failed state but a new state, a teenager, born only in 1990 of the marriage of two weak, unstable governments in their twenties, North Yemen, or the Yemen Arab Republic, based in Sana'a, where military officers deposed the last imam in 1962; and South Yemen, where revolutionaries seized power in Aden after the British departure in late 1967 and later declared the People's Democratic Republic (Carapico 2006, 183).

This chapter provides a brief overview over Yemeni state-building history and presents the major internal actors. It thus serves as a background chapter to the investigation of subcases related to state-building in the following two chapters. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to recent Yemeni state-building history and sets out the broader political developments. This is not just to familiarize the reader with Yemeni history, but also because events in Yemen cannot be understood without an appreciation of Yemen's unique history. This is both true in a concrete sense as recent political events cannot be understood separately from the historical context, but also because it illustrates how state-building in Yemen is not very adequately described through the state-building literature's focus on the state's *penetration* of society (Migdal 1988, 4). In the Yemeni case, state and non-state political organizations interact and are mutually constitutive.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the structure of the Salih regime, including two key political organizations, the tribe and political parties, as this structure is not only key to understanding Salih's regime but also remains key to understanding the transition in 2011 and Hadi's difficulty in establishing his internal legitimacy. The analysis in the final part of the chapter focuses on how Yemen was established as a fragile state. It argues that the use of the fragile state term, specifically the linking of Yemen and the threat of al-Qaeda, has made Yemen amenable to increasingly invasive forms of interventions such as the drone program. This sets the scene for the analysis of how internal elite actors have shaped state-building interventions in the subsequent chapters.

6.1. State-building in Yemen: two processes until 1990

An ancient cultural entity more than a “state”, Yemen was divided formally in the nineteenth century by British colonialism into Aden port and its hinterland, leaving North Yemen governed by an archaic Zaydi imamate (Carapico 1996, 290).

Yemen has never been fully colonized but its history is shaped by the ebbs and flows in relations between extra-regional and regional great powers. In 1872, the Ottomans were able to conquer Sana’a, the capital, but the Zaydi Imam, Yahyā Muhammad Hamīd al-Dīn, successfully held the northern part of Yemen, which is mountainous and difficult to enter.²²⁵ This period is sometimes mentioned as a cautionary tale for those thinking of invading Yemen as Yemen became known as “the graveyard of the Turks” because of the substantial losses that the Turks incurred trying to capture Yemen (Dresch 2000, 6). After World War I, the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the Turks withdrew from Yemen in 1918-1919, which allowed the northern Imam Yahyā to expand his area of influence southward. Although the development of state administration was limited and largely overseen by the Imam personally, this period has been called the start of the “modern Yemen” (Dresch 2000, 8, 45). During one interview with a seasoned politician this period was juxtaposed to the current Yemeni state:

Then the Imam from Taiz or Sanaa or anywhere can send just one person. Sometimes that soldier is even barefoot. Wearing an old Canadian gun or something. Most of the time it doesn't even have bullets but it's the symbol of the Imam. That person cannot go back to the Imam without bringing that person so that he can be tried and get the justice he deserves. If you want to look now at the kind of chaos and the kind of outlawed behaviour which can not be curved, it is mainly because those who are really outlawed are part of the system, part of the political structure or the state.²²⁶

The quote illustrates how history is ever present in current Yemeni narratives and how juxtaposition of historical and current events is used to describe the low level of the current state. However, life under the Imam was hard and poverty widespread. The system was highly centralized, although

²²⁵ Iliya Harik describes Yemen as a prime example of the imam-chief state where authority is invested in a sanctified leader residing in the periphery of the Arab heartland (Harik 1990).

²²⁶ Interview, Sana’a, October 2013 (2). This juxtaposition was made in several interviews in Sana’a.

the rudiments of state power emerged, including an army with a fixed pay scale (Dresch 2000, 30).²²⁷ The elite controlled most resources, and interaction with the outside world was limited, yet ideas of change were reaching the Imamate and dissatisfaction was growing. In 1962 the Imam was deposed in a coup performed by soldiers who, supported by Egypt, sought to change the Imamate into a republic. The Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), known as North Yemen, was declared (Dresch 2000, 87). The first president was a military officer, ‘Abdullah al-Sallāl and the presence of Egyptian soldiers and administrators increased substantially.²²⁸ The Saudis, on the other hand, saw this presence as a threat and began arming the deposed Imam. Fighting continued until 1967 when the Egyptians, weakened by their defeat to Israel in the Six-Day War, withdrew. Political order was unstable and no president lasted long; the most notable president of this period was Ibrāhīm al-Hamdī, who is still spoken highly of by many in the educated elite.²²⁹ After a brief interregnum, Ali ‘Abdullah Salīh took over power in 1978 with the support of the Hashid-tribes and the military.

The developments in the South were somewhat different but parallel. The Southern capital, Aden, was taken by the British in 1839. They primarily focused on keeping Aden stable, establishing a series of treaties with notables around Aden, so-called “treaty chiefs”. These developed into more formal Treaties of Protection from 1886 and onwards to prevent the Ottomans from expanding. In 1905, a formal line between the areas of British and Ottoman spheres of influence respectively was signed (Dresch 2000, 9-10). In 1934, the British and Imam Yahyā signed the Treaty of Sana’a, which established a border between the two regimes, although permeable. In the long term this came to define the border between the two Yemens but it had few practical implications at the time. The British built a network of truces among various internal actors in the Aden hinterland, a difficult task since domains of local dignitaries were often only loosely defined and of great variance (Dresch 2000, 36-38).²³⁰ The network was unstable and was further undermined in

²²⁷ Zaydism does not operate with the automatic succession of power from father to son, although in practice it has often happened (Dresch 2000, 44).

²²⁸ The Egyptians would not uncommonly describe Yemenis as backward using some of the same language as the British. Yemenis were perceived as unable to govern themselves (Dresch 2000, 93). It is estimated that there were up to 60,000 Egyptian troops in Yemen at the peak.

²²⁹ Ibrāhīm al-Hamdī will be referred to again in chapter 7 as he played a central role in the corporatist movement. He was assassinated and found in compromising circumstances.

²³⁰ Tribal leaders bargained for subsidies and stipends, including arms which they used to control their ‘followers’ (Brehony 2011, 4). This way, the British helped increase the authority of some internal actors vis-à-vis others and solidify authority relationships as maps were drawn and relations formalized, which had been quite fluid until then.

the 1950s as critique of the British rule was growing, partly as a result of limited economic and social development. Hence, the British supported the creation of a Southern federation as a solution to political instability (Brehony 2011, 10-11).²³¹ However, the federation was not a viable political unit, and as elsewhere the tide was turning against colonialism, whereas Arab nationalism spread through radio from Cairo.

Aden had developed into one of the world's busiest harbors and a buzzing international city, but it was also the center of resistance towards the British.²³² The city saw growing instability and discontent, which led to the emergence of a variety of groups and organizations. Among those workers unions, the National Liberation Front (NFL) became influential (Brehony 2011, 10-11; Dresch 2000, 102-108).²³³ The NFL soon controlled both the hinterland and Aden and therefore represented the Yemeni in independence negotiations with the British in late 1967. On 30 November, Southern Yemen was declared independent.²³⁴ However, the state was weak and the departure of the British along with their subsidies combined with the Suez crisis left the new state in dire economic circumstances.

After the British left, South Yemen developed closer bonds with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, whereas North Yemen was uneasily placed in the Western bloc. Both the Northern and the Southern state depended heavily on aid and loans, both from extra-regional and regional donors. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Yemeni both from North Yemen and South Yemen began to migrate in large numbers to especially Saudi Arabia, which was experiencing a large oil-driven boom. This created a sharp increase in available funds, which largely circumvented the state structures. At the same time, both Yemens were experiencing an increased influx of funds and consequently rapid improvements in social services. The relationship between North and South Yemen was ambiguous; on the one hand there was widespread popular support for unification, and the political elites rhetorically voiced their commitment to unification, but there were also several border wars in the 1970s. It did not help that the Saudis were opposed to the idea of a unified Yemen (Dresch 2000, 130). Hence, the announcement of unity in 1990 came

²³¹ I was introduced to the Southern federation as a historical reference for the more current debates on federalism. The current debate on federalism is analyzed in chapter 8.

²³² Aden is said to have been the second busiest port in the world after New York in 1958. In 1955 a census gives a total of 138,000 inhabitants in Aden, 37,000 reckoned to be Adeni (Dresch 2000, 71).

²³³ The NFL was supported by Egypt but was a national movement.

²³⁴ The NFL had previously stressed the goal of Yemeni unity but is said to have preferred to establish their power in the South before wanting to "rush" into unity with the North (Brehony 2011, 17).

as a surprise. Several factors pushed Ali ‘Abdullah Salih (President of North Yemen) and Ali Salim al-Bidh (President of South Yemen) towards unification. The South was severely weakened by inter-elite fighting and the collapse of the Soviet Union, both states were destitute, and in the mid-80s oil had been located in the border region between the two states. This fueled hopes of reserves matching those of Yemen’s neighbors and thus provided an incentive for political stability to be able to attract international investors (Carapico 2006, 194).²³⁵ However, the actual unification came quickly and took most by surprise.

6.2. The Republic of Yemen: Yemen between 1990 and 1994

The Republic of Yemen was formally established on 22 May 1990 in an agreement between the new president of united Yemen, Ali ‘Abdullah Salih and his new Vice President, Ali Salim al-Bidh. The constitution of the new state granted voting rights to all citizens over the age of 18 including women and a high degree of freedom of speech (article 26), and Yemen was lauded as the first parliamentary democracy on the Arabian Peninsula.²³⁶ Unification was widely supported by the Yemeni population, which has a sense of common historical identity. An often repeated description of Yemen is attributed to the Prophet Muhammed, who supposedly proclaimed that “The people of Yemen are the most tender, gentle hearted of men. Faith and wisdom are both of them Yemeni” (Dresch 1989, 1). However, political integration was not as straightforward. As formulated by Lisa Wedeen: “there were no prior political arrangements that regulated membership in a territorially determinate association of Yemeni citizens, who as ‘a people’ could identify themselves with an existing common political authority” (Wedeen 2003, 683).²³⁷ The immediate solution was to establish a democracy, based on a 50/50 power sharing arrangement, notwithstanding the approximate 80-20 population disparity to the former North Yemen, until elections could be held. In one interview, unification was described as a “historical accident” in which democracy was seen as a way to avoid the difficult process of agreeing on how to combine the two very different states.²³⁸ Jason Brownley has found that: “democracy often arises as an unintended by-product amid

²³⁵ On the unification process see also (Burrowes 1991; Dunbar 1992).

²³⁶ The constitution was ratified through a referendum on 16 May 1991.

²³⁷ See also Sarah Phillips for the same point: “Although most Yemeni citizens do not dispute their identity as Yemenis per se, the link between this identity and a sovereign Yemeni state is more tenuous” (Phillips 2008a, 253).

²³⁸ Interview, Sana’a, 2013 (3).

struggles forces not ideologically committed to democracy” (Brownlee 2005, 47).²³⁹ In Yemen’s case the unification process was ill prepared and implemented in a rush. Moreover, neither the southern nor the northern elites had any intention of relinquishing power to the other as both elites saw unification as a way of extending their own power and elections as a mechanism to that end (Blumi 2011, 125). Hence, unification created an amalgamation of two very different political systems but did not succeed in integrating the two systems, which remained inherently at odds.²⁴⁰

Furthermore, by an unfortunate twist of fate, the newly united Yemen was the only Arab representative in the United Nations Security Council in August 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Yemen voted “no” to the UN resolution that authorized UN member states “to use all necessary means” to restore international peace, i.e., expel Iraq from Kuwait.²⁴¹ Famously, the US Secretary of State James A. Baker III is quoted for calling it “the most expensive no vote you will ever cast” (Phillips 2012, 133). Apparently, he did so over the UN broadcasting system, making it a highly public threat and a clear signal to other states that might consider opposing American priorities (Gibbs 1997, 123). It was no empty threat and a lesson that president Salih has since remembered. Both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait viewed the Yemeni stance as hostile. As a consequence, Saudi Arabia expelled some 800,000 Yemenis who had been working in Saudi Arabia (Detalle 2000, 134). Moreover, development aid was substantially cut from both Arab and Western donors (Brehony 2011, 185; Phillips 2012, 133).²⁴² Any hopes of economic development crumbled and the new state was thrown into economic disarray (Carapico 2006, 195).

²³⁹ This has some overlap with Dankwart Rustow’s model of transitions to democracy. This model starts with a background condition, national unity, and is set off by a prolonged and inconclusive political struggle. The third phase entails the deliberate decision by political leaders to accept diversity and to institutionalize democratic institutions as a way of structuring differences. The final phase; habituation, suggests that democracy over time becomes integrated into everyday politics (Rustow 1970).

²⁴⁰ Karl Deutsch et al. suggest a four-cell matrix differentiating association on two dimensions; whether they are amalgamated or non-amalgamated (a formal merger of previously independent units) and second, whether they are integrated or non-integrated (a sense of shared community) (Deutsch 1957).

²⁴¹ See Resolution 678, 29 November 1990

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/678%281990%29 (Last accessed 30 March 2016).

²⁴² The expulsion of the migrant workers had the most serious impact on the Yemeni economy. It is estimated that foreign remittances alone constituted 40% of the GNP of North Yemen and 44% of GNP in South Yemen in 1980 (Okruhlik and Conge 1997, 556). This is discussed further in chapter 7.

In terms of the political situation, the temporary balance of power between the two former ruling parties provided space for a proliferation of political parties and lively debate leading up to the first elections in 1993 (Carpico 1998, 136).²⁴³ However, as elections were getting closer, already delayed from late 1992 to April 1993, assassinations of southern leaders increased and the South was increasingly unhappy with the centralization of power in Sana'a (Hudson 1995). The first elections of the new state in 1993 were a disappointment for the former ruling party in South Yemen, Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), as its limited gains in former North Yemen were not enough to offset the difference in population sizes, making it the junior partner in the government. And to make matters worse, the newly established Islāh party (Hizb al-Islāh (the reform party, referred to as Islāh), which had formed an alliance with Salih's party, the General People's Congress (GPC), became the second largest party. The political atmosphere was deteriorating rapidly as increasingly the northern elite positioned itself as the true leaders of Yemen. Several attempts were made to halt the cycle of violence and building mistrust. The most famous attempt led to the Document of Pledge and Accord, which was penned by a group of prominent Yemeni (Political Forces Dialogue Committee 1994; Romeo and El-Mensi 2011, 501). It, among other things, introduced a significant level of decentralization to appease the former South Yemen and as such remains a point of reference for local autonomy. However, although the document was signed at a ceremony in Jordan, it was too late and it was never implemented (Brehony 2011, 194). In April 1994, the former North and South Yemen were officially at war. However, it quickly became clear that the former North Yemen had the upper hand.²⁴⁴ Within three months Aden, the former capital of South Yemen, had been taken and the war was over. This left Salih with free hands to further strengthen his rule over united Yemen.

6.3. The political system of unified Yemen

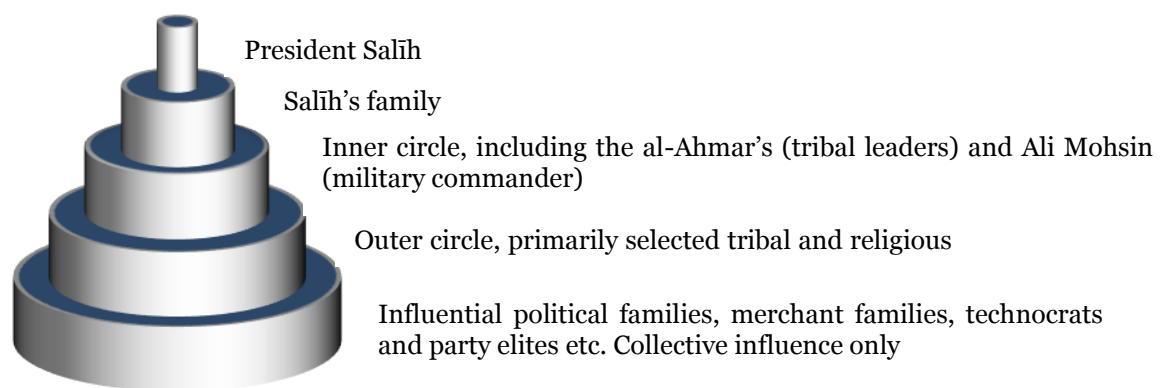
Yet, in spite of the regime's durability, the Weberian
fantasy of a state that enjoy a monopoly of violence –
legitimate or otherwise – is not remotely evident
(Wedeen 2003, 682).

²⁴³ More than 3000 candidates participated in the elections and voter turnout was quite high (Phillips 2008a, 235).

²⁴⁴ For more on the civil war in 1994, see for example (Warburton 1995).

After the civil war in 1994, Salih strengthened his hold on power, including through a series of constitutional changes (Sharif 2002, 84).²⁴⁵ The result was a political system which is formally a representative democracy, but one which was referred to as “cosmetic” more than the real locus of power or internal legitimacy; as having “learned the motions of the process, but not the spirit of the process”.²⁴⁶ The former South Yemen was marginalized in terms of both political and economic development. Salih controlled the state but used this control to build a centralized political system, where level of influence depended more on the personal standing of the elite actor than on the institutional post the elite actor may have occupied. The political system can be depicted as concentric circles around an epicenter of power. This is illustrated in figure 6.1.²⁴⁷

Figure 6.1. Concentric model of governance, Yemen



Here I focus on the largest concentric network, which defined the way Salih ruled Yemen. However, the system is made up of a never-ending number of networks which interact and mutually influence how each elite actor will be positioned in relation to the most powerful actors.²⁴⁸ Elite is considered a relative concept in the sense that an actor can be considered “elite” among one group of people and not necessarily among others. The very top of the

²⁴⁵ Article 143-146 of the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen, 1994. It can be accessed here: <http://www.al-bab.com/yemen/gov/con94.htm> (Last accessed on 28 March 2016).

²⁴⁶ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (3).

²⁴⁷ The idea of mapping elites in concentric circles is inspired from Volker Perthes' edited volume on political relevant elites (Perthes 2004). The idea of mapping Yemen's elites as concentric circles has also been taken up by Sarah Phillips (Phillips 2011). I have made a version that emphasizes the hierarchical nature of the concentric circles.

²⁴⁸ The focus is on the northern elites throughout the discussions of the Yemeni case, only bringing in the south when the so-called Southern Issue played a role for northern elites. This excludes a number of relevant actors and events taking place outside Sana'a, but reflects that historically and currently the main locus of power is and had been the northern elites.

figure, Salih and his inner circle, would be elite in any context, but as one moves down the layers, most actors will simultaneously be subject to and exercise power. The concentric form of governance is characterized by four key characteristics:

First, although it is a hierarchical system, it is characterized by a relatively high degree of fluidity and flexibility.²⁴⁹ Individual actors can move up and down or between different networks in which they do not necessarily hold the same level of power. For example, the former paramount sheikh of the Hashids, the most influential tribal confederation in Yemen, “Abdullah al-Ahmar, was the center of his tribal network. He was also one of the founders of the Islah party.²⁵⁰ Thus, he controlled various political organizations from which he could draw power but he was subordinate to Salih in the overall network. Power moves downward and outward, but the system, through its widening base, gradually becomes more flexible and with easier access for non-included actors. Another example is Ali Mohsin, who was generally described as the second most powerful man in Yemen under Salih. He is a military man who built his network through his association with Salih. His main powerbase was military and based on his control over the 1st Armored Division (commonly referred to as “firqa”), but he branched out and became a businessman, participated in the creation of the party Islah, and finally he is believed to have strong ties to Saudi Arabia (Phillips 2008b, 137). The higher up one moves in the hierarchy, the more sources the actors will draw on. Tribal background is an advantage but is neither sufficient nor necessary for becoming powerful. Indeed, Salih himself belongs to a minor tribe in the Hashid confederation.

Second, the system is elitist at its core but at the same time it is preserved by the extensive degree of inclusion and instrumentalism in the sense that membership can be extended if situations arise where this is deemed beneficial by the center. Basically, the regime has encouraged financial dependence, whether through personal relations necessary to succeed in private business or through government employment (Phillips 2008a, 247). At the

²⁴⁹ This is combined with low levels of transparency. In the Yemeni case relatively little is known about many of the actors in Salih’s inner circle or who they are. There are no mechanisms to secure the public any kind of knowledge of how decisions are being made or by whom.

²⁵⁰ Sheikh ‘Abdullah was also a powerful leader of parliament who did not necessarily follow legal guidelines for the parliament (Phillips 2008b, 87). Indeed, his authority stemmed more from his tribal position than from the state structures he represented and was meant to uphold. Part of this is that between 20 and 50 members of the GPC, that is, the ruling party to which Sheikh ‘Abdullah was formally in opposition as a founding member of Islah, would side with Sheikh ‘Abdullah in parliamentary discussions, thus prioritizing their non-state organization over their party membership.

same time the system is very competitive as various centers of power will compete for access and resources. This takes place at national level but also in each patron-client network introducing a certain dynamic into the system (Carvajal 2015, 6). However, although Yemen can be described as a rentier economy based on oil and aid, there are limited available resources, which means that Salih has never been able to either buy complete acquiescence or to build a coercive apparatus that could compel his opponents.

Third, decisions are usually made by elite interaction-bargaining, accommodation and compromise. The system has the potential of coercion but depends on dialogue and mutually beneficial relations to remain stable. The Yemeni regime tolerated a certain level of critique although directly challenging President Salih was unacceptable. If the “lower levels” of the pyramid withdraws, it can threaten the top echelons i.e. the leader cannot function without at least the acquiescence of lower levels, i.e. some legitimacy (Ayubi 2001, 245). This also means that the system secures that there is a certain level of information sharing as it brings together different types of people where neither has the strength to dispose of the other. The system encourages rivalry but not detrimental confrontations (Koury (1978) cited in Ayubi 2001, 245).

Fourth, the system was very stable in Yemen where Salih ruled for 33 years, including his years as president of North Yemen. This is because the system was based more on cooptation than coercion so that those co-opted into the system, which in the Yemeni case were large parts of the elite, have an interest in sustaining the system.²⁵¹ The most serious threat to this type of regime usually comes from intra-elite splits as was also the case in Yemen in 2011, which I return to.

The concentric network both overlaps and complements state organizations. Salih was elected through relatively free elections held every 7th year. He had a vice-president, Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, and a parliament consisting of two chambers; the Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura) and the House of Representatives (Majlis al-Nuwab).²⁵² The Majlis al-Shura is a body of 111 members appointed by the president. The Majlis al-Nuwab consists of 301 members elected based on universal suffrage in a single-district-majority system (Sharif 2002, 85).²⁵³ The constitution gives the parliament a series of

²⁵¹ Hence, the basis of power in the concentric network is neo-patrimonial, understood as a concentration of power in the hands of the president, the use of clientilism and selective distribution of state resources (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997).

²⁵² This describes the situation prior to the current crisis. The last elections to the parliament were in 2003.

²⁵³ The work of the MPs is made difficult by the lack of technical and administrative support to individual MPs and the parliament as such.

responsibilities, among them to propose and approve legislation (article 85) and review and approve the budget (article 88).²⁵⁴ However, the parliament was generally considered weak and unwilling to challenge Salih's authority (Alley 2008, 161; Phillips 2008b, 80; Sharif 2002).²⁵⁵ Instead, the parliament served as a channel of inclusion for both regime and opposition elites, including tribal sheikhs, and as a gauge for public opinion (Phillips 2008b, 81, 85).²⁵⁶ Indeed, the widespread patronage networks have left most elite actors included to some degree, leading to some MPs describing themselves more as employed by the regime than actual watchdogs on the regime. In general, the ad hoc development of Weberian type state structures including democratic institutions, a "democracy in doses", has created a disjointed and ambiguous system (Brynen, Korany, and Noble 1995, 269). The result is an extensive but fragmentary legal framework, which is unevenly implemented.

In sum, the Salih regime and the key internal elite actors draw on both state and non-state political organizations. It is, however, neither a sufficient or necessary element to hold a specific position in the state or the government to belong to the regime. The regime is the real locus of power and as such limited change can be implemented by the government if the regime does not support it.

²⁵⁴ These references are to the 2001 constitution. The constitution is to be replaced and a new constitution was in the process of being drafted based on recommendations from the National Dialogue.

²⁵⁵ It is interesting that researchers focusing on Yemen, such as Sarah Phillips and April Alley Longley, generally seem less impressed with the Yemeni institutions and organizations than comparative scholars who often present Yemen as an example of a country where the regime has had to be mindful of the political opposition in the legislatures. This might be related to the relative progressive Yemeni laws and the presence of representatives from various parties in the parliament.

²⁵⁶ Yet, there are examples of MPs who have chosen to stand against the regime. One prominent example is the Oil Block 53; an oil deal where the difference between what the foreign investor actually paid and what was reported by the Yemeni government was used to line the pockets of corrupt government officials who facilitated the deal. It was leaked to members of the GPC in parliament, who eventually succeeded in rallying the parliament against the sale and exposing the deal to the public. It is told that two parliamentarians personally went to a print shop to secure the distribution of a report documenting government corruption after President Salih had ordered the report to be buried. In the end, the deal was retracted and although no-one was ever held accountable it is considered an example of parliamentary strength (Alley 2008, 157-161).

6.3.1. The tribe as a non-state political organization

In this section, I provide a brief introduction to the tribe as a political organization in Yemen.²⁵⁷ The most powerful non-state organization in Yemen is the tribe, which is also the organization with the most independent space of action.²⁵⁸ During interviews, tribal actors were unanimously considered important, although their influence was described as waning.²⁵⁹ In the Yemeni context, the tribal category does not have a uniform valorization.²⁶⁰ It can be used derogatorily, often by urban, well-educated Yemeni who sees the tribe as an impediment to development.²⁶¹ Moreover, some southerners refer to the tribalism of the north as a way of distinguishing between a backward north and a civilized south.²⁶² This echoes the literature on state-building, which describes tribes as primordial and traditional groups, which should be replaced by Weberian-type state structures. However, overall, the tribal category is used to describe specific well-known actors in Yemen and as an organizational mechanism for political mobilization (Wedeen 2008, 171).²⁶³ Moreover, even those who are not tribal can praise values associated with tribalism in Yemen such as generosity, protection of the weak, including for-

²⁵⁷ The debate as to whether “tribe” is such a prejudiced word that it should not be used has been voiced in relation to Yemen, for example by Isa Blumi, who suggests using “communities” instead. However, this has not been a big debate, possibly because the tribal concept is used fairly descriptively by the Yemeni themselves (See Brandt 2013). Shelagh Weir, an authority on tribes in Yemen, argues that “the term ‘tribe’ is still a useful portmanteau term, I believe, for territorial polities whose members share a common allegiance, which exist in a matrix of similar polities with which they have relations, and which have always been potentially or actually formally subordinate to some kind of ‘state’, also, of course, a problematic term” (Weir 2007, 2). (See also Dresch 1989; Wedeen 2008, 170-176).

²⁵⁸ There are two major tribal confederations in north Yemen, the Hashids and the Bakil. Salih belongs to the Hashids and they have been the most political influential during the last decades.

²⁵⁹ Interviews, Sana’a 2013 and 2014. This impression is supported by YPC surveys. In 2007, 82% of respondents in a survey of the decision-making process in Yemen believed that the tribe has either a strong or a somewhat strong influence on decision-making in Yemen (YPC 2007). Helen Lackner writes that 75% to 80% of the Yemeni population belongs to a tribe (Lackner 2014a, 19).

²⁶⁰ See Collins 2006, for a similar discussion on the use of the clan concept

²⁶¹ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (14).

²⁶² Tribes in southern Yemen have generally been weaker than in the north. Moreover, the tribal structure was influenced by first the British, who tried to manipulate that tribal order into creating a stable hinterland as described, and later the socialist regime, which tried to minimize the role of tribes (Dresch 2000, 59).

²⁶³ Hence, despite difference in size, power and so on, tribes generally share the same functions (al-Dawsari 2012, 4). Moreover, tribalism should be distinguished from social structures which are basically feudalism. The distinction is not straightforward as tribes in Yemen are closely bound to specific territories (Dresch 2000, 24).

eigners, and the tribal codes' ability to contain conflicts.²⁶⁴ Especially in the north, tribal affiliation can be an important and valued sociopolitical identifier,²⁶⁵ even though only perhaps 20% of the population considers their tribe as their primary reference point (Phillips 2011b, 51).²⁶⁶ Indirectly, this was illustrated in multiple interviews with educated Yemeni, who would for example argue that:

And the best we could do is to have a clear division of responsibilities where tribal power would be allowed to continue in tribal communities to organize local affairs and not be allowed to spill over to the center.²⁶⁷

This statement suggests that although tribes should not rule the state, tribes are seen as playing a political and social role in local communities. Hence, tribalism is not per se the issue, but rather the dominance of a few elite actors over the state in part based on control over the most coherent tribal confederation.

Tribes have lost influence, especially in the last decade, partly due to increased urbanization, the youth bulk and widespread poverty, which has overburdened social bonds.²⁶⁸ Moreover, the tribal social contract has been undermined by Salih's co-optation of tribal leaders. Instead of focusing on representing their fellow tribesmen, they direct their attention upwards in the concentric circle, towards the political elites, leaving their tribesmen in neglect. In one interview this was formulated the following way:

Suddenly the state comes in, the sheikh becomes a commander in the military and get a salary, so he is no longer dependent on his tribal constituency and therefore less accountable to them. His power is now derived from his links to the state rather than from the local legitimacy and from his grassroots and the (tribal) code began to transform.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ This way tribalism was described as both a 'culture' associated with specific norms and a political organization. Tribal norms were evaluated both positively and negatively but generally it was considered a negative development that tribal norms were seen as having been integrated into the state

²⁶⁵ Importantly, in Yemen tribal identity is not fixed at birth; it is possible to cease being a tribesman or to switch between tribes (for individual tribesmen or sections of tribes) (See Dresch 1990, 155; Weir 2007, 113 for examples).

²⁶⁶ There are geographical variations and it would also seem that tribal influence is stronger within some areas than others. It is for example argued that the customary law system remains at least more effective than any alternatives and therefore resolves perhaps as many as 90% of conflicts in Yemen (al-Dawsari 2012, 5).

²⁶⁷ Interview, Sana'a, 2013 (3).

²⁶⁸ Interviews, Sana'a 2013 and 2014.

²⁶⁹ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (3). (See also for example Harris and Page 2009, 70).

When the mutual accountability between the tribal leader and the communities are cut, the tribal system ceases to function as the community will cease to acknowledge the authority of the sheikh (Al-dawsari 2012, 4). Optimally the bonds of the tribes are both horizontal and vertical, linking elites and non-elites, as the title of tribal sheikh is not a birth privilege but earned through proving services and applying the tribal code within the tribal system.

Especially two narratives on the tribes are repeated in Yemen. The first perspective describes tribes as manipulated by Salih as a way of preventing state structures from growing strong enough to constrain his power. Hence, as argued in one interview: “Salih did everything to exaggerate the power of the tribe because it served his purposes and because his powerbase is tribal.”²⁷⁰ In another interview, it was argued that:

Ali Salih, he could destroy the morals, the ethics, of the people. For example the tribal sheikhs, he chose the bad people and brought them closer to him, gave them money and authority, so that the good ones who would be against his regime, his system, his structure, will not be as powerful as the people close to him.

Hence, the tribal structure has been manipulated and the tribal sheikhs who are now most powerful are “bad” in the sense that they are only concerned with their own power. Here, the common theme in the state-building literature of the tribes as impediments to development and as hindering “development by resisting the state’s efforts to impose uniform state law over all its territory...” is repeated (Corstange 2008, 1).²⁷¹ However, another take on this process would be that the tribes were adapted to “modernity” through their integration into state structures. In this perspective, tribes are integrated into the state, thereby adapting to local normative structures but simultaneously expanding the state’s reach. In Yemen, there is a Department of Tribal Affairs, which each month handed out a stipend to approximately 4,000-5,000 sheikhs as representatives of tribal communities (Phillips 2008b, 104). Optimally, the sheikh represents his tribe in Sana’a and in return acts as an intermediary for the state. However, it was argued that this system was defunct; “the role of the tribal authority is just to pay money for the sheikh and give him the ID card, so there is no role...”²⁷² The system turned into an easy and, on the surface, acceptable way for Salih to extend patronage.

²⁷⁰ Interview, Sana’a 2013 (3).

²⁷¹ (See also Al-dawsari 2012) She also argues that tribes in some cases have felt that the tribes were portrayed as obstacles to development by the regime in order to attract money from Western donors.

²⁷² Interview, Sana’a 2013 (4).

However, tribes in Yemen are not adverse to development and have in fact been involved in one of the most successful efforts of rural development in Yemen, which will be further analyzed in chapter 7. This suggests that non-state political organizations such as the tribe cannot *a priori* be assumed to be inherently inhibiting for development (Cohen and Hébert 1981, 1039; Mitchell 2012, 297). The Yemeni case suggests that what is decisive is not tribal background *per se*, but the effect “development” will have on the actor. Those tribes who see “development” as improved services support it, while those who see “development” as undercutting their access to state resources and their authority are against it.

The second perspective describes the tribes as an alternative to the state; either accentuating that the strength of the tribes inhibits the state’s ability to perform its tasks or accentuating that tribes exist to fill the vacuum left by the state, which is unable to deliver basic public services. Hence, tribes are a second-best substitute for absent state structures (Corstange 2008, 13; Phillips 2008a, 253). For example, tribal law is estimated to handle 70% of judicial disputes according to a World Bank report from 2000 and up to 90% of conflicts are prevented using customary law (Al-dawsari 2012, 5; Phillips 2008b, 102).²⁷³

These narratives, however, build on the juxtaposition of state and society; the tribe as either an impediment to or a facilitator of development or the juxtaposition of state and tribe, where either the state is strong and society (the tribe) is weak or the state is weak and society (the tribe) is strong. Yet, remembering the definition of legitimacy as relational and based on willingness to comply because the system is considered valid, then the formation of an internally legitimate state is not about the state being strong enough to force compliance – it is about the state, understood as legitimate authority, being accepted as the “best” way of organization.²⁷⁴ The individual tribe and the field of tribes are unique organizations as are all organizations or fields of organizations, but it is not unique in the sense that it can *a priori* be said that in the Yemeni context “a tribe” will always do this, which is different from what, let’s say, a NGO will do.

The tribe in Yemen is an important social category but here it is primarily relevant as a political category. This means that I focus on a few tribal figures, the al-Ahmar’s. The events following the uprising in 2011 illustrate how their integration into the power elite, based in part on their position as leaders of the Hashid tribal confederation, had undermined their relationship to

²⁷³ Interview, Sana’a, 2013. (See also al-Zwaini 2012).

²⁷⁴ Ayubi argues somewhat similarly that in the Gulf, tribe and state complement rather than contradict each other – they are neither stages nor alternatives, but articulated with each other in complex ways into a system called “political tribalism” (Ayubi 2001, 244).

the very same tribal constituency so that when the al-Ahmar's became threatened by the Houthis, they were not as eager to come to their defense.

6.3.2. Political parties as state organizations

The political scene in Yemen displays substantial pluralism, including a large number of political parties, non-state organizations and organizations. There is for example a relatively large number of NGOs.²⁷⁵ Yet, generally the effectiveness of civil society depends on their proximity to the political leadership (Phillips 2008a, 242). In one interview, it was argued that civil society has been “corrupted by the political elite”.²⁷⁶

There is a wide range of political parties in Yemen, including the ruling party, General People's Congress (GPC), the Islamist party, Islāh and the former ruling party of the South, the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP). In addition, there is a host of smaller parties of limited importance although several have some historical legitimacy and backing among specific groups in Yemen, such as the Iraqi-leaning Ba'athists and the Nasserites.²⁷⁷ Yet, the role of political parties is not well established in Yemen and many believe they exacerbate problems more than they resolve them (YPC 2010).²⁷⁸ However, the continued presence and emergence of new parties speak to a belief in the party system.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Yemen has a Nongovernmental (NGO) Law of 2001, which accentuates pluralism and is considered fairly enabling in a Middle Eastern context, yet this regulatory framework is less important than access to the regime's network. The law can be read in English here: <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Yemen/1-2001-En.pdf> (Last accessed 18 February 2016). There is also a wide network of religiously motivated groups and networks in which Al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Houthis could be included.

²⁷⁶ Interview, Sana'a, 2013 (3).

²⁷⁷ The Houthis have also previously participated in the political process through a party, Hizb al-Haqq (party of truth), which consisted of Zaydi *sayyids* from primarily Sana'a and Sa'ada governorates and was represented in parliament, although with limited results (Carapico 1998, 145).

²⁷⁸ In a survey conducted by the Yemen Polling Center targeting 1000 representative respondents, men and women, in 12 governorates, only 40% believed political parties to be important and 49% answered “do not know” to a follow-up question about the main functions of political parties (YPC 2010). This is supported by data from the Arab Barometer where only 21% report to have trust in political parties (Arab Barometer 2007).

²⁷⁹ The Arab barometer Yemen report notes that 72% state that democracy is their preferred system of government (Arab Barometer 2007). This is supported by an YPC report, which states that 76% of respondents believed that democracy is important for the development of the country (YPC 2010). It is however not entirely clear what the respondents associate with democracy. This is indicated in the YPC report where the respondents were asked what democracy means to them; the majority, 54%, answers “freedom of expression” but it is not clear either what is meant by that.

The General People's Congress (GPC) is Yemen's ruling party, yet it is more an umbrella for a wide collection of political actors than an actual party (Carapico 1998, 140). The lack of a set ideology allows the GPC to recruit local sheikhs or others who are locally popular, thereby both securing electoral victory but also the inclusion of potential alternative power centers into the regime's concentric network (Phillips 2008b, 105). GPC was formed by Ali 'Abdullah Salih to be a vehicle of his power but the broadness of its membership base has introduced some diversity of opinion into the party. It has strong backing among tribal sheikhs from northern Yemen and in the military.²⁸⁰ As one Member of Parliament is quoted for saying: "The GPC is the party of the ruler, not the ruling party" (Quoted in Alley 2008, 184). Although elections have always returned a multiparty assembly, the GPC held a majority until the transitional parliament was set up in 2012 where GPC held 50% of the seats.²⁸¹

The main opposition party, Islāh, has since its inception in 1990 worked closely with the GPC.²⁸² Like the GPC, it contains various elements; including a religious wing consisting of the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood and a more fundamentalist wing headed by the controversial 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindānī, a strong tribal component as the al-Ahmar's wielded considerable influence and some businessmen. Hence, Islāh is in some ways an awkward compilation of forces, but as Sarah Carapico points out, there was a shared foundation: "al-Ahmar and al-Zindānī had both long been identified as Saudi clients, both prospered under the Salih administration and both despised communists and Westerners" (Carapico 1998, 143). Like GPC, Islāh has no clear ideology but makes use of ample networks, especially in mosques and social centers run by the Islāh Social Welfare Society.

The second most important opposition party is the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP). It is the remnants of the former ruling party of South Yemen and has a relatively coherent ideology, a form of Yemeni socialism, but has been marred by fragmented leadership from the time of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) until today. It presents itself as a social democratic party in favor of order, legality and women's rights. Its main constituency is still in the south but its importance has diminished since the 1990s (Carapico 1998, 142).

²⁸⁰ This leads Isa Blumi to refer to it as "clannish and ad hoc" (Blumi 2011, 125).

²⁸¹ 229 of the 301 seats were formally GPC candidates. Additionally, several so-called independents had strong ties to GPC (Phillips 2008a, 240).

²⁸² In one interview, it was accentuated that Islāh did not constitute an alternative as "they have been exercising the same kind of criminality (as the GPC), only at a lower level" (Interview, Sana'a, 2013 (3)).

In 2002, Islāh, YSP and three other minor parties formed the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) as an attempt to present a stronger opposition to the regime (Durac 2011).²⁸³ Hence, five years after Islāh left the ruling coalition and eight years after Islāh and YSP fought on opposite sides in the civil war in 1994, the two parties have formed a coalition. This is a testament to a long-time tradition in Yemen to set pragmatism over ideology. As argued by Stacey Philbrick Yadav, in relation to Islāh, flexibility has allowed the party to remain politically relevant both as part of the government and as the main opposition party (Yadav 2014, 134). In 2006, during the last presidential elections, JMP nominated a joint presidential candidate who received 22% of the votes. This was seen as a testament to the seriousness of the alliance to establish itself as a credible opposition. However, until the JMP was recognized as the “formal opposition” in the transitional deal following the uprising, which dethroned Salīh in 2011, the alliance was not able to threaten Salīh.

6.4. Yemen’s uprising in 2011: rattling the box

This section provides a brief investigation into the background of the Yemeni uprising in 2011, as well as the course of events as they unfolded in Yemen from the first protests to the negotiated transfer of power from Salīh to Hadi.²⁸⁴ This shows how the protests went from being relatively small and led by independent, liberal youths, to large-scale demonstrations headed by the political opposition, especially Islāh and the al-Ahmar’s, the most influential tribal family in Yemen.

It has been a popular narrative in the aftermath of the 2011-uprisings in the Middle East to portray them as a surprising and sweeping diffusion of revolutionary forces across the Middle East. Yet, the Yemeni uprising had been simmering for years. In the south, there had been ongoing peaceful protests at least since 2007 under the auspices of the Southern Movement, referred to as Hirak, while six rounds of wars had been fought starting from 2004 between the Houthis and the Salīh regime in the north. Regularly there had been demonstrations, strikes and other protests of varying sizes in Sana’a and other cities (Blumi 2011, 141). Yet, although the protest movement in Yemen cannot be said to have appeared out of thin air, it gained momentum as the feeling that change was possible reached Yemen as Tunisia’s Ben

²⁸³ (See Browsers 2007, for more on JMP).

²⁸⁴ See (Thiel 2015) for a detailed account of the uprising in Yemen based on a reading of the specific Yemeni historical context.

Ali and Egypt's Mubarak were overturned.²⁸⁵ This helped transform locally organized civil protests into a, least for a while, a cohesive, national political movement.

The protests were initiated by a small group of liberal well-educated youths. They, however, did not threaten the regime. As argued in one interview:

After 3 weeks of the revolution, the youth had already reached their limit of what they could do and political parties took over. And since the political parties are part of Sana'a's political elite, the revolution turned into a power struggle.²⁸⁶

The quote represents an often heard view in Sana'a; that the youth's lack of political network meant that they did not threaten Salih, so it was not until the youth-led protest became swallowed up by the existing elite's power games that the protest evolved into a serious threat to Salih. The youths themselves were a diverse group of students and new graduates. The youth category is inclusive in the sense that it is not defined by age alone but is also "a metaphorical, social youth" which seeks political and economic change (Yadav 2011, 557-558). Consequently, some youths sought to distance themselves from the political parties (Alwazir 2016, 2). This was pointed to in one interview by a politically active youth:

It is kind of a fashion, nowadays because of Ali Salih and the revolution people are talking about independency and you have to be independent to be good, but when it comes to the real state later, nobody will talk about independent, everybody will talk about the parties and programmes.²⁸⁷

The quote illustrates how being independent for some was considered necessary to remain separate from the politics of the elite. However, as the political system is built up around political representation and majority decisions, this inhibits the ability of youth to present a real alternative to the existing political parties. It does also opens up for questions as to who the youth actually represents.

The youth saw themselves in opposition to the Yemeni elite, especially Salih, but also Islah, Ali Mohsin and the al-Ahmar's. Hence, the announce-

²⁸⁵ Salih was not taken by surprise to the same degree as his less fortunate peers in Tunisia and Egypt. When the opposition for example called for a Day of Rage in early February 2011, Salih pre-empted the protests by occupying Sana'a own Tahrir Square thus preventing the opposition from a symbolic victory. At that time, Salih was able to mobilize substantial crowds on his behalf (Carvajal 2015, 7).

²⁸⁶ Interview, Sana'a, 2013 (3).

²⁸⁷ Interview, Sana'a, 2014 (28).

ment that the opposition, led by the party Islāh would join the protests in February was received with some apprehension. It was rightly feared that the involvement of elements from the existing elite would turn the protests into elite power struggles whereas the youth wanted a total change, including legal action against Salīh.²⁸⁸ While Salīh had initially tried to buy off central actors as well as putting a lid on the protests by promising to not run for presidency in 2013 as well as introducing salary increases and several other economic rewards, the regime response became increasingly violent (Boucek and Revkin 2011; Durac 2012, 166; International Crisis Group 2011b, 8).²⁸⁹ On Friday 18 March, the regime opened fire against the protesters and killed more than 50 people (Alley 2013b, 77). Shortly thereafter Ali Mohsin declared his support for the protests and troops under his command were stationed to protect the protestors. Likewise the al-Ahmars increasingly backed the uprising.²⁹⁰ The defection of Ali Mohsin is commonly described as a result of a simmering conflict between Ali Mohsin and Ali ‘Abdullah Salīh. This was offset by Salīh’s centralization of power, that had undermined the broad power-sharing deal on which his power rested by increasingly favoring his family at the expense of the rest of the inner circle, especially Ali Mohsin and the al-Ahmars (Hill et al. 2013, 9; Phillips 2011b, 92, 96). Yet, whereas the youth wanted a new state, these internal elite actors wanted to preserve the basic set-up of concentric governance (Manea 2015, 169).²⁹¹ This led to fissures within the protestors as some youths, Hiraq and the Houthis felt Ali Mohsin, the al-Ahmars and Islāh in general, were co-opting the process and marginalizing alternative voices. At the same time, however, it was the deci-

²⁸⁸ See Laurent Bonnefoy and Marine Poirier who discuss how the protests in 2011 distinguished themselves from previous protests by demanding change and the overthrow of the regime and not just reform. The fact that the short to-the-point slogan of “Irhat!” (Out!) was popular illustrates the point (Bonnefoy and Poirier 2012).

²⁸⁹ Nir Rosen describes the widespread use of civilian dressed military and police personal who would attack protestors with sticks, knives and the like (Nir 2012).

²⁹⁰ Especially Hamid al-Ahmar has been vocal in his opposition to Salīh for years. He is a MP for Islah and supported the opposition candidate against Salīh in the last presidential elections in 2006. It has been reported that he approached the American embassy in 2010 and told them of plans to organize massive protests against Salīh and potentially try to overthrow him if he could get the backing of Ali Mohsin (Hill 2011; Transfeld 2016, 5).

²⁹¹ Tribes men made up a substantial part of the demonstrations, estimated up to 50% (International Crisis Group 2011b, 4). Although some were there to support their sheikh, others came because they wanted to be part of a state as equal citizens and not tied to a sheikh, who was becoming less and less accountable to them. Hence, whereas the tribal elite sought stability, some tribesmen sought change as a way to improve their living circumstances. It was not uncommon to see tribesmen leading protests as it was calculated that the regime would be more hesitant to shoot them, knowing that it could lead to blood revenge.

sion of these forces to join the uprising which made it clear that Salih would not be able to remain as president of Yemen.

6.5. Yemen's fall from "the brink"

In this section, I discuss the use of the fragile state concept in relation to Yemen and argue that by establishing Yemen as a fragile state; haunted by Al-Qaeda, Yemen's sovereignty was made contingent. Yemen moved from being framed as a transitional democracy, a small beacon of light for the democracy agenda on the Arabian Peninsula, to increasingly being framed as a fragile/failed state, specifically pointing to al-Qaeda as a major threat. Hence, the linkage of al-Qaeda, terrorism and Yemen is argued to have facilitated different and more invasive forms of interventions, such as the drone campaign. The conceptual analysis of Yemen as a fragile state draws on a general search in the UN documents database.²⁹² This process is presented here so that it can serve as a backdrop to the following chapters where different types of state-building interventions are discussed in more detail.

6.5.1. Establishing Yemen as a fragile state

The analysis only includes UN documents that refer to Yemen along with either "fragile state" or "failed state", and conclusions are therefore preliminary. However, a few points stand out. First of all, as table 6.1 demonstrates, Yemen is more commonly referred to in combination with either fragile or failed state after 2009. This is perhaps not surprising, since there was a general increase in especially the use of the fragile state concept in that period, as documented in chapter 5. There is, however, a particularly steep increase between 2013 and 2014, which coincides with the breakdown of the transitional deal, the Houthi take-over in 2014 and the Saudi Arabian-led intervention in Yemen from March 2015.²⁹³

²⁹² A search was made in the UN documents database, but restricted to documents from the General Assembly and the Security Council until 1 January 2016. The search is an attempt to capture how Yemen has been used in discussions which also featured the use of the "fragile state" or "failed state" concept. The specific search phrase used was: "Yemen AND "fragile state" OR "failed state" using Boolean operators. This only captures certain types of documents and has certainly excluded documents which could be relevant. Yet, due to limited capacity some delimitation had to be made in documents referring to Yemen. The analysis includes 46 documents. Each document in the UN system has a unique reference code, so this code is used to specify which documents are relevant to specific points.

²⁹³ Saudi Arabia's claim to regional power status rests primarily on two factors; oil revenues and its importance to Islam and Muslims. First, Saudi Arabia has large quantities of oil and has used its oil wealth to leverage influence globally (Champion 2003, 1, 60-61;

Table 6.1. Overview of the frequency Yemen is referred to as fragile or failed (UN documents)

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2007	2004	1996	1983	1979
No. Yemen + fragile/failed state	10	13	5	4	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	1

If we take a closer look at the content of the documents, a second point emerges, namely that in the early documents Yemen is not a fragile state but is mentioned because of its support to UN peace missions in other states²⁹⁴ or because the Yemeni representative is making a general statement in support of peace and security.²⁹⁵ This can be juxtaposed to the later documents where Yemen is either referred to as a humanitarian crisis or a place of terrorism.²⁹⁶ The references to Yemen as a humanitarian crisis are all made in 2015 and specifically refer to the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing armed conflict.²⁹⁷ The references to terrorism are by far the most frequent, ranging from references to the rise of terror in general where Yemen is an example among others, to more detailed references to Yemen. Terror is described as increasingly interconnected and as taking advantage of “chaos and instability” (S/PV.7442/2015). See table 6.2 for an overview of contexts in which Yemen is referred to as fragile.

Table 6.2. Overview of context for reference to Yemen in UN documents

Theme	No. cases	Year (of mentioning)
Terror	11	2015-2013
Humanitarian crisis	4	2015
Yemen as actor	7	2010, 2009, 2007, 2004, 1979

The Yemeni representative to the UN also refers to Yemen’s struggle against terrorism, accentuating how the army has made progress and that “despite the Government’s lack of resources and international support, the Al-Qaida

Rasheed 2002, 93). Second, the Saudi regime presents itself as the protector and guarantor of the two Holy cities, Medina and Mecca, which provides it with a high degree of religious legitimacy (Rasheed 2002, 5). For a detailed account of the early years of Saudi state formation, see (Vassiliev 1998).

²⁹⁴ (S/2009/299 (2009), S/2007 (2007)).

²⁹⁵ (A/C.2/65/SR.13 (2010), A/C.3/65/SR.9 (2010), S/PV.6341 (Resumption 1) (2010), A/C.1/59/PV.4 (2004), A/C.3/34/SR.28 (1979)).

²⁹⁶ (S/PV.7561 (2015), S/PV.7533 (2015), S/PV.7442 (2015), S/PV.7361 (2015), S/PV.7351 (2014), S/PV.7343 (2014), S/PV.7331 (2014), S/PV.7323 (2014), S/PV.7316 (2014), S/PV.7160 (2014), S/PV.6965 (2013)).

²⁹⁷ (S/PV.7561 (2015), S/2015/730 (2015), S/PV.7466 (2015), S/2015/453 (2015)).

organization had been weakened” (A/C.6/69/SR.2 (2014)). The Yemeni government is trying to establish itself as a bulwark against terrorism, but generally the references to Yemen underscore that Yemen is a state in distress that has lost internal control to the detriment of its civilian population. This image is linked to potential regional instability as a consequence of the actions of non-state actors such as when the Kuwaiti representative argues that: “The events in Yemen threaten the security of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the wake of the acts perpetrated by the partisan forces of the country’s former President ‘Abdullah Saleh” (S/PV.7450 (Resumption 1) (2015)) or when the Egyptian representative argues that “In Yemen, non-State actors, in defiance of the international community, have obstructed the political transition there by taking over cities and State institutions” (S/PV.7442 (2015)). These statements should be read to the background of previous positive accentuations of the Yemeni transition and UN’s role therein. It is especially underlined that the UN was able to engage key stakeholders and secure a transparent process, which also included traditionally excluded groups such as women (the inclusion of women is mentioned separately in four documents as an achievement).²⁹⁸

Finally, the Israeli representative specifically mentions Iran as a “destabilizer” and “radicalizer”, which has “intensified its campaign to smuggle weapons to its terrorist proxies, including the Houthis in Yemen...” (S/PV.7442 (2015)). This is interesting, especially as the statement is made in May 2015, that is, *after* Saudi Arabia had begun its campaign in Yemen. It can therefore be understood as tacit support to the Saudis as they have strongly pushed the narrative of the Houthis being puppets of Iran. However, the Israelis also denounce the Saudi intervention: “In Yemen, Saudi Arabia’s massive and indiscriminate air strikes have hit hospitals and schools and killed hundreds of civilians, including many children” (S/PV.7466/2015). There are no statements from the Saudis in the material, and the Iranian representative only makes one comment, specifically focusing on the humanitarian consequences of the Saudi-led intervention: “The systematic bombing and destruction of the logistical infrastructure of a country that imports 90 per cent of its food, for example, will undoubtedly have long-term consequences” (S/PV.7466/2015).

In sum, the documents demonstrate how Yemen emerged and became more generally perceived as a fragile state and how Yemen’s fragility became linked to terrorism and the potential threat emanating from Yemen, both regionally and extra-regionally. The humanitarian perspective was less out-

²⁹⁸ (S/PV.7361 (2015), S/PV.7247 (2014), S/2014/213 (2014), S/PV.6897 (2012), S/PV.6621 (2011)).

spoken and was primarily voiced in relation to the consequences of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Reading through the documents, it seems as though critique of the Saudi-led intervention is primarily based on humanitarian grounds as a way of expressing concern without really challenging the legitimacy of the Saudi-led intervention.

6.6. Conclusion

This section has provided a brief introduction to Yemeni state-building history and the Yemeni political system. Yemen's internal political landscape is characterized by a multitude of actors which, on the surface, interact in a parliamentary democracy. However, as the section demonstrates, Salih constructed a political system built on wide inclusion and flexibility; described as concentric networks. The chapter focuses on elite actors which are included into the concentric network based on their resources which stem from a combination of factors; ranging from external legitimacy and connections to Saudi Arabia to tribal leadership. Instead of seeing the "formal" political organizations such as political parties and the "informal" institutions such as tribes as two distinct categories of political organization, the section understands both categories as political organizations on which internal political actors build their position. The chapter concluded with an analysis of how Yemen as increasingly been categorized as a fragile state, linked to the emergence of al-Qaeda. This is argued to have made Yemen amenable to increasingly invasive forms of intervention as it builds a narrative of Yemen as being an international security threat. The Yemeni state is portrayed as lacking the capacity to handle internal threats and therefore in need of international assistance.

Chapter 7.

The Salih years: getting aid - deflecting reforms

This chapter examines how Salih was able to embed external interventions into the Yemeni context from his ascendance to power until the late 2000s. During this period, Salih was able to consolidate his power, but he was never able to rule without the, at least, tacit support of key internal and external actors, primarily the tribes and Saudi Arabia. This section focuses primarily on how Salih sought to gain extra-regional support as a counterweight to the internal influence from tribes and Saudi Arabia's external influence. Thus, this chapter shows that Salih sought extra-regional support with the aim of furthering his internal power position vis-à-vis internal and regional actors and less because he necessarily shared the aims of extra-regional actors.

The period was characterized with both substantial internal and external developments for Yemen. Salih took power in North Yemen in 1978 in a world defined by the Cold War. Although placed in the periphery of international attention, Salih ruled a state, North Yemen, that bordered on the Middle East's only state explicitly belonging to the USSR camp, South Yemen. During the first decade of Salih's rule, South Yemen posed an external threat but also an opportunity, as it was the presence of South Yemen that gave Salih access to some military support. In reality, Salih was balancing relationships to both sides in the Cold War. Then came the end of the Cold War. 1990 was a major year for Yemen; the two Yemens united and Yemen opposed the American decision to expel Iraq from Kuwait in the UN Security Council. The latter decision was probably in the back of Salih's mind when 9/11 happened a decade later. At least he was quick to affirm his support to the American so-called "war against terror". The fact that Yemen had an active branch of al-Qaeda provided access to some American (military) assistance but international attention remained limited.

Internally, Salih built his rule on his ability to sustain a wide-ranging network of patronage. As Salih did not have a monopoly of violence, he instead favored inclusion and integration of elite actors. Although oil was the main source of income throughout the period, the difference between the first period, the 1970s and 1980s, where funds came in through remittances and thus directly to local communities versus the second part of the period, from the mid-1990s until the late 2000s, where the Yemeni economy became increasingly based on oil rents, defines the strategies that Salih could apply

in the face of external intervention. This because the second period saw a centralization of power in the hands of Salih as he came to control the main source of income.

In the first period, where Salih focused on gaining power, he was seeking to undermine alternative power centers but was too weak to directly challenge key tribal actors and Saudi Arabia. Consequently, Salih sought support from extra-regional actors. The case of the Local Development Associations (LDAs) shows how Salih was able to use extra-regional actors' preoccupation with legal-rational structures and elections to undermine a growing bottom-up rural movement while increasing extra-regional support to his regime and presenting himself as supporting extra-regional actors focus on building a Weberian state.

In the second period, Salih was stronger, less because of increased military capabilities and more because the economy based on oil rents left him with substantial relative economic capacity. The first case study traces decentralization in Yemen. Salih sought support from extra-regional donors who continued to focus on legal-rational structures. Thus, the period until the late 2000s saw the formulation of legal-rational structures guiding decentralization and local council elections in 2001 and 2006. This process gave Salih some extra-regional legitimacy. The second case study, basic education, influences the distribution of power in Yemen less directly than decentralization. It was accentuated as a priority for the regime and extra-regional actors alike as a prerequisite for improved governance.²⁹⁹ It is therefore also an area where greater cooperation would seem realistic. However, as the case illustrates, Salih prioritized building a structure that would sustain the patronage network over securing effective service delivery. And paradoxically, although extra-regional donors emphasize coordination and ownership, this case illustrates how this was facilitated by extra-regional actors' lack of trust in state structures and lack of coordination. The lack of trust led to a preference for alternative structures as *actual* providers of services, whereas projects directed at state structures often focused on mapping weaknesses and building capacity, understood as improving legal-rational structures. This, in combination with being given the extra task of coordinating the projects that extra-regional donors supported outside the state, created a disjointed service provision system where patronage thrives.

²⁹⁹ See for example (Juneau 2010).

7.1. Salih gaining power: the period until unification

This section analyzes the capacities of Salih's regime and its relationship to leading external actors. I show that when Salih first became president in 1978, he depended on the cooperation of alternative elite actors, most notably non-state organizations, while he was trying to gain control of the state and build his material capacity and internal legitimacy. This dependence was underlined by the fact that these non-state actors had closer ties to regional external actors than Salih, while extra-regional actors played a minor, yet increasing role. The final part of the section analyzes a specific case, the so-called Local Development Associations, to illustrate how Salih was able to embed external intervention into the Yemeni context in a way that maximized his benefits in a potentially difficult situation where he had not yet consolidated power.

7.1.1. Salih's internal capacity

Paul Dresch describes Salih as a "self-made man". He has a tribal background but belongs to a minor tribe within the Hashid confederation. The Sanhan, as they are called, were primarily known as soldiers, initially in the Imam's army and later the republican military (Dresch 2000, 148). Thus, Salih did not himself command any tribe, but instead used his military position to build a network in the military where tribal people dominate. He used this network in two ways: He put relatives and close associates in control of key security services to secure his safety, and he consolidated his power by incorporating key tribal leaders in his concentric network. The state had limited extractive capacities but benefitted from the expansion of wealth in neighboring countries due to oil. This reflects the reality in which Salih took power; the previous two presidents had been assassinated in a timespan of nine months and a serious coup attempt nearly deposed him in October 1978, just four months after he took power (Gause 1990, 131).³⁰⁰ In 1978, little more than a decade had passed since the Imamate had been deposed, and the state had limited outreach. This was exacerbated by a contentious relationship to South Yemen, which was a source of substantial insecurity during the 1970s. Hence, Salih's position was precarious during the first years of his rule but gradually became more secure.

³⁰⁰ It is generally believed that a deal was made between Salih and Ali Mohsin within the Hashid confederation that Ali Mohsen would take over if Salih was killed. When Salih took power few thought he would last long as president.

7.1.1.1. Military capacity

The capacity of the national army was limited when Salih took power but it was growing as approximately half of the state budget was spent on the military and police (Dresch 2000, 157). On the surface this increased the military's strength vis-à-vis the tribes, but soldiers were primarily recruited from tribal areas, which gave the tribes substantial indirect influence over the military (Gause 1990, 25). It was also a deliberate strategy for Salih to place relatives and tribal supporters in key positions within the military-security nexus. Moreover, tribes continued to hold substantial deposits of military power including tanks and artillery (Day 2012, 94). Yemen was a recipient of some military support in response to the competition between the two Yemens and Cold War dynamics. In 1979, for example, the two Yemens fought a brief border war, and South Yemen took a number of border towns. This led the Americans to increase military support to North Yemen to set off the perceived communist threat at the request of the Saudis, who had poor relations to South Yemen (Dresch 2000, 149-150; Gause 1990, 133). However, during the 1980s, North Yemen received almost as much aid from the USSR as did South Yemen (North and South Yemen owed 45% and 46% respectively of their foreign debt to the USSR in 1987 and 1983 respectively), mostly due to long-term credit for military equipment (Carapico 1998, 43). In sum, although the Yemeni state in no way held a monopoly of violence, this was the time of the most extensive military buildup in Yemen's history.

7.1.1.2. Economic capacity

The 1970s were a period of rapid economic expansion, including a growing state apparatus with the help of international donors, but with little planning or coordination. North Yemen presented itself as buffer between the socialist South Yemen and the oil fields on the Arabian Peninsula and used this position to attract aid from a variety of sources, most importantly regional but also international. In 1980, official development assistance was well over a billion dollars, approximately 43% of the total government budget.

Oil was not discovered in Yemen until the mid-1980s, but Yemen benefited from the oil boom in the region as perhaps as much as 40% of the Yemeni (male) workforce worked outside of Yemen, primarily in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, by 1975 (Birks, Sinclair, and Socknat 1981; Lewis and Cohen 1979, 523; Swanson 1979, 34). In the peak year of 1981 remittances are estimated to have reached \$3.8-4.0 billion, which equaled 126% of the official GNP for that year, and up from \$1.3 billion in 1978/1979 and \$800 million in 1976/1977 (Dresch 2000, 131). The majority of the remittances were channeled outside the state and allowed the Yemeni to see rapid improve-

ments in their living standards as they gained access to consumer goods imported from the entire world.³⁰¹

However, the Yemeni economy was fragile and tied to especially the Saudi economy. As Saudi Arabia's oil revenues declined from a high of \$120 billion in 1981 to \$17 billion in 1985, Yemeni labor remittances dropped by about 60% and development aid dropped substantially to less than \$100 million per year in 1988. Hence, international aid went from constituting the greater part of the budget to making up just over 1% in 1986/1987 (Carapico 1998, 43; Chaudhry 1989, 137; 1997, 7). This left the state in a precarious situation as it had limited alternative sources of income. The state had limited taxation capabilities and indeed, the vast majority of taxes had been earned on trade-related taxes, including import duties and trade fees as imports grew in 1970s (Askari, Cummings, and Glover 1982, 170). Income taxes were limited and made up approximately 2.5% of the collected taxes in 1977/1978 but were supplemented with the zakat, an annual levy at varying percentages depending on the source of income.³⁰²

7.1.1.3. Internal legitimacy and relationship to other elite actors

Salih is an example of extreme social mobility, and few expected him to last long as president. However, he was able to move from being accepted as a non-threatening figurehead to a key internal power broker. I argue that this was facilitated by two factors; the unprecedented influx of funds and his ability to build networks. The influx of funds in the years immediately following his takeover was used to build his concentric power network, including an expansion of the state bureaucracy. Salih did not rely on taxation but was instead able to pay for the expansion of the bureaucracy through funds that came from especially Saudi Arabia's oil wealth (Chaudhry 1989, 103). This coincided with improved living circumstances for ordinary Yemeni due to remittances. Consequently, Salih was able to claim substantial material legitimacy.

More importantly, Salih was a skilled networker and alliance builder. He was accepted by key non-state internal elite actors such as 'Abdullah al-Ahmar, who as head of the Hashid tribal confederation has been described as a "symbol of shaikhly power" (Gause 1990, 24). In the early years of Salih's rule, 'Abdullah al-Ahmar was the more powerful of the two, and he continued to hold substantial power until his death in 2007 (Dresch 2000, 160). This

³⁰¹ Imports are reported to have grown from \$80 to \$1040 million by 1977 (Askari, Cummings, and Glover 1982, 170).

³⁰² There was for example a 2.5% levy on wealth and a 5% levy on agricultural produce cultivated on irrigated land (Askari, Cummings, and Glover 1982, 170).

included using his tribal position to gain positions in the state, initially as president of the National Assembly that was formed after the collapse of the Imamate (Gause 1990, 24). He also had closer ties to Saudi Arabia than Salih. Although overall accepting Salih as president, this acceptance was predicated on Salih not encroaching on core tribal interests. For example, in 1979 when Salih was becoming too friendly with elements in South Yemen to the dismay of both the tribes and Saudi Arabia, "Abdullah al-Ahmar headed an "Islamic Front", supported by Saudi Arabia, to force Salih to halt negotiations with South Yemen (Gause 1990, 138). Salih eventually had to bow to the combined pressure of Saudi Arabia and the tribes, which illustrates how he negotiated between different internal elite actors rather than controlled them.

Other key internal elite figures include Ali Mohsin, a general and member of the same tribe as Salih, who played a key role in Salih's ascendance to power, and 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindani. Zindani is a conservative cleric with close ties to Saudi Arabia (Day 2012, 102; Dresch 2000, 173). Salih is a Zaydi but has focused more on nationalism and his special brand of republicanism than religious legitimacy. He has switched between allowing, supporting and striking down on religious authorities in Yemen, generally being more lax towards Sunnis than Zaydis. Saudi Arabia's religious influence increased in the 1970s and 1980s due to the influx of Saudi funds and because of the many Yemeni working in Saudi Arabia that became influenced by the more conservative version of Sunni Islam practiced there. This was used by Salih to offset the socialist challenge from South Yemen.

In sum, Salih can be described as a relatively weak president as he depended on the at least tacit support of alternative internal elite actors, especially the tribes. He was seeking ways to gain power but was too weak to directly confront the tribes. This was also complicated by the fact that the key external actor, Saudi Arabia, had closer ties with some of Salih's competitors than with Salih.

7.1.2. Salih's external relations, late 1970s and 1980s

Salih maintained relations with a wide range of external actors, including both sides in the Cold War, regional actors and a range of European countries. However, North Yemen was fairly low on the international agenda in the 1970s and 1980s. It was not considered a security threat, nor did it have substantial economic interactions outside the Gulf region. Its buffer position next to South Yemen occasionally brought it some attention, but overall both Yemens were in the periphery of international attention. A visit by then American Vice-president George H.W. Bush in 1986 was more the result of a

personal relationship to the executive of Hunt Oil, which was starting oil extraction in Yemen, than an official American interest in Yemen (Carapico 1998, 48).³⁰³ However, bilateral and international agencies were beginning to enter Yemen with a particular focus on state-building, understood as the creation and strengthening of the largely absent Weberian style state institutions and organizations (Dresch 2000, 133).³⁰⁴

Overall, regional actors were key, and Salih had especially close ties with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq (Carapico 2006, 193). Yet, relations between Saudi Arabia and Salih were never uncomplicated as Salih regularly reasserted his independence. Moreover, Salih showed some adeptness at maneuvering international conflicts to his advantage. Yet, there were limits to Salih's ability to challenge Saudi dominance as he knew he would not be able to run Yemen without at least their tacit support. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's direct support to various non-state actors, such as 'Abdullah al-Ahmar, indirectly undermined Salih. In 1981, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was founded by its current member states; Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).³⁰⁵ The charter of the GCC emphasizes economic and social cooperation, but it was clear from the beginning that strategic factors, primarily counteracting regional ambitions of Iraq and especially Iran, played a role in bringing the countries together (Pinfari 2009, 4; Qureshi 1982, 84; Tripp 1995, 293).³⁰⁶ North Yemen was not invited to join, which was noted with disappointment by Salih. This illustrates the ambiguities in the relationship between Yemen and its neighbors. Yemen was (and is) dealt with as an irredeemable source of instability that cannot be ignored but is best held at arm's length. Although regional actors supported Salih as president, he was not invited to join their "club".

³⁰³ This account of the visit in 1986 describes how vice president Bush was met by crowds cheering and chanting U.S.A. Security concerns are limited to the traditional Yemeni dagger, the Jambiya, and the main point on the agenda is oil: See http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-04-12/news/8601260945_1_south-yemen-ali-'Abdullah-Salih-arabian-peninsula (Last accessed 25 April 2016).

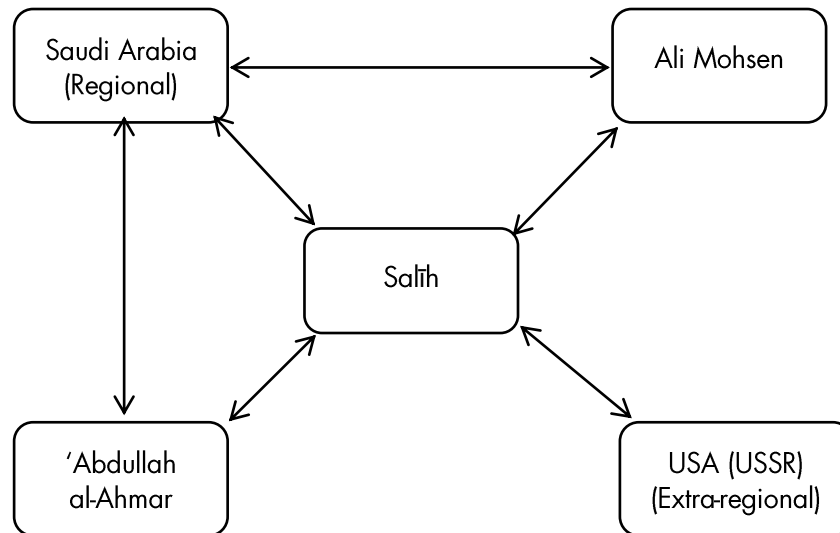
³⁰⁴ The US plays a central role in the region at a symbolic level and as the most important source of military and development aid, the central intermediary in the Middle East peace process, the most relevant provider of security in the Gulf and as directly involved in Iraq and Afghanistan (Harders and Legrenzi 2008, 37).

³⁰⁵ See Peterson 1988 for an extensive account of the founding and first years of the GCC.

³⁰⁶ The Charter of the GCC is available here: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=125347> Article 4 specifies the main areas of cooperation, including economics, finance, commerce, customs and education. (Last accessed 8 May 2016). Ursula Braun argues that the focus on economic cooperation was a deliberate strategy to not only avoid negative Iranian reactions but also to prevent Arab criticism (Braun 1988, 255).

Figure 7.1. sums up the relations between main internal and external actors in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁰⁷

Figure 7.1. Links between selected internal elite actors and main external actors



7.1.3. Co-optation as a donor-supported strategy: the case of the LDAs

In this section, I argue that amid declining aid from regional actors as well as decreases in remittances in the 1980s, Salih was seeking ways of gaining power and resources that would make him less dependent on Saudi Arabia externally and non-state organizations, the tribes, internally. This made him look towards extra-regional actors externally and the so-called Local Development Associations (LDAs) internally. As already mentioned, Yemen was not high on the international agenda, but the LDAs had gotten some international attention during the 1970s as relatively successful bottom-up rural development activities.³⁰⁸ Internally, their political potential had already been realized by one of Salih's predecessors, Ibrahim Al-Hamdī, who had been president of the umbrella organization for LDAs before he became president.³⁰⁹ In this section, I show how Salih was able to embed extra-regional

³⁰⁷ I restrict myself to the connections that are relevant for this section.

³⁰⁸ See Carapico 1998 and 1984 for detailed accounts of the LDAs. USAid for example did a comparative study in 1979 that included four Yemeni LDAs. The other countries included were Upper Volta, Cameroon, Guatemala, Peru, the Philippines and Jamaica, showing that the LDAs ranked in the top when it came to impact. See http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaal953.pdf (Last accessed 26 April 2016).

³⁰⁹ Ibrāhīm al-Hamdī had been director of CYDA from 1973 until he took power in Yemen through a military coup on 13 June 1974. Al-Hamdī had appeal to several important groups

actors' focus on legal-rational structures and elections as means to strengthen the central state in a way that allowed him to extend his concentric power network while undermining what could have become a challenge to his regime and increasing aid from extra-regional actors.

The LDAs began as bottom-up development projects, facilitated by the remittances that were sent home by the hundreds of thousands of Yemeni who entered Saudi Arabia on easy terms during the 1970s (Carapico 1998, 107; Cohen and Hérbert 1981, 1041; Katz 1992, 122). The state had limited reach, so instead local communities came together. As summed up in one interview "the LDAs were basically grassroots movement that spontaneously started the moment income in the hands of the people increased substantially".³¹⁰ The LDAs were particularly engaged in construction and infrastructural projects and are in total credited with the construction of thousands of kilometers of road, hundreds of schools in addition to hundreds of water, health and other projects (Abuldaim 1992, 35; Carapico 1998, 111; Cohen and Hérbert 1981, 1044; World Bank 1981, 18).

In many cases, the LDAs were headed by local sheikhs who were the natural focal points for local communities but as the structure increasingly became more institutionalized, it also offered political opportunities to non-elites.³¹¹ The number of self-proclaimed LDAs rose from 29 LDAs in 1973 to 191 LDAs by 1979 (Cohen and Hérbert 1981, 1043; Swagman 1988, 2). In 1973, the Confederation of Yemeni Development Associations (CYDA) was established as an umbrella organization for the LDAs chaired by the then-president. CYDA's aim was to coordinate the LDAs and government activities as well as distribute Western foreign aid, which was beginning to enter Yemen, to individual LDAs based on needs and abilities (Carapico 1998, 114-116). The projects were financed through a combination of contributions from local communities; according to Sheila Carapico, 63% of LDA revenues came from local contributions between 1976 and 1981 and 9% from the central lev-

in Yemen; he was a tribesman from the Hashid tribal region, the son of a Zaydi judge, a military man, and he was popular within CYDA that also covered non-tribal areas. He attempted to use CYDA as a tool of state-building by extending and deepening its structure (Carapico 1998, 114-115; Day 2012, 67).

³¹⁰ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (13).

³¹¹ However, evidence suggests that the LDAs were the most effective in creating local development where tribal affiliation overlapped with the LDA structure, not where the tribal structure was weak. Charles F. Swagman spent more than two years living in and researching rural development in two communities in Yemen. He compares the different experiences of two regions and concludes that in one area the tribe provided the ideological basis for uniting the competing interests of social groups spread over a wide area whereas in the other, where there was no uniting tribal structure, it was difficult to achieve and sustain the necessary level of cooperation (Swagman 1988).

el (Carapico 1998, 128). The remaining 28% came from the zakat of which the LDAs were given a percentage (Swagman 1988, 66).³¹²

Gradually, the local influence of LDAs grew as a consequence of their role in service provision, linking of different local communities and ability to settle conflicts. Moreover, because a relatively high percentage of the funds as well as manpower for construction came from the local communities themselves, the projects reflected local communities' preferences and introduced a certain level of independence from the state and elite actors in general (Chaudhry 1989). This did not go unnoticed by the regime.

When Salih took power in 1978, the LDAs were not his first priority but as income began to dwindle quite rapidly in the early 1980s, it was clear that he needed alternative sources of legitimacy. Moreover, Salih was looking for ways to build a structure that would be loyal to him as a counterweight to the tribes. The prevalent LDA structure indirectly strengthened the tribes as the tribal sheikhs often were directly or indirectly involved in the work of the LDAs as key mediators and community leaders.³¹³ To make matters worse from Salih's perspective, Saudi Arabia supported local development.³¹⁴ It is well established that Saudi Arabia supported a wide network of sheikhs, which made it possible for them to sustain a certain level of independence from Salih (Weir 2007, 293). Thus, the LDAs were both internally and externally competing with Salih.

However, if Salih could gain control with the LDAs, this would enable him to penetrate further into rural, tribal Yemen than any previous Yemeni leader had been able to. The first step was to play on the need for greater coordination and regulation, a need that resonated among Western donors and to some degree the LDAs. Extra-regional actors were looking for ways to strengthen the Weberian structures of the Yemeni state and therefore supported these moves as greater uniformity, shared regulative structures and increased integration into state structures were seen as ways to strengthen and improve the LDAs *while* building the capacity of the Yemeni state. In 1975, a consultant from USAID expressed cautious optimism about the potential of the LDA movement: "...that an effective relationship can be developed between particular LDAs and other central government and foreign agencies seeking to increase the pace and to broaden the scope of development and productivity in rural Yemen" (Green 1975, 14). Specifically, greater regulation was seen as a way of circumventing the perceived negative role of

³¹² Zakat is a payment that is considered a religious duty. It is meant to go to charity.

³¹³ Shelagh Weir describes how even when tribal leaders were not directly involved in the LDAs it would still fall on them to mediate between different LDAs or between LDAs and government officials (Weir 2007, 292).

³¹⁴ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (13).

tribes in the LDAs. It was feared that the tribes used the LDAs as a path to formal recognition of their power as well as access to a new pool of resources.³¹⁵ It is for example argued that since there is no central authority and few formal controls are in place: “public funds tended to become mixed with personal funds and funds for projects were handed out to personal friends who often did not get around to doing the work required” (Green 1975, 15).³¹⁶ These illegitimate practices were linked to the presence of tribes. Thus, Salih used CYDA as a focal point, arguing that membership of CYDA and thus the “right” to be recognized as an LDA depended on the LDA living up to certain requirements. Only LDAs that did this could qualify for extra-regional aid.³¹⁷

The second step was to integrate the LDAs in the state structure, which was done in two steps: by subordinating the LDAs to appointed local political leaders and by integrating the LDAs in the General People’s Congress (GPC), Salih’s “party”.³¹⁸ In 1985, Salih transformed the LDAs into local elected councils, Local Councils for Cooperative Development (LCCD). This included moving responsibility and power to the provincial governors and district governors appointed by Salih. They were put in charge of overseeing all projects and controlling funds (Piepenburg 1992, 59-60). This was a marked difference as previously LDA projects would be financed through cost-sharing where the LDAs negotiated with the central government on equal terms. Hence, this step in effect removed the ability of the LDAs to act independently of the state as it removed the LDAs’ financial independence (Day 2012, 69; Phillips 2008b, 79; Tutweiler 1984, 185).

³¹⁵ See for example this World Bank report: “The combination of the Yemeni tradition of initiative and self-help together with the inability of the Central Government to reach the rural areas makes it difficult to draw a definite line between the responsibilities of the Central Government in the field of national development and those of the LDAs” (World Bank 1981, ii).

³¹⁶ Timothy Morris provides a well-written account of the frustrations well-intended but thoroughly unprepared Western aid workers encountered in the 1970s and 1980s when entering Yemen and working with LDAs and the Yemeni state to further rural development (Morris 1991).

³¹⁷ There are no overall numbers for how much aid was channeled through CYDA. Generally, extra-regional aid to Yemen did increase during the 1980s compared to 1970s levels. For example, the World Bank more than doubled the average yearly commitment to Yemen from 28 million dollars between 1971-1979 to 62 million dollars per year between 1980-1989. USAid likewise increased aid from an annual average of 1.2 million dollars between 1975-1979, to 2.7 million dollars between 1980-1984 and 4.3 million dollars between 1985-1989. These are total numbers and not funds directed specifically at the LDAs. Calculated from <https://explorer.usaid.gov/> and <http://data.worldbank.org/country/yemen-republic> (Last accessed 26 April 2016).

³¹⁸ Political parties were prohibited in North Yemen in the 1970 Constitution.

In 1982, the GPC first convened with 700 elected delegates and 300 delegates nominated by Salih. It was (and is) more an umbrella for political forces within the regime than a political party and as such its political agenda is kept in general terms. At the meeting, a National Pact was adopted that had been formulated through an ongoing national dialogue (Burrowes 1991, 493). The process had entailed an unprecedented level of dialogue and Salih therefore presented it as being democratic. The result, an inclusive document, was presented as non-partisan and all-inclusive (Poirier 2011, 206). The main goal, however, was to integrate alternative elite actors into the regime as a way of controlling and containing dissent. The elections for the GPC assembly were then combined with the elections for the LCCDs. This was presented as a further expansion of democracy and a strengthening of the legal-rational structures of the LCCDs but in reality the combination of GPC and the LCCD structures seriously undercut the LCCDs' ability to act independently. Sheila Carapico sums it up as follows: "Whereas previous cooperative elections were *outside* government, the LCCD elections were *for* government" (Carapico 1998, 118). As one interviewee argued: "as the government interfered and interfered in the elections and appointments of leaders of LDAs, grassroots accountability was basically removed. It was disabled by this government intervention."³¹⁹ The government intervention undermined the accountability relation that has previously existed as the leaders of the LCCDs became political appointees and thus became accountable to Salih. Instead of being vehicles for local development, the LCCDs became political satellites.

Thus, gradually the independence and local relevance of the LDAs/LCCDs was undermined and instead they became part of the national political system. The GPC continued to gain importance as membership became a prerequisite for other types of political and civil service appointments (Alley 2010, 390). This way, increased regulation undermined local development, whereas the bottom-up structures, the "original" LDAs, created what is still spoken of as the largest developmental leap in Yemen's rural history. Shelagh Weir sums it up: "Thus was a vigorous grassroots movement stifled by the dead hand of central control" (2007, 295).

7.1.4. The period of gaining power: a review

The overall discussion of Salih's internal and external position in combination with the more detailed case study documents how Salih was initially a relatively weak president, but that he employed a wide range of internal and external strategies to gain and consolidate power. Yemen's fairly isolated po-

³¹⁹ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (14).

sition, which is simultaneously close to the world's key oil-producing countries substantially, influenced its internal politics. As Salih was trying to consolidate his power, he was in a position of relative weakness vis-à-vis particularly 'Abdullah al-Ahmar and non-state organizations. The Yemeni state was weak but it did provide access to both internal, primarily taxes on remittances, and external funds. Moreover, although Salih had support in the army and in parts of Yemeni society, al-Ahmar was not only internally stronger, but by all accounts he also had a closer relationship to Saudi Arabia, the main external actor.

Thus, Salih was looking for ways to gain power. The detailed case study of how the LDA movement was turned into Local Councils exemplified how Salih was able to integrate the extra-regional preoccupation with legal-rational structures and elections as a model for rural development and state-building in the local context. The fact that the regional actor, Saudi Arabia, had multiple contacts in Yemen and thus a better understanding of internal dynamics, including internal relative power relations, meant that Salih was more restrained in how he dealt with Saudi Arabia. The extra-regional actors lacked an in-depth understanding of Yemeni internal politics and approached Yemen based on their own pre-understandings and priorities. This is reflected in how foreign policy towards Yemen was framed in Cold War terms and how internal Yemeni politics was understood through the binary between "bad" tribes and "good" central state organizations. The intention was to strengthen rural development further by "liberating" it from its tribal cloak and integrate the LDAs into the state.

Extra-regional actors' lack of in-depth knowledge combined with Salih's political skills created a situation where the LDAs that developed outside the state, based on local initiatives and Saudi funds, lost momentum as they became integrated in the state. Western donors were initially impressed with the capacities of the LDAs, describing them as "bona fide expressions for local initiative for development", and in an attempt to further strengthen them the extra-regional donors supported a process of state take-over (Green 1975, 14). This way it was not the tribal system that was obstructing development and modernization, but in fact the foremost representative of the state, the president, supported by extra-regional donors who undermined the local potential. This process strengthened Salih's power while it undermined the LDAs as independent centers of local power.

However, decentralization remained a strong theme both internally and externally. This will be discussed further in the next section, which investigates the second phase of Salih's regime.

7.2. Salih maintaining power: the period until the late 2000s

This section analyzes the capacities of Salih's regime after unification and the civil war in 1994 and discusses Salih's relationship to main external actors. This part of the chapter continues to trace the development of the LDAs, turned LCCDs, into the current Local Councils. This shows how decentralization was derailed by the regime while extra-regional actors continued to push for its implementation. This was possible because extra-regional actors were satisfied to see (slow) progress in terms of legal-rational structures that on the surface created a decentralized system. Moreover, this section brings in a second case, basic education, which offers an alternative example of how Salih embedded external intervention in the Yemeni context. Basic education is a core element in service delivery and has been prioritized by the Yemeni regime. It is thus an example of a policy area where the soil should be fertile for a cooperative relationship between the regime and extra-regional actors.

7.2.1. Salih's internal capacity

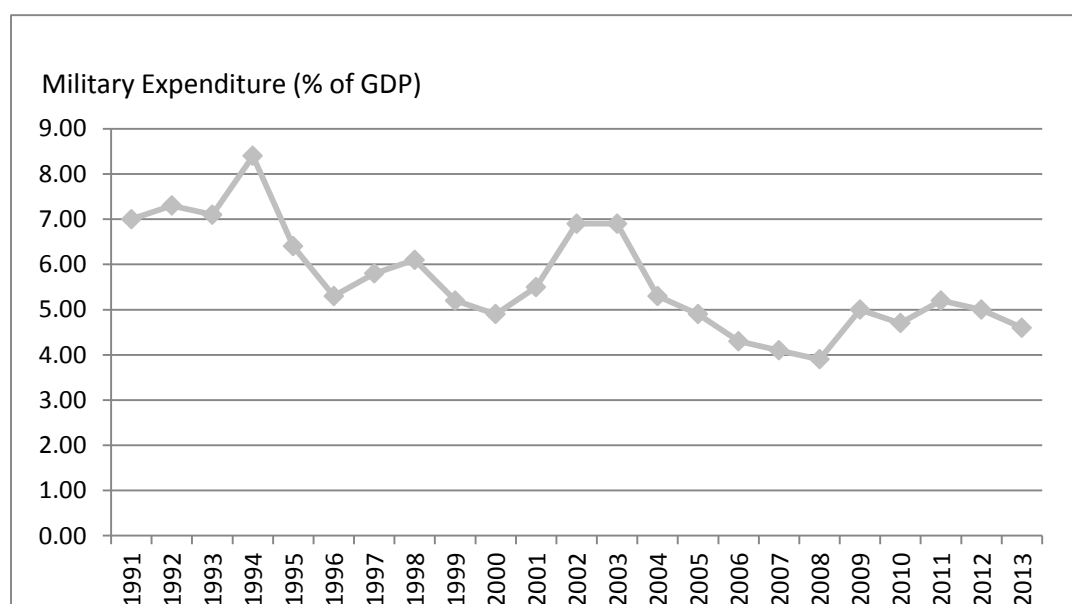
Following the civil war in 1994, Salih emerged as the strongest single elite actor, but he was not so strong that he controlled everything. The main internal challenge continued to come from the tribes, although gradually Salih was able to integrate key tribal sheikhs into the regime, tying their fate to his. This was facilitated by oil excavation, which turned Yemen into a rents-based economy. Indeed, oil changed the relationship between the regime (Salih) and alternative elites as resources became centered in the state that Salih controlled. This meant that tribal sheikhs increasingly came to rely on the political center instead of their local populations (Phillips 2011a, 97). Power consolidated around Salih and his close associates, mainly relatives who depended on Salih, as well as Sheikh 'Abdullah al-Ahmar and Ali Mohsin.

Simultaneously, a number of threats to the regime were emerging. The former South Yemen felt increasingly marginalized as power became gradually centered around Salih and the northern tribal sheikhs. North of Sana'a, the Zaydis were similarly experiencing increasing marginalization and were losing faith that their grievances could be addressed through the political process. Finally, the period saw the emergence of al-Qaeda in Yemen. Al-Qaeda was less of an internal threat in this period, but a major concern for especially extra-regional actors, the US, and also Saudi Arabia. Hence, although Salih was stronger than in the first years following his takeover there were substantial challenges.

7.2.1.1. Military capacity

After the civil war there was no longer an army in the south of Yemen that could threaten Salih externally. However, the military remained fragmented and based more on personal loyalties than loyalties to the state. Moreover, after the end of the Cold War, Yemen lost access to significant military assistance and there was a decline in military expenditures during the 1990s, estimated from around 10% of Yemen's GNP in 1990 to 6% in 1999 (Cordeman 2005, 10).³²⁰ Overall, military capacity was estimated as relatively low as much equipment was aging and in need of maintenance as well as a general lack of training and effective command structures.

Figure 7.2. Military expenditure in Yemen (% of GDP), 1991-2013



Source: World Bank.

In 2000, the American naval destroyer USS Cole was bombed while docked at Aden harbor. 17 American sailors were killed and nearly 40 others were wounded in the attack that was attributed to al-Qaeda (Day 2012, 336). Salih, supported by the Saudis, had strengthened conservative religious elements in Yemen during the 1980s and 1990s as a counterforce to the local Soviet-allied socialist elements. This included taking a relatively welcoming approach to Yemeni mujahidin who had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan. These were now growing into a more cohesive Islamist internal challenge. After 9/11, the Americans turned attention to Yemen as one of the

³²⁰ GNP is an economic statistic that is equal to GDP plus any income earned by residents from overseas investments minus income earned within the domestic economy by overseas residents.

states perceived to be harboring terrorists. This perception came to define the relationship between the US and Yemen in the subsequent decades.

In 2000, Salih's son, Ahmed Ali took command of the Republican Guard and began expanding it to a military elite unit of approximately 30,000 men modelled on its Iraqi counterpart (Phillips 2011b, 167).³²¹ The Republican guard was the best trained and funded brigades in the Yemeni army, in part with funds given to Yemen to fight terrorism (International Crisis Group 2013a).³²² In 2002, the National Security Bureau was established as a rival intelligence entity to the Political Security Organization, supported by the US and controlled by Salih (International Crisis Group 2013a, 9). Table 7.1 shows how American support to the Yemeni military-security nexus increased in 2002, but in relation to other Middle Eastern states, support to Yemen remained low as the comparison to Jordan illustrates.³²³

The table illustrates that American military support increased in the late 2010s as Salih's hold on power became more tenuous, a point I will return to in the next chapter.

However, where the Americans supported the Yemeni military to increase its ability to strike down on al-Qaeda, Salih directed the support towards specific elite units such as the Republican Guard and the Central Security Forces' Counter-Terrorism Unit. These had as their first priority to protect the regime, whereas the poorly funded regular army units would typically be sent to fight the Houthis or al-Qaeda.

³²¹ Several other family members held central military positions such as Commander of the Air Force, Chief of Staff of the Central Security Forces and Head of the Presidential Guard, which were also charged with keeping President Salih safe.

³²² In one conversation in Sana'a in 2014 on the future of Yemen, the professional way that Ahmed Ali had run the Republican Guard was given as an argument that he would be a good president. It was accentuated that they for example received their salaries and that these were higher than elsewhere in the military (Informal conversation, Sana'a 2014).

³²³ Israel and Egypt are the most stable main beneficiaries of American military aid since 2000. Iraq becomes a major recipient following the military intervention in 2003. Moreover, countries such as Lebanon, Turkey and Bahrain regularly receive more support than Yemen. I have included a ratio measure for Jordan to illustrate the comparative value of the American support to Yemen as it illustrates the importance given to Yemen by American policy makers.

Table 7.1. American support for Yemen's military and police

Year	Amount (US dollars)	Ratio (x times more allocated to Jordan)
2000	1,544,462	153
2001	5,951,901	13
2002	31,353,384	3
2003	5,196,664	122
2004	22,399,951	9
2005	14,841,157	21
2006	16,610,475	13
2007	49,897,696	7
2008	8,316,272	53
2009	75,234,580	8
2010	176,110,594	2
2011	26,727,785	13
2012	145,690,436	3
2013	76,557,578	4

Source: http://securityassistance.org/data/country/military/country/1997/2017/is_all/Middle%20East

7.2.1.2. Economic capacity

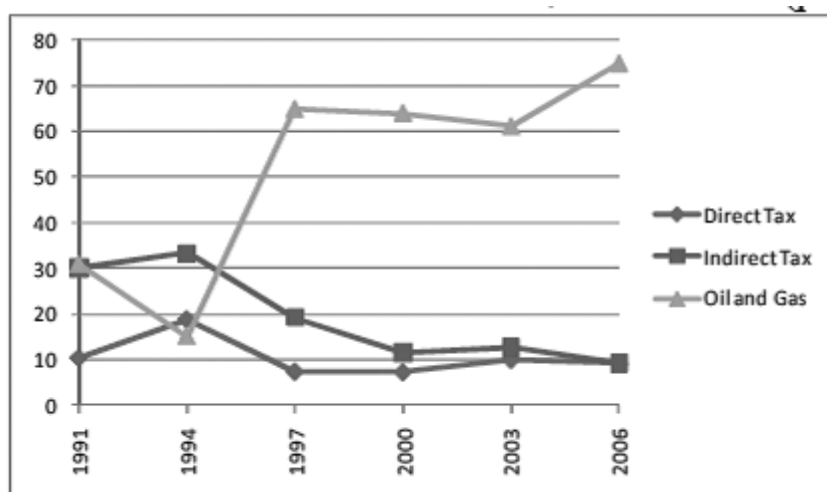
The Yemeni economy was in poor condition in the mid-1990s for two main reasons: the expulsion of approximately 800,000 Yemeni from Saudi Arabia in 1990 and the civil war in 1994. Moreover, Salih's concentric network relied on the distribution of enormous sums from the center to particularly the security services and the tribes (Day 2012, 178). This was done through direct payments and indirect channels such as "ghost workers". In a constructed example a military commander is allocated salaries for 20 soldiers, but in reality there are only 10 soldiers, meaning he can pocket the salaries of the last ten. It can, however, also refer to the practice of giving Yemeni government jobs they are not qualified for and/or do not show up for. It is difficult to know the full extent, but by all accounts the practice is widespread.³²⁴ Both elite actors and ordinary Yemeni benefit from the practice

³²⁴ Daniel Egel has calculated ghost workers in the education to account for 6% of the government budget in 2008 (Egel 2011). Ghost workers were also referred to in interviews. The public sector was described as providing a kind of welfare service, as people relied on these (low-paid) government jobs that were, however, not sufficient to live off. I know

During this period, the regime increasingly relied on oil revenue. Commercial oil extraction had begun prior to the civil war but rising output and increasing oil prices made the Yemeni state dependent on oil exports during the 1990s. Production peaked in 2001 with 441,000 barrels per day and then declined due to a combination of aging oil fields and frequent attacks on the infrastructure.³²⁵ The peak in Yemeni oil production corresponded with rising oil prices during the 2000s until the economic crisis began in the late 2000s. According to the World Bank, the percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) coming from the oil sector fluctuated from just over 40% to just under 30% in the period 2000-2008 (See also figure 8.1. Oil rents as % of GDP from 1990-2013).³²⁶ Oil accounted for 80–90% of Yemen’s exports and 70–80% of government revenues (Salisbury 2011, 6).

The Yemeni state extractive capacities are by all accounts low and have in fact decreased. According to a UN report, the share of tax revenue to GDP fell from 10% in 1992 to 7% by 2009. Figure 7.3 shows this development.³²⁷

Figure 7.3. Government revenue from taxes and oil, 1991-2006 (% of total revenue)



skilled people who kept a government job ‘on the side’ so to speak. This way reforms of the public sector would met general resistance from both elites and non-elites.

³²⁵ See <http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.cfm?iso=YEM> (Last accessed 29 April 2016). To comparison Saudi Arabia had an output of more than 20 times this amount in 2001 (nearly 21.000 barrels per day).

³²⁶ Data from the World Bank. See

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PETR.RT.ZS> (Last accessed 30 April 2016).

³²⁷ The figure is from a United Nations publication on the Millennium Development Goals and based on data from the Yemeni Ministry of Finance (Al-Batuly et al. 2011). Direct taxes refers to taxes levied on the person that pays the tax such as income tax, where indirect taxes are levied on goods and services such as sales taxes, customs duties and the like.

According to Charles Schmitz the combined taxes have never constituted as much as a third of state revenue (Schmitz 2015, 82). Hence, the Yemeni state mainly depends on alternative sources of financing.

Yemen Economic Corporation (YECO), which is run by the military, functioned as a “commercial arm of the regime” (Phillips 2011a, 110). Initially focusing on supplies to soldiers, it benefitted from the privatizations that took place in the former South Yemen after the civil war, and became involved in a number of sectors including tourism, oil and gas, transport and agriculture. It also owns large swaths of land as the military can claim land for military use and then distribute or sell it to developers. Moreover, YECO was pushed by the regime as the local partner for foreign investors and it is allotted part of the import quota leading in some areas to monopolies (Dresch 2000, 159). It was subsidized by the government and is perceived as largely serving the interests of core elite actors such as Salih and Ali Mohsin and less “the needs of the people” as it is otherwise formulated on YECOs homepage.³²⁸

Corruption emerged as a major international concern in the 2000s and Yemen saw downward slide on the International Transparency corruption perceptions index.³²⁹ The perception of growing corruption led extra-regional donors to apply increasing pressure on the Yemeni government to “do something”. Consequently, Yemen has had several anti-corruption bodies. The Central Organization of Control and Accounting (COCA) was meant as an oversight institution but it had limited capacity and was seen as Salih’s tool. In 2006, the regime was under increasing pressure to improve the political system and strike down on corruption and thus formed the Supreme National Anti-Corruption Commission (SNACC) (Salisbury 2015a, 68).³³⁰ Yet, although there were people involved in this process who publicly sought to tackle corruption, efforts were largely futile. The lack of political will was mentioned as the main reason.³³¹

The relationship between Yemen and the American Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a US initiative from 2004 to fight global poverty, illustrates the point. It shows how a seemingly objective evaluation and the use of thresholds for qualifying for aid has been used as a political tools to

³²⁸ See <http://yeco.biz/yecoeng/index.php> (Last accessed 29 April 2016).

³²⁹ Yemen was placed as the 88th most corrupt country out of 133 countries in 2003 and the 154th most corrupt country out of 180 in 2009. See <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/> (Last accessed 29 April 2016).

³³⁰ Yemen ratified the UN Convention against corruption in November 2005.

³³¹ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (18). During the same interview, it was also quite bluntly stated that donors had openly argued that the donors “did not trust the Yemeni people to give them money”.

attempt to discipline the Yemeni regime. Yemen qualified for development assistance for poverty reduction in 2004 based on its performance on MCC's Scorecard.³³² However, already in 2005 Yemen was suspended as a successful strike-down on al-Qaeda by the Yemeni government left the Americans free to implement more stringent aid conditions (Phillips 2012, 138). The political character of the funding mechanism became even clearer in 2007 when Ambassador John Danilovich, CEO of the MCC, announced that Yemen re-qualified due to "a series of impressive reforms".³³³ However, before the grant could be disbursed, it was suspended.³³⁴ This happened as Salih released the most wanted al-Qaeda operative in Yemen, the architect of the USS Cole bombing, to house arrest.³³⁵ This way, Salih underscored his autonomy from the US and the US punished him by suspending Yemen from the MCC (Phillips 2012, 139).

Yemen is not a major recipient of ODA and has, compared with other Arab states, continuously received relatively less aid than its socio-economic indicators warrant. In this sense, Yemen is a "donor orphan", underfunded relative to its needs (Hill et al. 2013, 36). Moreover, the level of aid from particularly extra-regional donors has fluctuated and been contingent on Yemen's amenability to security concerns over al-Qaeda.

7.2.1.3. Internal legitimacy and relationship to other internal elite actors

Salih was now the most powerful man in Yemen. In addition to commanding military and economic resources, he gradually came to possess substantial internal and external legitimacy. First, Salih came to embody the presidential office. He was president longer than more than 60% of Yemen's population has been alive. Hence, Salih did not draw on traditional legitimacy in the sense that he represents the last embodiment of a long line of ancestors who are particularly qualified to rule, but because *he* has ruled for so long that he is considered to possess special wisdom. Salih was somewhat successful in presenting himself as the only elite actor able to maintain stability (Phillips 2008a, 233). Second, President Salih regularly accentuated his constitution-

³³² The scorecards are available on MCC's homepage, although with limited background information on methodology and data collection. See <https://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work/country/yemen> (Last accessed 5 April 2016).

³³³ See: <https://www.mcc.gov/news-and-events/release/release-021407-yemenreinstated> (Last accessed 5 April 2016).

³³⁴ See: <https://www.mcc.gov/news-and-events/release/release-102607-yemen> (Last accessed 5 April 2016).

³³⁵ The USS Cole bombing was an attack on an American destroyer while it was refueling in Aden harbor in 2000. 17 American sailors were killed in the attack which was claimed by al-Qaeda.

al legitimacy as he was elected multiple times in relatively fair elections. In the 1990s and into the 2000s Salīh used the democratic opening that followed from the unification to present himself as a constitutionally elected president and the leader of a struggling democracy. Democracy has been a way to secure donor money (Phillips 2008b, 49). This gave him some extra-regional legitimacy, and internally it became a key part of his self-image that he was a democratically elected president (Day 2012, 185). Although the critical observer might dismiss this as propaganda, the claim had some value – and towards different audiences. Sarah Phillips has for example argued that President Salīh drew legitimacy vis-à-vis other elite members as he was the only one with constitutional power, that is, he could draw on the legal source of legitimacy (Phillips 2011b, 97). Finally, this period saw a centralization of resources in the hands of the regime as the economy became more dependent on oil. The centralization of resources allowed Salīh to build a system of rule based on extensive networks of patronage (Alley 2010). He thus possessed some material output legitimacy.

The most powerful alternative elite actors continued to be found close to Salīh. Sheikh ‘Abdullah al-Ahmar continued to hold substantial influence over Yemeni politics. In relation to the first elections in unified Yemen, he was one of the co-founders of the Islāh party, an Islamist party, and he became Speaker of Parliament. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Islāh worked closely with the GPC and as such supported the status quo (Day 2012, 163). Ali Mohsin controlled a part of the army and used that to amass a personal fortune in part through smuggling (Phillips 2011b, 90). Ali Mohsin also took part in establishing Islāh and had close links to Saudi Arabia.

There was simmering discontent, most notably in the former South Yemen, which felt marginalized after the civil war. Moreover, in the north of Yemen, the home of the Zaydis, disgruntlement was growing with what was perceived as a government-supported encroachment on the Zaydi core area by Saudi-supported Salafism while the area was systematically neglected.

7.2.2. Salīh's external relations, late 1990s and 2000s

The Salīh regime's relations to extra-regional actors were characterized by two perceptions of Yemen in this period; Yemen as a struggling democracy and Yemen as a safe haven for terrorists.

Democratization emerged as a key theme following the unification of the two Yemens, which led to Yemen being accentuated as an unlike democracy in one of the least democratic regions of the world, the Arabian Peninsula. However, although democracy remained part of the extra-regional rhetoric towards Yemen, terrorism emerged as the major concern.

Salih immediately joined the Americans in their fight against terrorism following 9/11, a step widely seen as facilitated by the lesson learned after the negative consequences it had for Yemen that it did not support the American-led intervention against Iraq in 1990. President Bush showed clear intent to go after not only terrorists but also those harboring terrorists; a threat Salih feared could be directed at him.³³⁶ Hence, Salih rushed to affirm his support to the Americans, including visiting Washington in November 2001 to reaffirm the two countries' partnership in the "war against terror". The result was increased American military support to Salih and an increased American military footprint in Yemen. Indeed, in 2002 the first and only officially affirmed drone strike until 2011 took place in Marib in Yemen when the Americans killed six al-Qaeda suspects with the cooperation of Salih.³³⁷ The Americans focus was to have a stable partner in Yemen that was amenable to their main goal; striking back at al-Qaeda.

In addition to the Western donors, Yemen depends on regional support, where Saudi Arabia is the most important single donor. Yemen's neighbors have focused on maintaining a minimum level of stability in Yemen. It is an often heard "truth" in Yemen that whereas the regional actors, headed by Saudi Arabia, do not want a totally unstable Yemen, it would be even worse with a strong, democratic Yemen.³³⁸ Indeed, many Yemenis will say that Saudi Arabia plays a substantial role in destabilizing the country and thus preventing it from developing (Blumi 2011, 147).³³⁹ It is impossible to know exactly how much regional assistance accounts for as payments are regularly made directly to the Central Bank, the office of the president as well as a wide network of state and non-state actors and individuals. The main locus of payments was the Special Office for Yemeni Affairs, headed by Crown Prince Sultan, also deputy crown minister and defense minister (Hill and Nonneman 2011, 9). Supposedly, this office at one point channeled \$300 million per month but the budget has now dropped considerably (Phillips

³³⁶ In a Radio Address on September 15, 2001, President Bush said, among other things: "Victory against terrorism will not take place in single battle but in a series of decisive actions against terrorist organizations and those who harbor and support them. We are planning a broad and sustained campaign to secure our country and eradicate the evil of terrorism." See <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/15/bush.radio.transcript/> (Last accessed 30 April 2016).

³³⁷ See The Bureau for Investigative Journalism for details: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/03/29/yemen-reported-us-covert-actions-since-2001/#YEM001> (Last accessed 30 April 2016).

³³⁸ Interviews, Sana'a 2013 and 2014. See also (Colombo 2013, 172; Warburton 1995, 23).

³³⁹ Multiple interviews, Sana'a 2013 and 2014.

2016).³⁴⁰ The official payments for the Gulf States prioritize development projects and infrastructure (Bonney 2011a, 7).

7.2.3. Deflection as a way of satisfying donors: the case of decentralization

The demand for a devolution of local government power is and always has been at the heart of united Yemens political troubles
(Day 2001, 466).

The state shall encourage and sponsor the local cooperative administrations as they are one of the most important means of local development.
(1994 constitution, article 146)

Thus far, I have shown that Salih had been relatively successful in establishing himself as the most powerful internal actor, but that he still depended on regional actors externally and non-state organizations internally. In this section, I argue that Salih was seeking to build extra-regional legitimacy by sustaining the perception of his regime as being a struggling democracy. This way, Salih used the fact that he was the constitutionally elected president to differentiate himself from alternative elite actors both internally and externally. Extra-regional actors saw decentralization as a way of strengthening the Yemeni state and improving service delivery and were therefore prepared to support a further regulation of the LCCDs. Decentralization has been linked to democratization and increased political accountability.³⁴¹ I show how Salih was able to embed external pressure for decentralization into a process of developing legal frameworks that lasted decades.³⁴² In this pro-

³⁴⁰ A newspaper has gotten hold of a list with more than 2700 names of Yemeni supposedly receiving regular payments from Saudi Arabia. The names included Salih, Ali Mohsen, the al-Ahmar family (which was expected) but also a number of Southern leaders and other prominent personalities (See <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/8337>, Last accessed 5 April 2016). It is universally recognized in Yemen that a substantial number of especially tribal actors receive funds through Saudi Arabia, but it is impossible to document.

³⁴¹ Arandel et al. identify the following potential benefits of decentralized governance in fragile states; improved service delivery, conflict management, capacity building for local actors, avoidance of “winner-takes-all” politics, greater space for institutional experimentation, increasing state presence in remote areas and potential to increase trust and accountability (Arandel, Brinkerhoff, and Bell 2015, 987).

³⁴² I use a standard definition of decentralization as “the devolution by central (i.e. national) government of specific functions, with all of the administrative, political, and economic attributes that these entail, to regional and local (i.e. state/provincial and municipal) governments that are independent of the center within given geographic and functional domains” (Faguet 2014, 2-13:3).

cess, the Salih regime used the perceived low level of administrative capacity to its advantage as it was a legitimate excuse for the lack of “progress”.

Moreover, decentralization was occasionally voiced internally by primarily groups in the former South Yemen who saw it as a way of counteracting centralization of power and as part of the Yemeni history (Corstange 2008, 13-14; Swagman 1988, 2).³⁴³ This way, decentralization reforms have been a source of both external and internal legitimacy but in different ways. Decentralization in Yemen was pointed to as a way of improving local governance and creating rural development from the bottom up. This corresponds to a common perception that local authorities are better at identifying local communities’ needs and preferences and that accountability is better in decentralized governance (Jütting et al. 2005, 626). Decentralization featured in united Yemen’s constitution from 1990 and remained through the subsequent adjustments in 1994, following the civil war, and 2001.³⁴⁴ The 1990 constitution established the legal foundations of decentralization in part 3, section IV where it is stated that Yemen shall be divided into administrative units and that the administrative units are to have elected local councils. It is also clear that the state is unitary, it is “an inviolable unit” (Maktari and McHugo 1992). Yemen has 22 governorates (including the island of Socotra and Sana’a city) and 333 districts. Districts are divided into sub-districts, villages and hamlets (Mitchell 2012, 291:304). It is underlined that the local councils are part of the state authority, but the system would be defined as decentralized since there is a “transfer of power to different subnational levels of government by the central government” (Oxhorn 2004, 7).

It was not until 2000, however, that the language of decentralization was concretized through the Local Authority Law (LAL) in response to both internal and external pressure. Western donors were beginning to withhold aid in response to the centralization of power in Sana’a (Day 2001, 422). Elections to local councils were held in 2001 and again in 2006.³⁴⁵ The law states that the local authority system is based on the principle of administrative and financial decentralization (Art. 4) but there is an unclear separation of responsibilities. This follows from article 10, which states that “Every one of the administrative units and the local councils is deemed to be an integral part of state authority” and the hierarchical nature of the decentralized system where district local councils are responsible to governorate local coun-

³⁴³ This was for example seen in 1994 when decentralization featured prominently in the Document of Pledge and Accord as a way of addressing Southern grievances and preventing secession.

³⁴⁴ This section draws on (Clausen 2016).

³⁴⁵ Scheduled elections were postponed due to the events of 2011 and thus the current local councils were elected in 2006.

cils and the governor, who was appointed by the president (Art. 19).³⁴⁶ The Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA) is responsible for the implementation of the Local Authority Law in Yemen. To this end, the LAL was supplemented with the National Local Authority Strategy in 2008, which was meant to provide more specific guidelines for the decentralization process in Yemen. Hence, there is a complete regulatory setup for decentralization.

However, I argue that this institutional setup can be described as an embedment strategy referred to as isomorphic mimicry. The concept is developed by DiMaggio and Powell, who used the concept of isomorphic mimicry to explain why so many organizations look alike (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). They argue that organizational change is driven by mimicry; one organism mimics another to gain an evolutionary advantage (Krause 2013, 1). Here, the Yemeni regime builds a comprehensive regulatory setup for decentralization, with the help of Western donors, to get access to external resources and keep up its image as an emerging democracy. It presents itself as a state that does not have the capacity to implement all reforms, but that has the political will as evidenced through the confirmation of the laws and strategies; the progressive legal-rational framework. In reality, these structures function as façade institutions as power is not *actually* delegated from the central state to the decentralized structures. Indeed, their main goal is not to function according to their legal-rational structures but to relay the impression to donors that they do. In fact, in the same period as Yemen was decentralizing, power was further centralized in the hand of Salih. This was quite clearly argued by a number of people in Yemen:

So, it (the Local Authority Law) is actually defective as it is now - it is defective because it's for show. The strategy, the attached strategy (The Local Authority Strategy from 2008), did not have the political will behind it to actually give up centralized power. It was meant to appease local communities, to appease donors and so on.³⁴⁷

This created a decoupled system where the state has only apparently been transformed but where existing power relations remain largely unscathed (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 35). The case of decentralization is interesting because decentralization, in addition to providing external legitimacy, would be a source of considerable internal legitimacy. But whereas external actors have largely been satisfied with the legal-rational changes made and seen them as substantial progress in a fragile state with limited capacity, internal

³⁴⁶ In 2008 governors were indirectly elected (Phillips 2008b, 78).

³⁴⁷ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (13).

actors did not see the local councils as a tool for local development. Instead local councils are seen as a part of the government.³⁴⁸

The one major obstacle that was pointed to as preventing real decentralization was that local councils have not been given control over a substantial budget, and decentralization “will fail at the end, because money will be controlled at the center.”³⁴⁹ In practice, local councils have had very limited control over their budgets and almost no running costs are covered (Day 2012, 189; Phillips 2008b, 78; Romeo and El-Mensi 2011, 519-525). This reality was generally recognized and openly voiced, even in the Ministry of Local Administration where it was put the following way:

So the relation now between the central and the local, I give you now some details to give you the full picture, they depend on the central level for everything, for employment, for their current budget, for the staffing, for training, for the support for investment. So many things come from the national level.³⁵⁰

Indeed, instead of seeing a decentralization of power, the decentralization process has been used, since the formation of the LCCDs, the precursors to the current Local Councils, as a way to extend and expand central control to the periphery without devolving actual power (Phillips 2008b, 77).³⁵¹ The Yemeni regime has primarily described this as a result of limited resources, which is a narrative that seems to resonate among donors in Yemen. During interviews with a wide range of Yemeni actors it was, however, generally accentuated that the problem is not mainly lack of resources but that the resources are being stolen by elite actors. Decentralization, in part, remains a powerful internal narrative as a way to counteract centralization of power.

In sum, decentralization features prominently in Yemeni history and self-perception as well as in donor approaches to institutional reform in Yemen. In this section, I have argued that Salih was able to integrate the extra-regional actors' focus on creating advanced legal-rational structures with his own agenda of maintaining control over resources. The historical tradition for local self-help in combination with the practical difficulties involved in expanding the central state's reach, especially in the mountainous areas of Yemen, makes it an obvious candidate for decentralization, but decentraliza-

³⁴⁸ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (4).

³⁴⁹ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (13).

³⁵⁰ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (4).

³⁵¹ Even the Yemeni government itself officially states that local councils have not contributed substantially to local economic and social development but points to the limited capacity and financial resources of local councils as the main reason (Ministry of Local Administration, Yemen 2008, 39).

tion would remove power from Salih. Consequently, the emphasis on decentralization at the central level did not result in *actual* decentralization. On the contrary, as the legal framework of decentralization was developed, in many cases with the assistance of Western donors, *actual* power and resources were increasingly centralized.

7.2.4. Going with the flow: the case of basic education

Mr Arhabi (Managing Director, The Social Fund), however, says the fund consults with local stakeholders and calls the debate about a parallel bureaucracy “a lavish discussion”, given Yemen’s poverty. You have to serve the poor, no matter how. Do you want to wait until you have reformed the civil service?” he asks. (Fielding-Smith 2010).

In this section, I use the example of basic education to show that the involvement of multiple internal and external actors in service provision created a disjointed structure that allowed Salih to expand his concentric network based on patronage. Salih was seeking ways to maintain power and was therefore interested in increasing external support in ways that could increase available resources without jeopardizing his position. The case of basic education shows that a lack of consistency between what Western donors say they will do (ensure coordination and ownership to build the state) and what actually happens (a host of individual projects defined by the donors) facilitated this process. The Yemeni state organizations, in this case the Ministry of Education and to some degree the Ministry of Local Administration, are not only weak but also have to allocate resources to coordinate between different actors while navigating between unclear internal divisions of responsibilities.

Education was chosen as an example because it is and has been a priority, both generally in the state-building literature and in Yemen.³⁵² The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has actively connected state fragility and education. Education is seen as having a central role in the protection of children and the development of future of fragile states.³⁵³ It is stressed that education is lacking but should be a priority and hence specifically targeted in fragile states.³⁵⁴ Yemen has followed this trend and made basic education

³⁵² This section draws on (Clausen 2015a).

³⁵³ (E/2006/34, part I – E/ICEF/2006/5, part I (2006); A/HRC/21/38 (2012)).

³⁵⁴ (E/ICEF/2007/10 (2007); E/2007/80 (2007); A/62/PV.88 (2008); CRC/C/49/3 (2010); E/ICEF/2011/9 (2011); E/2013/95 (2013); A/68/294 (2013)) and (A/62/228 (2007); PBC/2/SLE/SR.2 (2008); CRC/C/49/3 (2010); (E/2011/SR.7 (2011)).

a priority.³⁵⁵ This strategy was continued after the uprising in 2011, and then-Yemeni Prime Minister, Khaled Bahah, made 2015 the year of education shortly before the political situation deteriorated.³⁵⁶ The level of education in Yemen is low, with one of the world's highest illiteracy rates at around 34% (17% for men and 50% for women).³⁵⁷ However, progress has been made, especially in terms of enrolment rates, going up from 58% in 2005/2006 to 70% in 2010/2011 for girls and up from 67% to 79% for boys in the same period (Ministry of Education 2013, 21-22).³⁵⁸ But as argued by a centrally placed employee in the Ministry of Education: "There is a kind of satisfaction with the students' access to the schools but we are not satisfied with the quality of education in general".³⁵⁹ The lack of quality is seen in low completion rates (only 63% complete the 6th grade), and studies show that Yemeni schoolchildren are outperformed by children in other Arab and low to middle income countries (Yuki and Kameyama 2013, 4; Yuki and Kameyama 2014, 9-10).

It was argued in both the Ministry of Local Administration and the Ministry of Education that external funding was thoroughly insufficient and that this had become even worse after the uprising in 2011 as "all the donors are focused on the National Dialogue."³⁶⁰ Hence, at a time where the overall level of external funding was growing, support to actual service provision declined. However, returning to the period of interest here, this is nothing new; donors have generally hesitated to support government structures, as they are viewed as corrupt and ineffective. This point is for example driven home

³⁵⁵ Yemen has allocated a substantial part of its budget to education, according to one UN report, between 15% and 21% of government spending between 1991 and 2006 (Al-Batuly et al. 2011).

³⁵⁶ The Uprising in 2011 severely impacted education in some areas; 1.2 million boys and girls lacked regular access to education during the uprising and approximately 820 schools were partly or totally damaged by fighting or occupied for other purposes (Ministry of Education 2013). The current conflict has meant an even larger number of closed schools and the disruption of an entire school year, although efforts have been made to conduct classes and exams when possible. Moreover, education features prominently in a number of outcomes from the National Dialogue in 2012-2013, including the right to education and the need to secure the quality and impartiality of education at all levels.

³⁵⁷ Data is from UNESCO

(http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS&popupcustomise=true&lang=en) (Last accessed on February 15, 2016).

³⁵⁸ The Ministry of Education is charged with the provision of primary education services to all citizens according to the constitution and the General Education Law. The Yemeni Constitution, art. 54 states that education is a right for all citizens and that the state shall guarantee education in accordance with the law.

³⁵⁹ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (23).

³⁶⁰ Interviews, Sana'a 2013 and 2014 (4) and (24).

by the UK Government's Special Envoy to Yemen and former Minister of State for International Development, Alan Duncan, who notes in defense of aid to Yemen: "No British money is channeled through the government; it is all managed by trusted partners, whether UN agencies, international NGOs or Yemeni civil society organizations".³⁶¹ This clearly marks a lack of faith in the state that British aid is supposedly aimed at supporting.

One key alternative channel is the Social Fund for Development (the Social Fund or SFD).³⁶² The Social Fund was established as an autonomous state organization with the support of the World Bank in 1997 to alleviate the consequences of structural adjustment reforms and combat poverty (Al-Iryani, de Janvry, and Sadoulet 2015; De Regt 2007, 54).³⁶³ Its success is largely attributed to the fact that it functions outside the "normal" Yemeni bureaucracy. This allows it, for example, to maintain merit-based recruitment and salaries that are sufficiently high to be competitive (Phillips 2008a, 248). It receives funds from the Yemeni government, but a minimum of 80% of its funds come from international donors. The majority comes from extra-regional donors, i.e., individual governments, the World Bank, and the EU, but regional donors also support the SFD primarily through their own Social Funds.³⁶⁴ It has been singled out multiple times as a success story and even as "the only institution that can address problems and support activities that have otherwise fallen through the cracks in Yemen" (World Bank, quoted in Al-Iryani, de Janvry, and Sadoulet 2015, 323).

The Social Fund tries to involve local communities in activities, including Local Councils and non-state actors such as tribal sheikhs, which it specifically aims to capacity build. The Social Fund refers to the experience of the LDAs as a source of inspiration and has it as its stated aim to support decentralization and local development. The involvement of local communities in the process cycle was accentuated during an interview in the Social Fund, but described as "very superficial" by an astute observer of Yemeni politics.³⁶⁵

³⁶¹ The Guardian, 28 September 2012. See <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/sep/28/uk-aid-yemen-saves-lives-promote-stability> (Last accessed on 29 March 2016).

³⁶² The UK government was the largest single donor to the Social Fund in its fourth phase of operations starting from 2014. See <http://www.sfd-yemen.org/content/1/26> (Last accessed 1 May 2016).

³⁶³ For information about SFD, see <http://sfd.sfd-yemen.org/index.php> (Last accessed 29 March 2016).

³⁶⁴ Primarily the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) and the Public Works Programme (PWP), which were established simultaneously with the SFD. According to Romeo and El-Mensi, the SFD and PWP in combination absorb 40-50% of all external aid to Yemen (Romeo & El-Mensi, 2011:539).

³⁶⁵ Interviews, Sana'a 2013 (6) and 2014 (13).

One obvious difference is that although local communities may be consulted and even involved, to some degree, in the project, it is paid for through donor funds and part of a larger structure that is set up and monitored by the Social Fund. Whereas the Social Fund is accentuated as one of the most successful Yemeni organizations, and its aim is to support local service delivery and build the capacity of Local Councils, it is not a bottom-up initiative but a professional, donor-financed organization built on an international template. Two challenges were accentuated; that the Social Fund functions in parallel to the Yemeni state structures and that resources are directed towards the Social Fund instead of the state structures. Although services provided by the Social Fund may alleviate the state's inability to provide services, its activities accentuate and deepen the weakness of state structures as they are given the extra task of coordinating between multiple actors. Hence, although some argue that the Social Fund will lead the way through its positive example, others argue that the Social Fund is undermining the very structures it is supposedly aiming to support. A seasoned observer of Yemeni politics with knowledge of the Social Fund described it in the following way:

It should have been a showcase, a pilot for how other institutions of the state should function. There should have been a similar structure for project construction and for project management in every ministry, every line ministry should have had an equivalent structure of the Social Fund. That way it would have made sense. The problem is when you turn a pilotproject into a parallel structure that replaces and weakens the state institutions, specifically the line ministries.³⁶⁶

Education is the largest single expenditure within the Social Fund, accounting for 44% of total expenditures (Al-Iryani, de Janvry, and Sadoulet 2015, 324).³⁶⁷ The Fund focuses on construction of schools, which should optimally be coordinated with the Ministry of Education and the Local Councils/Ministry of Local Administration as these actors are responsible for providing teachers and materials to the schools once built.³⁶⁸

The Ministry of Education (MoE) works with multiple external actors (donors).³⁶⁹ These partnerships are coordinated through the Coordination

³⁶⁶ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (13).

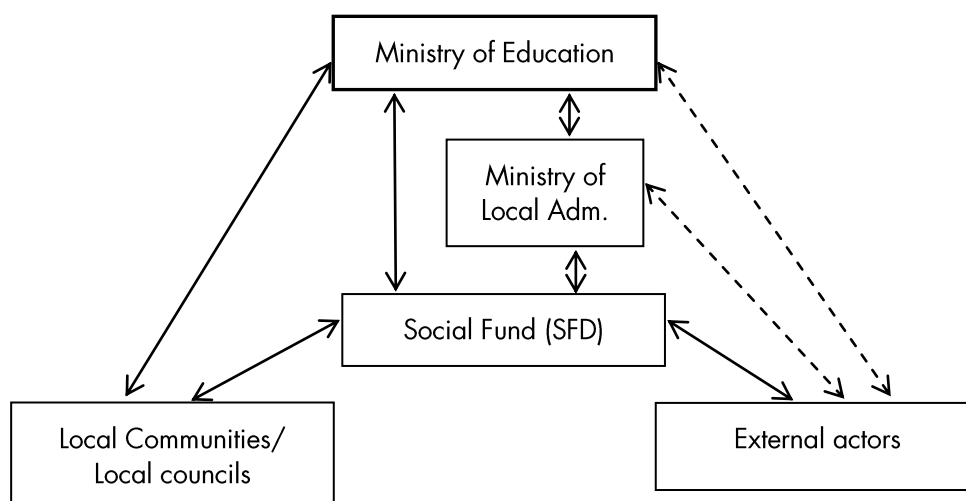
³⁶⁷ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (6)

³⁶⁸ Interviews, Sana'a 2013 and 2014, (4), (6) and (24).

³⁶⁹ There is no full overview over all donors, but I have seen numerous reports and project descriptions involving an impressive number of donors including UN organizations (UNICEF), the World Bank and OECD as well as a host of OECD countries represented through bilateral projects. Moreover, a range of non-state actors are represented such as the Social Fund and Global Communities.

Unit, which is also involved in coordination between MoE and other actors. Here I focus on the Ministry of Local Administration (MOLA) and the Social Fund, which both have a central stake in basic education at the local level.³⁷⁰ All three Yemeni actors, MoE, MOLA and the Social Fund, have a formulated aim to include local communities in basic education. The relations between these key actors are depicted in figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4. Model of actors in basic education



The figure is a simplified model as in reality more actors are involved in service provision in general and education specifically.³⁷¹ The figure has the Ministry of Education as the main internal actor, which has to coordinate between external actors, other ministries, non-governmental organizations such as the Social Fund and the more local entities, which include local councils and local branches of the Ministry of Education. External actors support the Ministry of Education, but the Fund is accentuated as a more effective partner. There is no arrow between local communities/Local Councils and external actors to illustrate that the extra-regional focus on decentralization is not realized as direct support to local actors (Romeo and El-Mensi 2011, 539-540). Indeed, it was argued in the Ministry of Local Administration that Local Councils were not, in general, able to attract external funding. Instead, donors might ask the ministry to pay heed to donor preferences in terms of which geographical areas should be prioritized; this can be related to practical considerations, i.e. that the targeted areas should be accessible

³⁷⁰ Interviews, Sana'a 2014 (23) and (24).

³⁷¹ There are other relevant ministries; for example is the Ministry of Finance responsible for hiring teachers. There is also a system of religious schools, which I do not discuss here.

for evaluation visits, or it can be related to political or socio-economic considerations, for example, al-Qaeda presence.³⁷²

The Social Fund and the two ministries pointed to coordination problems and saw it as a result of the limited capacity of the ministries. The lack of capacity in the Ministry of Education has been noticed by extra-regional donors, and a relatively high share of projects supported by extra-regional donors have focused on establishing the inefficiencies of the Ministry of Education and reviewing its internal work processes, whereas fewer projects focus on supporting service delivery.³⁷³ This is in sync with the focus on capacity building found in the state-building literature. Yet, however logical it might seem from the donor's perspective to use expensive international consultants to map the deficiencies of their internal partners, this is not without consequences. First it drains the internal actors' resources as these reviews are prioritized by the ministries. Thus, qualified employees and managers spend time and resources supporting the international consultants, providing information and formulating suggestions for how legal-rational structures can be improved. Second, it can create some latent antipathy as it accentuates a hierarchy where (well-paid) international consultants, which do not necessarily have deep knowledge of the Yemeni context, are considered better able to identify and rectify challenges than the Yemeni who dedicate every day to working with these issues.³⁷⁴

Extra-regional donors are concerned about the low level of capacity in the Ministry of Education, which is confirmed through their reviews, and therefore prefer to work through the Social Fund or to support well-defined projects instead of allocating money to the ministry's core service. The Social Fund can legitimize its continued existence by pointing to the inadequacy of state structures (Al-Iryani, de Janvry, and Sadoulet 2015, 327).

³⁷² Interview, Sana'a 2013 (4).

³⁷³ Interviews, Sana'a 2014 (24). I was given access to reports by various donors and consultants. Moreover, to the degree that service provision was supported, this was also done in a way that reflects donor priorities as seen in the construction of a parallel structure for girls' education.

³⁷⁴ Interview, Sana'a 2013. Moreover, the introduction of "experts" that does not necessarily know much about Yemen, but knows the aid industry can have adverse effects. Sheila Carapico illustrates this with the example of the introduction of semitropical fruits into Yemen, a semiarid climate thus exacerbating ongoing acute water depletion (Carapico 2006, 201). Indeed, this was also a reoccurring theme; that either donors just copy/paste approaches from one country to another or as it was said in one interview with someone who had extensive experience in working with Western donors and the UN "You know, Maria, the problem, many of them they come here for one day, they think they know Yemen, and they go back and say we have to do this and this and this..." (Interview, Sana'a 2014 (28)).

Here, I argue that the extra-regional donor's belief in the low capacity of the Ministry of Education has led the Salih-regime to employ what could be called a "diversification strategy" as a way to maximize support and integrate it into the Yemeni context. Education is not tightly connected to core elite interests like decentralization, and the Social Fund does not challenge the regime as the LDAs did. Hence, instead of being undermined, the Social Fund is supported (or at least accepted) as an actor in service provision. Yet, it is supported in a way where unclear responsibilities and overlapping functions make it possible to use the structures to extend the regime's concentric network. Indeed, in one interview, the Ministry of Education was emphasized as having a particularly large percentage of "ghost workers".³⁷⁵ Moreover, the unclear division of responsibilities, both between and within ministries, makes it easier to move responsibilities between actors without changes in the overall setup as a way of disciplining or rewarding specific actors. The existence of parallel structures can also be used as a way to counterbalance alternative internal actors to avoid that one actor becomes too strong. This way the parallel structure is used as a way for the internal elite actor to diffuse critique by setting up a structure that does not directly threaten its power.

This structure has the dual advantage of catering to extra-regional actors who are hesitant to commit aid to state structures, while it, through the diversification of resources and capacities, secures that no single internal actor grows strong enough to challenge the basic setup of the concentric system. Through the proliferation of actors and ambiguous divisions of work, it also creates opportunities to place loyal people in both high and low positions in multiple organizations.³⁷⁶ This way the diversification strategy helps sustain the patronage system – all funded by donors.³⁷⁷ In the Ministry of Local Administration it was argued that, despite a shortage of funds, an estimated 90% of costs related to basic education would be covered if the funds were used effectively.³⁷⁸ Yet, the current system seems to value patronage oppor-

³⁷⁵ I was told a story about how a new Minister of Education wanted to reduce the number of employees: "He wanted to reduce the number of the staff to increase their capacity and to increase their salaries - to stop the corruption. He said some of his staff lay beside his car - he could kill them. They said: Kill us, but don't take our jobs!" The story was told to accentuate how Salih's concentric system has become self-perpetuating to a point where changes are opposed not only by elite actors but also by ordinary Yemeni like employees in the Ministry of Education (Interview, Sana'a 2014 (28)).

³⁷⁶ One study by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) measured absenteeism, that is, undocumented absence by teachers at approximately 20%.

³⁷⁷ In the Ministry of Education, for example, people loyal to Islah/ the al-Ahmars had been hired without there being actual jobs for them, after the transition that increased influence to Islah as Salih was weakened.

³⁷⁸ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (4).

tunities over efficiency. The result is less efficient services: sometimes schools are built but there are no teachers, or there are teachers but no school – or no students because the students are too busy working with their parents.³⁷⁹

In sum, this section has shown how basic education, a prioritized area of service delivery in Yemen, involves multiple internal and external actors. The Yemeni regime has taken a strategy of accommodation as a way of embedding the external support; including supporting the involvement of the Social Fund. Although Western donors accentuate coordination and ownership, the case illustrates how a lack of trust in the national state organizations leads to the creation and support of parallel structures such as the Social Fund. It is considered more effective and thus a better partner while the state bureaucracy struggles to coordinate between the multiple actors. Consequently, lack of coordination becomes a separate issue that further undermines state organizations' capacity. In reality, the extra-regional external actors themselves undermine state organizations and facilitate the disjointed character of the Yemeni state organizations through limited and targeted support to specific prioritized projects within the overall category of basic education. The regime further supports the system with ambiguous divisions of work and multiple overlapping actors as this type of system facilitates distribution of patronage and prevents any single actor from emerging as a threat to the regime.

7.2.5. The period of maintaining power: a review

The overall discussion of Salih's internal resources following the civil war and his relationship to key external actors, in combination with the two more detailed case studies show that Salih over time managed to consolidate his power and emerge as the single most powerful internal actor. He did, however, still rely on alternative elite actors. Moreover, regional actors, especially Saudi Arabia, continued to play a decisive role. Thus, Salih was seeking to increase extra-regional support but in ways that would not undermine his internal legitimacy. The two case studies showed how Salih applied different strategies to embed extra-regional support to his regime in the Yemeni context.

The detailed case study of the decentralization process showed how Salih was able to use the extra-regional focus on building legal-rational structures to attract donor support. However, whereas international donors, including Saudi Arabia, have supported decentralization, the Yemeni regime saw decentralization as a threat to its hold on power. The result has been a political

³⁷⁹ Interviews, Sana's 2013 and 2014 (4), (23) and (24).

system where decentralization figures prominently, starting in the constitution, explicated through the Local Authority Law (LAL) and complete with elected Local Councils. However, the local administration system has not developed into strong representatives for local communities. Although extra-regional actors were relatively successful in keeping decentralization on the agenda, external pressure was only enough to create façade institutions without real ability to implement decentralization and an extensive legal framework, which has been difficult to implement into actual delegation of competencies to Local Councils in Yemen.

The case of basic education demonstrated how extra-regional actors' lack of trust in government structures has been used to create a disjointed system where multiple actors seemingly work to improve local services but in reality end up creating a disjointed system is more facilitating for patronage than it is for effective service delivery. Thus, the regime has taken an accommodating approach, supporting the diversification of actors as it might not increase effectiveness of service delivery but it does provide ample opportunities for the regime to expand its patronage networks while cooperating with Western donors.

Through these strategies Salih was able to embed extra-regional support into the local Yemeni context. However, aid from extra-regional actors remained fairly limited, despite a slight increase following growing attention to Yemen after 9/11 and the perception of Yemen as a safe haven for al-Qaeda. It was not enough for Salih to build a fully professional military, and as oil prices declined in the late 2000s, it became increasingly clear that Salih's regime did not have the resources to sustain the same level of patronage. Thus, the late 2000s were a period of relative decline for Salih until the uprising in 2011. The period immediately leading up to and following the uprising will be the focus of the next chapter.

7.3. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Salih applied different strategies to embed external intervention in the Yemeni context depending on his internal position vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. The analysis has shown that when Salih was seeking to gain power from a position of relative weakness, he did not directly challenge internal elite actors but instead sought extra-regional support. Salih sought to increase support from extra-regional actors as these provided the best opportunity to gain an advantage vis-à-vis alternative elite actors who already had close relations with key regional actors. Extra-regional actors emphasized legal-rational structures, rural development and elections as a way of strengthening the state. Salih in a sense shared the goal of increas-

ing state power but as a way to increase his power vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. The analysis showed how Salīh was able to integrate the external support in the local context by using extra-regional calls for greater regulation to undermine the independence of the Local Development Associations and then subsume them into his party-like structure, the General People's Congress (GPC). The LDA movement was successful when working *outside* the state, whereas the integration of the LDAs into the state structures undermined their ability to positively influence rural development.

In the second period, Salīh had emerged as the key internal actor. The development of the Yemeni economy into an oil-based rent economy allowed Salīh to expand his concentric network based on patronage. His strategies in the second period were therefore more focused on maintaining power. However, Salīh continued to depend on alternative elite actors and thus continued to seek extra-regional legitimacy through a process of decentralization and democratization. The process was slow and the result was a relatively high level of decentralization on paper, but limited actual decentralization. In fact, the 2000s were characterized by a centralization of power. The second case of basic education had potential as a case of a cooperative relationship between the regime and donors. It was rhetorically emphasized as a priority while basic education does not, in the same way as decentralization encroach directly on distribution of political powers. However, as the case study shows, a combination of lack of donor coordination, weak capacities in the relevant ministries and a regime strategy of formulating ambiguous responsibilities between different internal actors, created a situation where the Ministry of Education and the area of basic education provide ample opportunities for patronage while service delivery suffers. This way, the Salīh regime was indirectly able to expand its patronage network with the help of extra-regional actors.

In sum, this chapter has shown how the internal elite's power position in combination with relations to key external actors defines the strategies internal elite actors can use in the face of intervention. However, it also illustrates how the internal actor has substantial agency in this process, especially when working with extra-regional actors. This shows how internal actors are key to understanding what shapes state-building processes.

Chapter 8.

Salīh's decline and Hadi's ascendance

This chapter examines the most recent period of Yemeni politics: Salīh's decline and Hadi's ascendance from 2011 until 2014 where the Houthis took over the Yemeni state.

The first section focuses on Salīh and the time period leading up to the uprising in 2011 that ended with Salīh's deposition from the presidential office. During this period, Salīh lost economic capacity and consequently internal legitimacy as he was no-longer able to sustain his inclusive patronage system. Instead, Salīh attempted a strategy of increased coercion to maintain his internal elite position. Externally, Yemen was increasingly described as a fragile state as discussed in the previous chapter. Specifically, 9/11 increased the American focus on al-Qaeda and Yemen was seen as harboring one of the most dangerous branches of al-Qaeda. Hence, this chapter shows how the categorization of Yemen as fragile made it amenable to American military intervention, including an extensive drone campaign. It is argued that as Salīh was facing multiple challenges to his rule, he was able to use the American preoccupation with al-Qaeda to increase his coercive capacities internally. Specifically, the section shows how Salīh was able to embed the American intervention in the Yemeni context in multiple ways that increased his coercive abilities vis-à-vis alternative elite actors.

The second section focuses on Hadi's ascendance to power in 2012 as part of the transitional agreement following the uprising. Hadi was chosen as a consensus transitional presidential candidate, something which was in part made possible by his *lack* of internal resources. Even though he had been vice-president for decades, he was a largely unknown political figure who had seemed content to stand behind Salīh. The Yemeni economy was near collapse following the uprising, and the military had fractured. Hence, Hadi was heavily dependent on external backing. The section uses the Executive Bureau, an aid absorption mechanism to illustrate how external actors may emphasize state-building and recognize the need for aid but simultaneously use exactly the lack of capacity as a reason for circumventing state structures. Thus, this case shows how Hadi, and the Yemeni state structures, tried to push for an economic intervention that could be embedded in the state but with limited success as the external actors preferred a parallel elite unit. The second part of the section uses the National Dialogue Conference, a cornerstone in the UN supported transition, and the discussion on federalism, to show how Hadi, heavily backed by the UN and to some degree other external

actors, was able to create a limited space where he had substantial influence within the NDC. Thus, he was able to push through a decision on federalism. However, the case shows how Hadi, due to his lack of internal resources and legitimacy, was unable to embed the notion of federalism in the Yemeni context. Instead, political discussions in the NDC were becoming increasingly detached from the internal elite struggles taking place outside the NDC. The case finishes with a brief update on the events following the closure of the NDC to make this point.

8.1. Salih's decline

This section briefly analyses the declining internal capacities of the Salih regime in the late 2000s and its relationship to key external actors. These factors are used to analyze how Salih used the primarily American preoccupation with al-Qaeda as a way to increase his coercive capacity in a time of relative decline. Salih was facing multiple challenges to his rule that were growing increasingly difficult to control, especially in the face of declining oil revenues (see table 8.2 in section 8.1.1.2).

8.1.1. Salih's internal capacity

In the late 2000s, Salih was by far the most powerful internal actor in Yemen."Abdullah al-Ahmar died of cancer in 2007, and Ali Mohsin was weakened by taking the brunt of the fighting against the Houthis. In interviews, it was described how this was the period of the most extensive centralization of power in Yemen's history. However, the centralization of power was built on increased coercion as a consequence of declining resources that meant that Salih was forced to contract his concentric network. This led to increasing dissent as growing internal groups felt marginalized while Salih increasingly prioritized family members.³⁸⁰ Thus, Salih's internal legitimacy was beginning to dwindle. Salih tried to compensate by using extra-regional actors' focus on al-Qaeda to increase his coercive capacity.

8.1.1.1. Military capacity

The Yemeni military was underfunded and suffered from lack of professionalization as Salih had prioritized using the military to extend patronage rather than building an effective fighting force.³⁸¹ Hence, as resources became

³⁸⁰ See for example Wikileaks, "Salih And Cronies Draw Fire From a Broadening Swath of ROYG Critics' (09SANAA1014, Embassy Sana'a, Yemen, 31 May 2009).

³⁸¹ This is a reference to Samuel Huntington's influential terminology as was also discussed in chapter 2 (Huntington 1957, 83-85).

more limited it became increasingly difficult for Salih to sustain the inclusiveness of his concentric network and competition for resources increased. Moreover, the wars against the Houthis put a strain on the military. This despite the fact that the government's defense spending is reported to have increased from an approximate average of \$870 million dollars pr. year between 2003-2007 to \$1332 million, 13.2% of government expenditures, in 2010 (Knights 2013, 272). According to data from the World Bank, military expenditure as a percentage of GDP has fluctuated between 6.9% and 3.9% in the 2000s (See figure 7.2). Moreover, the American support to the Yemeni military increased further in the late 2000s as detailed in table 7.1.

The ordinary military, including in part Ali Mohsin's units, were moreover relatively deprived compared to a few elite units headed by Salih loyalists (Albrecht 2014). They received the bulk of American support for the Yemeni military and security services (Carapico 2014, 43; Hudson, Owens, and Callen 2012). Specifically, the American focus on al-Qaeda led to a focus on building the Yemeni Air Force's ability to support ground operations, increased intelligence capabilities and improved border control (Sharp 2015). It was a deliberate strategy by Salih to build some core military units, primarily headed by family members such as his son, Ahmed Ali, that were also in charge of his personal security. This gave him a military advantage vis-à-vis alternative elite actors, most notably Ali Mohsin.

This helps explain why the Yemeni army fractured during the uprising in 2011 along intra-regime battle lines (Knights 2013). Ali Mohsin defected in March 2011 and stationed his troops, the *Firqa*, to protect the protestors. Although Salih continued to hold the military advantage, particularly since elite units such as the Republican Guard largely remained loyal, he was unable to fully benefit from this as the application of military force would have substantially hurt his internal and external legitimacy. Hence, despite tensions and occasional clashes between pro-Salih forces and defectors, fighting was relatively limited inside Sana'a in 2011 (Ibid, 279).³⁸²

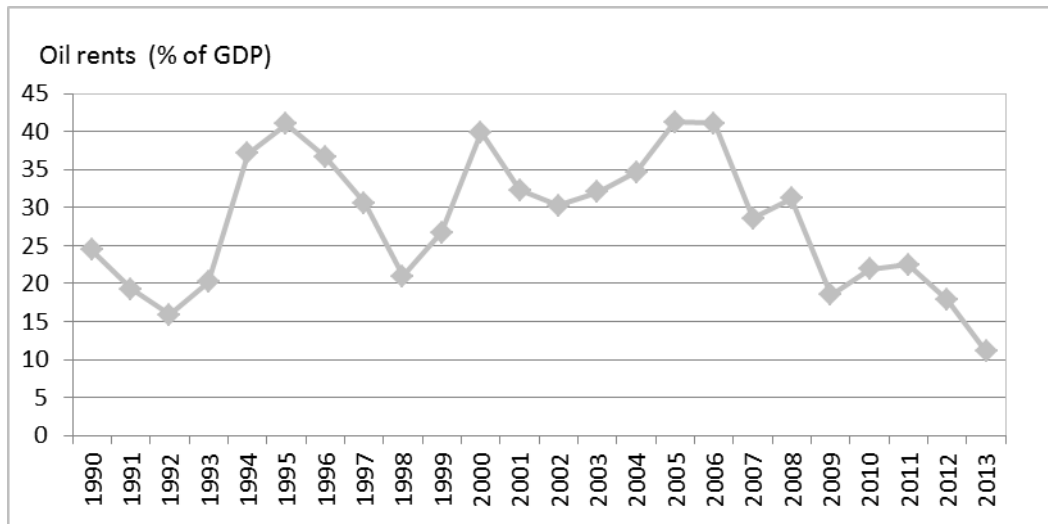
8.1.1.2. Economic capacity

Yemen had developed into a rent-based economy, where Salih depended on oil revenues to finance his patronage network. Figure 8.1 shows the development of oil rents as a percentage of Yemen's GDP from 1990-2013. Statis-

³⁸² Sana'a was divided as pro-Salih forces controlled some parts of the city whereas others were controlled by forces loyal to Ali Mohsin and the al-Ahmar's. Despite tensions, it was common to shoot *over* the opponent to avoid casualties and subsequent blood feuds, and occasionally qat and food would be shared across the "front" (Informal conversations, Sana'a 2013).

tics from Yemen should be read with caution and are therefore more useful as indicators for broader trends. Particularly relevant here is the decline in oil rents as a percentage of GDP since the mid to late 2000s. This made it increasingly difficult for Salih to finance his patronage network.

Figure 8.1. Oil rents (% of GDP), 1990-2013



Source: World Bank.

Oil does not only finance the official state; the oil industry and related smuggling have been especially lucrative for corruption. This can take several forms; international companies are pushed to use regime-approved contractors and agents that keeps costs artificially high (Salisbury 2015a, 66), through smuggling or through the allocation state-subsidized fuel products that can be sold to internal or external buyers at market price (Hill et al. 2013, 21). A 2008 study found that at least 50% of the public money allocated to the diesel subsidy, in 2008 estimated at around \$3.5 billion, corresponding to roughly 12% of the GDP, was smuggled out of the country by key regime members (Phillips 2011a, 108). As oil revenues were declining it thus also limited these indirect “benefits”, leading to increased competition among internal elite actors.

Industry in Yemen accounts for 15% of GDP and is mainly controlled by a small number of families. In early 2011, an estimated 10 families controlled more than 80% of imports, manufacturing, processing, banking, the telecommunications and transport sectors (Hill et al. 2013, 19). One of the key actors was Hamid al-Ahmar, who runs the al-Ahmar Group, which represents some of the world’s best known internationals in Yemen.³⁸³ Approximately 70% of the Yemeni continue to live in rural areas, yet only 3% of the

³⁸³ This included the country’s only Kentucky Fried Chicken.

country's land is arable (Brehony, Al-Sarhan, and Lackner 2015, 15). Thus, agriculture remains the main economic activity for a majority of Yemeni but not the main source of income as income has to be supplemented, usually with casual labor by male household members. The result is widespread rural poverty and the maintenance of a system that has similarities to a form of feudal agriculture.

8.1.1.3. Internal legitimacy and relationship to other elite actors

In 2007, Sheikh 'Abdullah al-Ahmar died. This meant the disappearance of a strong alternative elite actor, but also greater fragmentation and a more unpredictable political environment. Several of Sheikh 'Abdullah al-Ahmar's sons have vied for power in different ways while none hold the same authority as he did. Sheikh 'Abdullah al-Ahmar was speaker of parliament and he was involved in the foundation of the Islāh party. He was also a key power broker between the Saudis and the Yemeni political system (Hill and Nonneman 2011, 6). His oldest son, Sadiq al-Ahmar, became the paramount sheikh of the Hashid tribal confederation, but his younger brother, Hamid al-Ahmar, has attracted attention as a business man and MP for Islāh with clear political ambitions (Phillips 2011b, 101). Hamid al-Ahmar has been most explicit in his criticism of Salīh.³⁸⁴ Another brother, Hussein al-Ahmar, led the Saudi-backed tribal militia during the wars against the Houthis and is considered to have the closest relations with Saudi Arabia.

The relationship between Ali Mohsin and Salīh deteriorated in this period because Ali Mohsin was unhappy with the way Salīh increasingly prioritized close relatives and groomed his son, Ahmed Ali, for the presidency. Moreover, it is widely believed that Salīh used the wars against the Houthis to weaken Ali Mohsin's section of the army, the *Firqa* (International Crisis Group 2013a). Salīh dispatched Ali Mohsin's forces well knowing that they were under-equipped and refused to send back-up when requested. Additional rumors tell of clashes between Ali Mohsin and Ahmed Ali, Salīh's son, as part of the internal competition for succession (Boucek 2010, 48; Winter 2010).³⁸⁵

It was clear that Salīh's regime was facing increasingly severe challenges. Particularly two are worth mentioning. First, Hiraq, the full name being 'al-Hiraq al-Janubi', is a broadly based movement in the south of Yemen. It be-

³⁸⁴ See for example Wikileaks, "Another ROYG Insider Speaks Out: "He Won't Listen to Anyone" (O9SANAA1611, Embassy Sana'a, Yemen 31 august 2009).

³⁸⁵ Ali Mohsen's headquarters were almost bombed by Saudi aircraft using coordinates supplied by Salīh's Office of the Commander-in-Chief, something that is speculated to have been done on purpose (Knights 2013, 276).

gan as a rights-based campaign demanding equal access for southerners to jobs and services and greater local autonomy (International Crisis Group 2013b, 1). When the protests started, former military officers who were dismissed following the civil war in 1994 constituted a core group with demands of reinstatement as they felt they were forced into early retirement (Alley and al-Irani 2008). The movement was initially asking for political and economic decentralization but increasingly focused on secession and reestablishment of an independent South Yemen (Day 2010, 61). The movement has substantial strength on grassroots level but lacks a uniform leadership, which has so far inhibited its ability to translate popular appeal into political influence. Figures such as the former president of South Yemen, Ali Salim al-Bidh, who agreed to unification in 1990, has re-emerged to present himself as a leader, but neither he nor others have so far been able to merge the movement into a more coherent political organization.

Second, the Houthis, a political and religiously inspired movement, are Zaydis, a branch of Shia Islam, but distinct from the Twelver Shi'ism found in Iran.³⁸⁶ The movement began as a civil rights movement as the Zaydis and the entire geographical area of Sa'ada where the majority of Zaydis live were marginalized economically and politically by Salih. Moreover, the Zaydis saw an influx of Salafi-leaning institutions backed by Saudi Arabia, which challenged Zaydi identity and was used as part of a divide-and-rule tactic by Salih (Bonney 2009). As the Zaydis ruled Yemen until 1962, Salih was concerned that the Houthis might want to overthrow his republican leadership. Salih and the Houthis fought six wars between 2004 and 2010.³⁸⁷ The Salih regime was not able to defeat the Houthis despite help from Saudi Arabia and indirect help from the US through the counterterrorism program.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Zaydism takes its name from Imam Zayd b. Ali Zayn al-Abidin, who was a descendant of Ali b. Abu Talib, a relative of the Prophet Mohammad. Centrally, only descendants of Ali and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet and her husband, can become imams. Zaydism is distinct from the Twelver Shi'ites practiced in Iran and is sometimes referred to as "fiver" Shi'ites and largely endemic to Yemen. Paul Dresch argues that if Zaydis move south, which they have regularly done, then it was not uncommon that they would then just become shāfi'i. In any case, doctrinal markers such as prayers were seldom an issue, and Zaydis and shāfi'i would for example pray together (Dresch 2000, 15). For more information on the Houthis and their relationship to the Yemeni government, see (International Crisis Group 2014b; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells 2010).

³⁸⁷ The Houthis got their name after Hussein Al-Houthi, who was killed by government troops sent to arrest him in 2004. His son, "Abdul Malik al-Houthi is now the Houthis' leader. The Houthis now often refer to themselves as Ansar Allah (Supporters of Allah).

³⁸⁸ The Houthis are deeply mistrustful of the Americans as reflected in their "motto", the *sarkha* chant: Death to America, Death to Israel, Damn the Jews, Victory to Islam.

Despite the severe challenges to Salih's regime, many elite actors believed that the likely alternative to Salih would be chaos, and were therefore hesitant to directly challenging Salih. In a sense, the events following the change of president in 2011-2012 have supported that fear (Carvajal 2015, 2).

8.1.2. Salih's external legitimacy, late 2010s

The primary aim for regional and extra-regional external actors in Yemen is stability, which was underlined in relation to the uprising in 2011 where external actors took a wait-and-see approach. It was not until internal divisions led Yemen to the brink of civil war that external actors intervened as they realized that Salih was no longer a guarantor for stability.

The external legitimacy of the Salih regime became increasingly tied to al-Qaeda in the 2000s. Especially, US policy towards Yemen is defined by how the US at any given moment estimates the threat of AQAP. Yemen is not a strategic concern *on par* with challenges in Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Iran or Iraq, so it is mainly on the agenda due to the perceived security threat to the US from al-Qaeda (Green 2014; Zimmerman 2014). This has resulted in a predictable pattern of ebbs and flows in the level of attention and aid given to Yemen depending on the activity level of AQAP (Harris 2010, 31). This was not only acknowledged by Salih, but a widely held perception among political actors in Yemen. It was for example argued in one interview that since Yemen does not have large oil reserves or other resources it could use as bargaining chips, its influence lies in its destabilizing potential:

If Yemen is peaceful and quiet and stable, then we are a zero value to the internal community. If we are in a bad state and we are unstable, then we are a humanitarian crisis, a terrorist risk etc. We are a destabilizing force for the region so we have a negative net value to the international community.³⁸⁹

Consequently, the American focus on al-Qaeda led it to remain notably silent in regard to the fate of Salih. In fact, then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton paid a surprise visit to Yemen on January 11 2011, the first by an American Secretary of state in two decades.³⁹⁰ This was in the early phases of the Arab uprisings, and they had not yet evolved into a mass protest in Yemen. However, the rare visit to Yemen by a high ranking American official was seen as a substantial boost to Salih. In March 2011, a senior Pentagon official noted in a show of support for the Salih-regime that "In my view, it's the best part-

³⁸⁹ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (3).

³⁹⁰ See for example the report in Washington Post: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/11/AR2011011101447.html> (Last accessed 2 May 2016).

ner we'll have, and hopefully it will survive"³⁹¹ Salih himself played on the fear of al-Qaeda by arguing that his departure "would see Yemen overrun by terrorists" (Lewis 2015, 101). Hence, among the protesters in Yemen, the impression was that the US was willing to overlook Salih's increasing level of coercion if they could continue to work with him against al-Qaeda. This began to change in April 2011, however, when it became increasingly clear that Salih was losing control with events on the ground.³⁹²

Saudi Arabia likewise focused on keeping Yemen stable. The Saudis have considered the Yemeni chaos a constant source of concern which, due to its proximity and the long shared border, cannot be ignored (Chubin 1996, 75).³⁹³ "The good or evil for us will come from the Yemen", King "Abd al-Aziz supposedly said on his deathbed as a warning to his sons (Gause 1990, 1). Thus, although the relationship between Salih and Saudi Arabia has fluctuated, the Saudis were concerned that Salih's demise would lead to increased chaos that could spill into Saudi Arabia due to the long shared border.³⁹⁴ The concerns included the potential of growing al-Qaeda influence, but also that the Houthis would gain influence. Saudi Arabia has backed the Salih regime's wars against the Houthis and became directly involved in the conflict in 2009 when Saudi Arabia carried out its first unilateral military operation in decades against the Houthis (Knights 2013, 271). It is difficult to verify details, but Saudi Arabia is perceived to have launched a major operation on its southern border in response to Houthi incursions (Boucek 2010, 56-57). It was reported that Saudi Arabia used indiscriminate violence against the Houthis, not differentiating between civilians and fighters (Carapico 2014, 45).³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ See <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/02/world/middleeast/02yemen.html> (Last accessed 2 May 2016).

³⁹² See http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/04/world/middleeast/04yemen.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (Last accessed 2 May 2016).

³⁹³ Burke and Bazoobandi argue that over the last ten years the events of the Middle East including the implosion of Iraq and the weakening of Egypt and Syria have "resulted in the rise of Saudi Arabia as the most influential country in the Arab world" (Burke and Bazoobandi 2012, 39).

³⁹⁴ The exact placement of the border is also controversial. The first peace treaty with Saudi Arabia, Treaty of Ta'if, was signed in 1934 and ran for 20 years. The issue of border demarcation continued to simmer; specifically in relation to the provinces of Asir, Najran and areas of Jizan and finally, Salih signed a permanent deal in 2000 (Burke 2012, 52). Yemen also shares a border with Oman. This border was formally drawn in 1991 without much controversy; in the words of Paul Dresch: "One could have drawn it a little west or east without upsetting anyone" (Dresch 2000, 11).

³⁹⁵ See the Critical Threats Tracker for situation updates, documenting in overall terms the Saudi intervention in 2009/2010: <http://www.criticalthreats.org/yemen/tracker-saudi->

In sum, Salih had the at least tacit support of main external actors until March 2011 when it became clear that he would not be able to contain the internal unrest.

8.1.3. Increasing coercion: the case of al-Qaeda

In this section, I argue that as Salih's internal position was becoming more precarious in the late 2000s due to evolving conflicts in Sa'ada (Houthis) and the former South Yemen, as well as changes in the elite structure and declining oil rents, Salih sought to embed the American preoccupation with al-Qaeda into the Yemeni context in a way that allowed him to use American military resources against internal challengers while avoiding the blowback that could follow from being seen as working too closely with the Americans. It was a period where oil rents were declining and Salih tried to increase coercion to compensate for a narrowing of the patronage network

Al-Qaeda has structured the relationship between Yemen and the outside world for decades (Bonnefoy 2011b, 324). Al-Qaeda in Yemen, commonly referred to as AQAP (al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula), was formally created in 2009 through a merger of al-Qaeda in Yemen and in Saudi Arabia (International Crisis Group 2011a, 27). Despite the intense focus on AQAP, the exact strength of the organizations is not known, with estimations of the number of AQAP fighters ranging from a few hundred to several thousands. This is propounded as both AQAP and the Yemeni regime have an interest in manipulating data. Moreover, there are substantial definitional issues as it is not clear how exactly an AQAP affiliate is defined (Harris 2010, 38; Hellmich 2012, 621; Lewis 2013; Lewis 2015, 98; Swift 2015).

The American military support to Yemen sought to stabilize Yemen and weaken AQAP. Salih was a somewhat inconsistent counter-terrorism partner but for the Americans there were no potential alternatives.³⁹⁶ Immediately following 9/11 it was clear that Salih could choose between cooperating with the Americans and maintaining some control over their policy in Yemen or reject the American "offer" of assistance in fighting al-Qaeda, in which case the Americans made it clear that they would still go ahead (Rugh 2010).³⁹⁷ Thus by cooperating he secured the regime some extra-regional legitimacy,

arabia%E2%80%99s-military-operations-along-yemeni-border (Last accessed 30 March 2016).

³⁹⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/02/world/middleeast/02yemen.html> (Last accessed 2 May 2016).

³⁹⁷ The disciplining effect of the international response to the Yemeni no vote to the intervention in Kuwait in 1990 was still remembered.

but Salih's own agenda only partly overlapped with the American focus on al-Qaeda.

The Americans only carried out one confirmed drone attack in Yemen in the 2000s but increased their overall covert counter-terror activities as Yemen became increasingly viewed as a "fragile state" whose al-Qaeda franchise was an international menace.³⁹⁸ The Americans carried out several cruise missile attacks in December 2009 for which Salih took responsibility while denying American involvement. This was later revealed by Wikileaks.³⁹⁹ Seemingly, this arrangement suited both the Americans and Salih well; the Americans avoided difficult questions at home, and Salih avoided looking weak by accepting American "help". Anti-Americanism is widespread in Yemen, so it was key to Salih that he was not perceived as an American puppet as this would seriously hurt his internal legitimacy (Hellmich 2012, 627).

In the early 2000s, Salih was able to create an unstable balance where the Americans considered him a sufficiently reliable partner to increase both military and humanitarian aid, although not to impressive levels, while Salih managed to sustain a relationship to AQAP that meant that al-Qaeda primarily prioritized the "far enemy", the US. Hence, while occasionally angering the Americans, Salih's policies spared Yemen from high level political violence (Bonnefoy 2011b, 331). However, from the late 2000s this began to change and al-Qaeda began to target the Yemeni government (Bonnefoy 2011b, 332; Swift 2015, 77). Thomas Hegghammer has commented that AQAP now has "one of the most ambiguous enemy hierarchies in contemporary jihadism" as it focuses both on regime and Western targets (Hegghammer 2009, 35).

It is not uncommon to hear that Salih is secretly supporting al-Qaeda or at least tacitly allows them to exist.⁴⁰⁰ According to a Yemeni politician:

Al-Qaeda is not a real thing in Yemen to be very frank with you. Al-Qaeda is something made by Ali Salih and Ali Mohsin and now they are using them.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ This included the so-called "underwear bomber", a Nigerian who attempted to blow up a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on 25 December 2009. The bomb did not go off. AQAP claimed the attack.

³⁹⁹ See for example <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/03/wikileaks-yemen-us-attack-al-qaida> (Last accessed 5 April 2016).

⁴⁰⁰ Elite actors and ordinary Yemeni are critical of AQAP's violent methods, which are considered outlandish to Yemeni values. It was often accentuated that a substantial number of AQAP fighters are foreigners. This is partly true as there are many Saudis, Somalis and other nationalities among AQAPs fighters (Harris 2010, 39; Hudson, Owens, and Callen 2012, 152). However, the majority is considered Yemeni (Green 2014, 523).

⁴⁰¹ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (28).

Al-Qaeda was not considered a major internal actor. This is not to say that al-Qaeda is considered inconsequential as mainly Yemeni are killed in its attacks, but the difference between how important al-Qaeda has been in defining the American policy towards Yemen, compared to how defining of Yemen al-Qaeda is considered in Yemen is striking.⁴⁰² This was illustrated by arguing that al-Qaeda is the creation of Salih, who “invented” or at least allowed the organization to stay in Yemen to be able to extract resources from the Americans and strike down on internal opposition.⁴⁰³

Salih was able to embed the American preoccupation with al-Qaeda into the Yemeni context in a way that allowed him to use the American military support and resources to bolster his coercive capabilities and maintain his hold on the state. This included trying to link the Houthi rebellion to the “war on terrorism” to garner international support for the regime and redirecting American counterterrorism support to his fight against the Houthis (Boucek 2010, 46).⁴⁰⁴ This way, the American focus on al-Qaeda not only served to increase Salih’s coercive capacity, but by framing strike downs on internal dissent as “fighting terrorism” Salih obtained internal leeway as the focus on al-Qaeda and terrorism made the extra-regional donors willing to overlook transgressions against internal groups in Yemen. This enabled Salih to extend the reach of the Yemeni state beyond what it had been ever before:

Pre-2011 we were very close to getting to that state of a monopoly of violence, rightly or wrongly, but power was being concentrated in the hands of one person (Salih) and he was controlling the whole state but it was all done through the instruments of the state, security forces, everything...⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Conversations, Sana’a 2013 and 2014. In 2010, Yemen Polling Center conducted a survey, asking 1000 people to name the most important political issue and less than 5% mentioned terrorism. Instead, the war against the Houthis, the Southern issue and poverty were the main concerns (YPC 2010, 22). See also Lewis 2013, 87.

⁴⁰³ Conversations, Sana’a 2013 and 2014. See also (Lewis 2015, 101; Swift 2015, 83).

⁴⁰⁴ In the late 2000s, the Houthis were occasionally linked to AQAP but these are two very distinct organizations which might share their dissatisfaction with the Yemeni state but little else (Lewis 2015, 99). See also a US Senate Foreign Relations Report from 2010 where the difference in priorities between the US and Yemen is noted. The Yemeni are believed to be more concerned with the Houthi rebellion and “was likely diverting U.S. counter-terrorism assistance for use in the war against the Houthis, and that temptation will persist. Sustaining ROYG commitment to the fight against al-Qaeda will be critical” (US Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Following the money in Yemen and Lebanon: Maximizing the Effectiveness of US Security Assistance and International Financial Institution Lending, January 5 2010, 2, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/CPRT-111SPRT54245/CPRT-111SPRT54245/content-detail.html> (Last accessed on 5 April 2016).

⁴⁰⁵ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (15).

Salih had wide control of the means of coercion, in the same interview described as a situation where Salih through the coercive apparatus of the state controlled maybe 70-80% of the state. This is unprecedented in Yemeni history and was facilitated by American military support, which not only increased Salih's military capacity but also allowed him to target internal opposition under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

This also meant that Salih had little to gain from completely defeating al-Qaeda. Salih is generally described as a political mastermind who refined the art of political manipulation and balancing, both towards external and internal actors. As Isa Blumi points out: "In the context of the now ubiquitous 'global war on terror' Yemen's status as a 'frontline' state has given the regime a strategic option that simply expands instability in order to reiterate the fundamental value of the regime to this larger concern of the United States and its allies" (Blumi 2011, 143). Hence, Salih would shift between coming down hard on al-Qaeda and showing leniency, even carelessness, to the regular frustration of the Americans. Salih is for example believed to have released strategic prisoners or "allowed" prison breaks such as the escape of 23 militants in 2006 from a high-security penitentiary in Sana'a, when it suited him (Bonney 2011b, 332; Loidolt 2011, 103). The escape reinvigorated al-Qaeda's leadership, which had been decimated by a relatively effective Yemeni effort leading up to the escape. Moreover, these, often rhetorical, pushbacks against the Americans helped Salih reassert independence from the Americans in the eye of the Yemeni public (Bonney 2011b, 330).

In sum, the relationship between the Americans and the Salih regime on counter-terrorism can be described as dynamic but generally valued by the Americans as Salih had been able to relatively successfully portray himself as the only person who could prevent Yemen from falling into complete disarray. Salih realized that if he did not work with the Americans, they would most likely still intervene as they were doing elsewhere so by working with the Americans he was able to embed the American interventions into the Yemeni context in a way that strengthened his coercive capacities vis-à-vis alternative internal elite actors.

8.1.4. Salih's decline: a review

This section has argued that although Salih was the most powerful internal actor in the 2000s, he had to increasingly rely on coercion. Thus, on the one hand this period saw an increased level of centralization of power and coercive abilities which is typically associated with "more state". However, as the increasing monopolization of power was financed through external support, it was not linked to increasing levels of internal legitimacy. On the contrary,

the declining economic capacity of the Salih-regime, primarily following from declining oil production, led to a decline in internal legitimacy which the increased coercion was a response to.

Salih sided with the Americans in the “war against terror” in a situation where Yemen was increasingly described as chaotic, and al-Qaeda identified as a main security threat to the people living in Yemen as well as the wider “international community”, here specifically meaning the US. The characterization of Yemen as fragile helped position it as unable to fight al-Qaeda and thus in need of assistance. Consequently, the US can present its military intervention in Yemen, including drone and missile cruise strikes as assistance to help the Yemeni state defeat an enemy that is threatening its very foundation. This way, an American military intervention in Yemen is framed as not only being in Yemen’s interest, but also as strengthening the Yemeni state and helping the Yemeni people. However, Salih did not share the American preoccupation with al-Qaeda. Instead, the case study argues that he was able to embed the American military intervention in the Yemeni context in a way that expanded his coercive capacity in a time where he did not have the economic capacity to “buy” the same level of coercion. Not only could Salih use American military support to target internal actors, but by framing his increased coercion as being part of the effort against terrorism, he avoided the external blowback related to what Mohammed Ayoob referred to as the “the third world security predicament”, i.e. having to adhere to human rights while spreading dominion.

Although the Americans were occasionally frustrated with Salih there were no potential alternative actors which they could work with who would have the same level of resources as Salih and be equally forthcoming. Indeed, Salih had successfully positioning himself, internally and externally, as being the only actor who would be able to secure a level of stability in Yemen. Thus, the Americans chose to increase support to Salih in the face of what they perceived as a serious threat to his regime, by supporting Salih with military aid and directly targeting al-Qaeda through the drone campaign.

8.2. Hadi’s ascendance (and fall)

This section briefly analyses the internal capacities of Hadi from 2012 and until the Houthi takeover in 2014 and Hadi subsequent flight to first Aden and later Saudi Arabia. These factors form the backdrop to two case studies; the Executive Bureau that was a donor supported elite unit to facilitate aid absorption. External actors pledged substantial amounts to the Yemeni transition but disbursement was slow and inadequate. It is argued that this was facilitated by a combination of bureaucratic resistance on the Yemeni side

and unwillingness to disburse funds to the Yemeni on the donor side. The second case study focuses on the National Dialogue Conference, particularly one of the most contentious decisions; the discussion on federalism. It shows how Hadi attempted to use external support and control with the NDC to stack the cards in a way that would strengthen him vis-à-vis alternative elite actors in a future Yemen.

8.2.1. Hadi's internal capacity

Hadi is from Abyan, a governorate in the former South Yemen and as such cannot depend on support from the northern tribes. Like Salih, he began his career in the military until he fled South Yemen in 1986 as he supported the losing side in an internal regime struggle. In the civil war in 1994, he became defense minister for North Yemen.⁴⁰⁶ This is still remembered in the former South Yemen. From 1994 Hadi functioned as Salih's vice-president but without bringing much attention to himself. In fact, many ordinary Yemeni did not know of him and one of his main assets seem to have been exactly his lack of close links to either state or non-state political organizations, although belonging to GPC, as it made him an acceptable choice for all internal elite actors. When Salih was seriously wounded in June 2011, Hadi took over as temporary president. This gave him a chance to position himself as an alternative to Salih. However, many silently wondered if Hadi would have the necessary political clout to break away from Salih's influence and begin the needed reforms. Hadi was not given an easy task and had to rely primarily on external actors for support. Internally, Hadi distanced himself from Salih, making it clear that Salih could not control him, but this left Hadi more dependent on alternative elite actors such as the al-Ahmars and Ali Mohsin. Consequently, the influence of Islah increased. While the political struggles were ongoing the economy continued to deteriorate in Yemen and public services were increasingly strained. Moreover, although non-state actors such as the tribes to some degree stepped in to fill the vacuum left by the state, these structures have weakened and no longer represent local communities to the same degree as they used to (Corstange 2008; Egel 2011).⁴⁰⁷ The result was deteriorating living conditions for many Yemeni.

⁴⁰⁶ Hadi fled in 1986 as he sided with the president of South Yemen, Ali Nassir Mohammed, who lost an internal power struggle within the southern leadership against Ali Salim al-Bidh, the president of South Yemen, who later entered into unification in 1990.

⁴⁰⁷ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (3).

8.2.1.1. Military capacity

When Hadi was inaugurated as president, the military-security complex was placed under his command. However, during the events of 2011 the military-security nexus had fractured according to elite loyalties. Hence, although Hadi nominally controlled all defense and interior ministry forces plus the intelligence services, in reality commanders would occasionally refuse, ignore or only partially implement the president's orders (International Crisis Group 2013a). The GCC deal included a provision that a "Committee on Military Affairs for Achieving Security and Stability" should be set up to end divisions within the military and ensure that military units returned to their military camps.⁴⁰⁸ It was seen as key to the future of the Yemeni state that the security sector was reformed, particularly to undermine the influence of Salih. Hadi focused on replacing top personnel with primarily his own men, many of them from his home governorate, Abyan (Albrecht 2013). This suggested that Hadi was less focused on substantial structural reforms and more concerned with consolidating his own position (Albrecht 2014). Subsequent events, specifically the Houthi's takeover, have shown that the reforms did not change the basic structure of the military. It remained a patronage army where sections were loyal to the "patron" and not the state (or Hadi as the representative of the state).

The Americans continued the military support to Yemen despite difficulties in documenting whether the support had any effect on its main goal, weakening al-Qaeda.⁴⁰⁹ The Americans have increasingly come to rely on drone strikes, possibly because the chaotic situation on the ground led the Americans to believe that direct targeting from the air was more efficient. Since 2011, Yemen has been targeted 116-136 times, with 528-765 combatants killed and 73-110 confirmed civilian deaths.⁴¹⁰ Hadi has claimed that he,

⁴⁰⁸ See the implementation mechanism for the transition process in Yemen: <http://peacemaker.un.org/yemen-transition-mechanism2011> (Last accessed 30 April 2016).

⁴⁰⁹ See https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-loses-sight-of-500-million-in-counterterrorism-aid-given-to-yemen/2015/03/17/f4ca25ce-cbf9-11e4-8a46-b1dc9be5a8ff_story.html (Last accessed 3 May 2016).

⁴¹⁰ It is very difficult to obtain data. These numbers are from The Bureau of Investigative Journalism and have been cross-referenced with numbers from the Long War Journal and New America Foundation, which all collect data on drone attacks. They rely on primarily English language news sources for data as the US does not publish data. The boundary between civilian and combatants is problematic as for example the US counts all male of military age as combatants unless there is evidence proving they are not AQAP. In other words, guilty until proven innocent (Johnsen 2013, 260). Moreover, the US makes use of so-called signature strikes, where targets are hit because of suspect behavior but where their identity

as the legitimate president of Yemen, authorized every drone strike and only when they were in the interest of Yemen (Swift 2015; Terrill 2013, 22). This way, Hadi attempted to frame the drone campaign as the Americans helping or acting on behalf of the Yemeni. This was for example used as an explanation of the spike in drone attacks in 2012, which sought to prepare the way for the Yemeni military to take over areas in southern Yemen, which AQAP had occupied following the disintegration of the Yemeni army in 2011 (Terrill 2013, 17).

Although there are Yemeni who argue that under very specific circumstances drone strikes might be warranted, the current use of drones is underlining the weakness of the Yemeni military more than supporting it (Swift 2015, 81).⁴¹¹ Specifically, the killing of civilians, which the Yemeni believe to make up a much larger percentage of those killed because the very expansive definition of an al-Qaeda operative is rejected, sends a signal that the Yemeni government is prioritizing relations with the US higher than the well-being of its own people (Loidolt 2011, 112).⁴¹² In this sense, the drone campaign might end up weakening Hadi rather than strengthening him, and thus become an example of a degenerative relationship, where the external actor undermines the internal actor.⁴¹³ Hadi cannot prevent the Americans from carrying out drone strikes in Yemen. This is not only because he depends on American support (external legitimacy), but also because the characterization of Yemen as a fragile state and safe haven for terrorists is generally accepted, thus providing normative support to the drone program. It is an example of how the fragile state term makes states amenable to intervention in

is unknown. All but one drone attack have been carried out during Obama's presidency with 2012 as a particularly active year.

⁴¹¹ Conversations, Sana'a 2014.

⁴¹² See for example this report from Abubakr al-Shamahi, a British-Yemeni journalist, who has reported frequently on Yemen: https://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/yemens-bedouin-tribes-are-getting-sick-of-us-drone-strikes (Last accessed on 6 May 2016) or <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/death-from-above-how-american-drone-strikes-are-devastating-yemen-20140414> (Last accessed 6 May 2016). See also Hellmich 2012, 622.

⁴¹³ For example following an attack on a wedding convoy in December 2013, there was widespread outrage and the Yemeni parliament voted in favor of a decree banning drone attacks in Yemen. This was a symbolic gesture as the parliament holds no real power, but it illustrates the widespread anger with the way the drone program is being conducted in Yemen. The Americans did not apologize or officially recognize their role in the attack, but there were rumors that the families did receive some compensation from the Yemeni government. See for example:

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/yemen0214_ForUpload_o.pdf (Last accessed on 5 April).

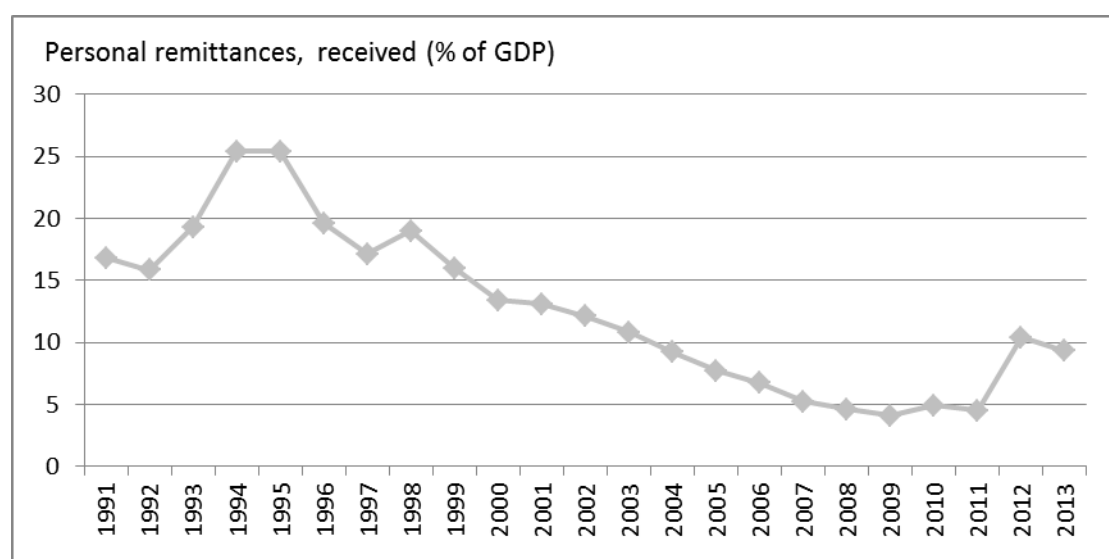
a form and degree largely decided by those who intervene and not the state being intervened in.

8.2.1.2. Economic capacity

The uprising in 2011 had detrimental effects on the already vulnerable Yemeni economy. Yemen's GDP per capita fell from \$878 in 2010 to \$728 in 2011 and was only slowly increasing when the Saudi-led intervention led to further decline in 2015.⁴¹⁴ This can in part be explained by declining oil exports, which still made up 63% of government revenues and 89% of export revenues in the period between 2010 and 2012 (Brehony, Al-Sarhan, and Lackner 2015, 16).

Remittances to Yemen played a key role in the 1970s and 1980s and although the importance of remittances declined especially in the 2000s, they reached around 10% of the GDP in 2012 and 2013. Figure 8.2. shows the development in remittances. In all likelihood the real numbers are higher than what is reported by the World Bank.

Figure 8.2. Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)



Source: World Bank.

Likewise, continued corruption to be a major concern in Yemen to the degree that it was referred to as a “culture” in Yemen.⁴¹⁵ Yemen is ranked 154 of 167 in 2015 by Transparency International.⁴¹⁶ There had been attempts at reforming the Yemeni taxation system prior to 2011, and Hadi urged all tax

⁴¹⁴ GDP per capita is obtained by dividing the country's gross domestic product, adjusted by inflation, by the total population. Data from the World Bank.

⁴¹⁵ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (17).

⁴¹⁶ See <http://www.transparency.org/country/#YEM> (Last accessed 14 April 2016).

collecting units to double their efforts, but there was no indication that this had a positive impact (Schmitz 2015, 82).. Reforms have in part been made difficult by the widespread corruption, which means that most Yemeni do not trust that taxes will actually go to improving the state. It was described as a general problem that it was impossible for ordinary Yemeni to see where “their” money went, which made them less likely to pay fees and taxes.⁴¹⁷

The need for aid to Yemen was recognized by key external actors who established the Friends of Yemen to facilitated donor coordination. It is a collection of more than 20 of Yemen’s main donors, including the US and the Gulf states that operates on the level of high diplomacy and is as such not an aid-delivery mechanism (Hill et al. 2013, 37-38). It was, however, very successful in securing substantial donor pledges through two high level conferences in September 2012 and March 2013. In total approximately 8.1 billion US\$ was pledged in return for Yemen’s acceptance of the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF), which outlines a series of reforms the Yemeni government was to undertake. The MAF builds on a larger document, the Transitional Program for Stabilization and Development 2012-2014 (TPSD).⁴¹⁸ However, disbursement was (too) slow making the level of aid actually disbursed to Yemen following the uprising insufficient.⁴¹⁹ Hence, in early 2014 Yemen was described as “a large scale humanitarian crisis” with more than half of the population (15 million) in need of assistance and 10.5 million food-insecure.⁴²⁰

8.2.1.3. Internal legitimacy of key elite actors

The current period is characterized by struggles between multiple internal actors of which none hold universal legitimacy in Yemen.

External actors continue to back Hadi but his legitimacy is disputed. He was made president as part of the GCC deal, chosen as a consensus candidate between Salih’s party, the GPC to which Hadi also belongs, and the JMP

⁴¹⁷ Interview, Sana’a 2013 (4).

⁴¹⁸ In addition to the problem of absorption, it has been a problem that some states make grand promises but never actually make the funds available. According to the EB homepage, for example, Kuwait pledged 500 million dollars but disbursed only 2% of that. Generally, the GCC countries pledge larger amount than Western countries but are more unwilling to disburse the funds (<http://www.ebyemen.org/en/content/donors-pledges>, last accessed 29 March 2016).

⁴¹⁹ Moreover, counter-terrorism objectives have made – and continue to make – up a large part of the funds donated to Yemen and generally define donor strategies (Hill et al. 2013, 36).

⁴²⁰ Data from UNOCHA. See <http://www.unocha.org/cap/appeals/humanitarian-response-plan-yemen-2014-2015> (Last accessed 3 May 2016).

(Islāh), the opposition. In February 2012 he was confirmed through popular vote, but the election featured only one candidate and one possible vote; yes. Still, the fact that voter turnout was high (55.2%) showed that the population was willing to give Hadi a chance (IFES 2012, 4). Hence, Hadi held internal legitimacy in the early phases of the transition as an alternative to Salīh. However, Hadi's transitional period formally ran out in February 2014, but was prolonged for one year with the support of the UN and the GCC states. In late 2014, the GPC party began to openly criticize president Hadi, calling for his removal from GPC's leadership. Islāh, on their part, blamed Hadi for not deploying the military against the Houthis, but instead "letting" the Houthis overrun Islāh's two main military components; the troops commanded by Ali Mohsin and the tribal militias controlled by the al-Ahmars (Alley 2014; Schmitz 2014b). Many ordinary Yemeni, who have seen their living conditions deteriorate since 2011, have lost faith in Hadi's ability to induce the needed change. Hence, he increasingly lacks internal legitimacy but still holds external legitimacy.

The transitional deal gave Salīh immunity and allowed him to stay in Yemen as head of the GPC. Thus, Salīh controls the General People's Congress (GPC), the largest party in Yemen, which he founded, the best trained and equipped parts of the military thanks to American counter-terror support, and he is the richest man in Yemen.⁴²¹ The uprising was facilitated by his lack of internal legitimacy, but the chaos and deteriorating living conditions that have characterized the period following his disposal have led to some nostalgia for his return.⁴²²

Islāh was the internal actor that benefited most from the GCC deal. The GCC deal increased the influence of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), the official opposition in Yemen, which Islāh dominates, and Hadi was dependent on key figures such as Ali Mohsin and the al-Ahmars (Yadav and Carapico 2014). However, the rise of the Houthis weakened Islāh, as the Houthis particularly targeted the al-Ahmars and Ali Mohsin. The al-Ahmars did not command the same respect in the Hashid tribal confederation as their father did, and thus segments of the Hashid tribes chose to support the Houthis or

⁴²¹ In a UN report, prepared by the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2140 (2014), Salīh was estimated to have amassed assets between \$32 billion and \$60 billion. Most considered this a high estimate but no one doubts that his years as president have made him a rich man: See http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_125.pdf (Last accessed 13 April 2016).

⁴²² In late 2014, images of Salīh had become more common in the Old City again and during informal conversations nostalgia for his return was occasionally expressed (Sana'a, 2014).

to remain neutral (International Crisis Group 2014b, 8). Moreover, the relationship between especially the al-Ahmars, and Islāh in general, and Saudi Arabia has cooled since 2007, which also weakened the al-Ahmars vis-à-vis the Houthis and Salih (Hill and Nonneman 2011, 10). The Houthis also specifically targeted Ali Mohsin's military forces and he was forced to flee to Saudi Arabia. However, he still remains politically active as he was appointed vice-president in a surprise government re-shuffle in early April 2016. This was controversial as he for many Yemeni represents the Salih-regime almost as much as Salih himself, but it might be an attempt by Hadi to cater to the tribes in northern Yemen and parts of the army that remain loyal to Ali Mohsin.

Al-Qaeda has benefitted from the on-going chaos in Yemen, but has never been particularly successful in swaying the Yemeni by coercion (Swift 2015, 75-76). However, al-Qaeda offers steady salaries to young men, has paid compensation to families of victims of drone attacks and helped in the face of natural disasters. Many of the areas where AQAP is particularly strong are characterized by a total absence of government structures and strong non-state organizations (Johnsen 2013; Swift 2012; Swift 2015).⁴²³ Thus, it has been a deliberate strategy of local AQAP leaders to try to win hearts and minds by providing basic services (Green 2014, 533).⁴²⁴ Consequently, al-Qaeda has some material legitimacy. Moreover, AQAP is trying to build different kinds of descriptive legitimacy, especially focusing on religious legitimacy, but also to tap into Yemeni perceptions of honor and respect. Hence, AQAP has attempted to frame its attacks as directed at the Yemeni regime, which is presented as corrupt, apostate and in the pocket of the Americans (Loidolt 2011). This means especially targeting military and other security positions, and avoiding purely civilian places such as mosques and markets.⁴²⁵ This led AQAP expert Gregory Johnson to argue that "al-

⁴²³ The relationship between AQAP and the tribes is ambiguous; AQAP has tried to exploit tribal grievances and mistrust of the central state while integrating itself in the tribal structure, starting with weaker tribes. This way al-Qaeda has attempted to present itself as an alternative to the state. However, the tribes in Yemen are renowned for their desire for political autonomy, which means that they will engage in relations deemed beneficial (Al-dawsari 2012, 4; Dresch 1989).

⁴²⁴ AQAP in Yemen has also made a subgroup that uses the name "Ansar al-Sharia" (Supporters of Islamic Law) to introduce themselves. This is meant to highlight their religious credentials and separate them from AQAP's "baggage of death" (Johnsen 2013, 272).

⁴²⁵ This could be conceived as an element taken over from the Yemeni tribal code, which generally prohibits attacks on places that serve public interests such as markets, schools and hospitals (al-Dawsari 2012, 7). The attack on the Yemeni Defense Ministry on December 5, 2013 illustrates that this is not always upheld but that it is not entirely inconsequential for AQAP to uphold the perception. The Defense Ministry shared its compound with a

Qaeda is the most representative organization in Yemen. It transcends class, tribe, and regional identity in a way that no other organization or political party does” (Gregory Johnson quoted in Harris 2010, 33). This is not a statement all in Yemen would agree with, nor approve of, but it does make one important point; that AQAP has successfully crossed, at least in part, some of the cleavages that otherwise define Yemeni society, most notably the one between North and South Yemen.

The Houthis were turned into a battle-trained movement with deep-seated mistrust towards the political elites in Sana’a and some sympathy from larger subsets of the Yemeni population who opposed the harsh military tactics used against them (Alley 2013b, 76).⁴²⁶ The Houthis participated in the NDC but were simultaneously engaged in fighting against tribes loyal to the al-Ahmars and military units loyal to Ali Mohsin. In September 2014 the Houthis overtook Sana’a. The framing of the Houthis as “Shia” fighting against “Sunni” adversaries is highly simplified. First of all, Zaydism is quite distinct from Twelver Shi’ism practices in Iran and closer to the Shāfi’ī strand of Sunni Islam practiced in Yemen. Therefore, sectarian conflict has historically been limited in Yemen. Moreover, key enemies of the Houthis, the al-Ahmars are themselves ancestral Zaydis, although now considered to belong in the “Sunni camp” due to their close alignment with the Islāh party. But most importantly the goals of the Houthi movement were political and social, not sectarian, which was particularly evident in the early phase of the take-over where the Houthi leader, “Abdul Malik al-Houthi, was successful in presenting the Houthis as an alternative to the existing elites, especially the al-Ahmars, Ali Mohsin and to some degree Hadi (See for example Yadav and Carapico 2014). Thus, in the fall of 2014 the Houthis did have substantial support in Sana’a.

hospital, and after the attack graphic surveillance videos aired on Yemeni television showed how terrorists moved in and killed personnel and patients. The video showed an absolute disregard for human life, and people in Sana’a were outraged by AQAP’s behavior. This made AQAP take the unprecedented step of issuing a public apology, blaming the actions on rogue terrorists: “We do not fight in this way, and this is not what we call on people to do, and this is not our approach”. AQAP also offered to pay compensation to the families of victims and for medical treatment for civilians wounded in the attack on the hospital. See for example: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/12/22/al-qaeda-apologizesforyemenihospitalattack.html> (Last accessed on 5 April 2016). Recent attacks on this type of targets have mostly been attributed to Islamic State, a new and still largely undocumented actor in Yemen.

⁴²⁶ The sectarian narrative, i.e., the Houthis being Shia whereas the majority (70%) of Yemen’s population is Sunni, has traditionally not been a key aspect of this conflict. Traditionally, Zaydism is considered as close to Sunni sects as to other Shia sects (Phillips 2008b, 41). However, the sectarian aspect has gained saliency in the last couple of years.

8.2.2. Hadi's external relations, 2012 and onwards

If Saudi Arabia can be regarded as having one single underlying objective in Yemen spanning its recent history, it is to maintain itself as the strongest external actor, thereby ensuring that a Yemeni state did not arise which could challenge Riyadh's preeminent position in the country's affairs" (Burke 2012, 55).

Hadi has depended on external actors from the beginning of his ascendance to presidency. The regional organization, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), was a central player in the formulation of the transition deal and thus on the face of it opted to support political change in Yemen. However, as the transitional deal institutionalized the power of known elite actors, it is more accurately read as support to stabilization of the situation in Yemen. Yemen has always had a precarious relationship to the GCC. Yemen has long expressed interest in becoming a member, but despite occasional symbolic support to Yemen membership, Yemen has not been invited to join the organization (Burke 2012, 67).⁴²⁷ Yemen is on the one hand an obvious member given its geographical location, but it does not fit the criteria of the GCC, which above all is a grouping of like-minded, fairly small monarchies sustained by oil rents (Legrenzi 2008, 108; Twinam 1991, 107).⁴²⁸ Furthermore, Kuwait has not forgotten the lack of Yemeni support when the country was invaded by Iraq in 1990 (Burke 2012, 58).⁴²⁹

Although especially Qatar has marked itself as having an independent foreign policy, the key player in the GCC in regard to Yemen is Saudi Arabia (Lawson 2008, 23).⁴³⁰ Saudi Arabia is by far the single largest donor to Yemen and has made regular cash transfers to keep Yemen afloat, specifically to avoid an economic meltdown, which could lead to an influx of Yemeni migrants. Yemen is much poorer than Saudi Arabia and boasts a population of

⁴²⁷ Oman supposedly supports Yemen's accession to the GCC. Saudi Arabia has on occasion voiced limited support (Burke 2012).

⁴²⁸ This is underlined by the fact that Morocco and Jordan were invited to join the GCC in 2011, hence emphasizing shared political system and not geography (Colombo 2013, 172).

⁴²⁹ The GCC has facilitated formal and especially informal economic relations and increased cooperation. Moreover, although externally the GCC has not substantially enhanced their military security, it is within internal security that the strongest regional cooperation has developed (Gause 1994, 68; Tripp 1995, 293; Twinam 1991).

⁴³⁰ Multiple interviews, Sana'a 2013 and 2014.

26 million, primarily young and poorly educated (Gause 1990, 2).⁴³¹ This at a time where there is a growing concern for the economic sustainability in Saudi Arabia. In April 2013 at a pivotal moment in the Yemeni state's transition Saudi Arabia hundreds of thousands of Yemeni, a decision which seriously hurt the Yemeni economy that Saudi Arabia was supposedly trying to build (Salisbury 2015c, 3). In one interview, this was described as detrimental as the Yemeni economy was already falling apart, to the point where people around President Hadi had urged him to visit King 'Abdallah, to ask, even beg, if necessary, him to stop dispelling Yemenis.⁴³² This indicates that the Saudi policies towards Yemen aim at securing Saudi Arabia continued control, and are less focused on building a strong Yemen.

The key extra-regional actors, the Americans and the UN supported the GCC's draft transitional plan. The US hoped that it would stabilize the situation and allow the US to continue its counter-terrorism program (Rugh 2015, 146). The UN adopted resolution 2014 on 21 October 2011, which expresses support to the GCC's efforts to resolve the political crisis in Yemen, condemns the use of force against protestors and increases pressure on Salih to sign the GCC deal. It also accentuates that the UN Security Councils is concerned with the deteriorating security in Yemen and the potential destabilizing effect this could have outside Yemen, specifically pointing to al-Qaeda. It is underlined that the UN Security Council has a responsibility to maintain international peace which was read as a threat to Salih.

Yet, although this presents as a uniform display of rare external agreement, the external legitimacy of Hadi derived more from what he was not, i.e. Salih, than from what he was seen to stand for.⁴³³ Hadi was primarily chosen as an alternative to Salih. Simultaneously, he lacked internal legitimacy in a situation of economic crisis and fragmentation of the military. This made it difficult for him to embed external interventions in the Yemeni context. The next sections demonstrate how this is problematic for external actors.

Figure 8.3 sums up the relations between main internal and external actors during this period. The figure shows how Hadi was caught between ex-

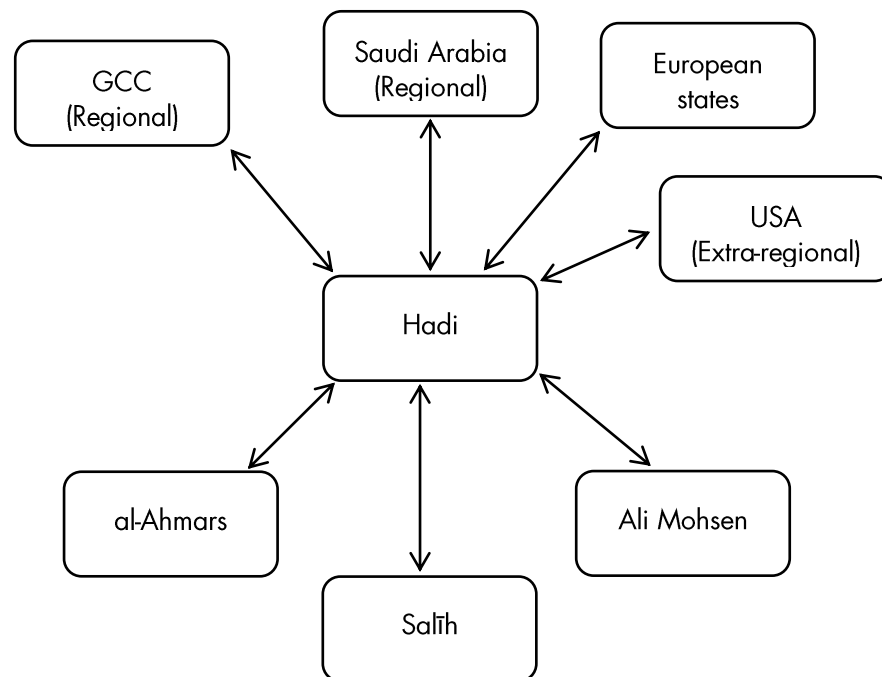
⁴³¹ Hence, it can be argued that although Yemen is the militarily and economically weaker part with fewer international friends, it constitutes the most potent threat to Saudi hegemony on the Arabian Peninsula (Gause 1990, 2).

⁴³² Interview, Sana'a 2013 (2).

⁴³³ It was repeatedly argued in Yemen that the relative position of Yemen as a country in the periphery was actually a positive thing in this situation as it facilitated the relatively unified front that was presented by all main international actors including GCC and the UN Security Council. There were no strong ties to any of the parties in Yemen, so the general preference was for stability and preventing the state from collapsing.

ternal actors that were his main source of resources, and internal elite actors who he depended on internally. This figure is a sterilized representation of complex relations to show that Hadi's position can be seen as more as a buffer or moderator between internal and external actors than as the center of a network consisting of both external and internal actors. This gave him less maneuverability compared to when Salih was attempting to gain power as illustrated in figure 7.1.

Figure 8.3. Hadi's dilemma: between external and internal actors



8.2.3. Absorbing aid in the absence of a state: the case of the Executive Bureau

In this section, I argue that following the transition external actors realized that Hadi was in a precarious situation as he lacked internal resources and legitimacy. Regional and extra-regional actors therefore pledged substantial amounts to avoid a collapse of the Yemeni state and facilitate the transition. However, whereas “state-building” was the stated goal, external actors simultaneously perceived the Yemeni state as lacking the capacity to control or coordinate the many different actors who each preferred their own technology, management systems and accounting methods.⁴³⁴ Donors therefore preferred building a parallel structure, the Executive Bureau, to facilitate aid ab-

⁴³⁴ The Executive Bureau documents that 30 different donors supported 244 different projects in 2014/2015 (Executive Bureau, report for January 2014-January 2015). Regional actors tend to prioritize infrastructure projects whereas extra-regional Western donors tend to favor capacity building of institutions, good governance and state-building projects.

sorption whereas Hadi pushed for disbursement through government structures to allow him to increase their capacity and/or loyalty towards him. These disagreements delayed the establishment of the Executive Bureau and consequently the disbursement of donor funds which seriously hurt Hadi's internal legitimacy.

The problem of donor coordination is recognized by both Yemeni and donors. Yemeni tended to stress the need for Yemeni coordination, such as in the following quote:

The only way you can coordinate donor interventions is if the recipient country has the institutional capacity to organize this coordination. So, the coordination should happen from the Ministry of Planning, not from the donors. Donors would never have the time to be able to have a coherent strategy towards Yemen. Often they are going at cross-purposes, often they are duplicating projects.⁴³⁵

The quote demonstrates how coordination is seen as a problem, but also a problem that requires a Yemeni solution; the donors are not perceived as being able to do this job satisfactorily. The need for improved coordination was also recognized by the donors but it was generally described as having improved considerably, among other things with the introduction of the "Friends of Yemen" group.⁴³⁶ Although Yemeni recognized there had been an improvement, it was not seen as sufficient.⁴³⁷

In 2012 donors and the Yemeni government agreed on a "Mutual Accountability Framework" (MAF) that outlines key actions to be carried out by the Yemeni government.⁴³⁸ The MAF builds on the GCC deal and a larger document, the Transitional Program for Stabilization and Development 2012-2014 (TPSD) and aims to contribute "towards the overarching goals set out by the Government of Yemen to restore political, security and economic stability and enhance state-building" (MAF 2012; TPSD 2011). On the one hand, these documents show that there is general awareness of the challenges facing Yemen, but on the other hand, they are so extensive that they provide little guidance in terms of prioritizing.⁴³⁹ The MAF was clearly ambi-

⁴³⁵ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (3).

⁴³⁶ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (12).

⁴³⁷ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (3).

⁴³⁸ The MAF can be found here: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/files/arabvoices/maf.pdf> (Last accessed 5 May, 2016).

⁴³⁹ A summary matrix was made of the TPSD, pointing to 10 focus areas, the key policy actions within each of these fields, level of financing and key implementing agencies. These were transfer of power, security and stability, humanitarian and material needs, macroeconomic stability, economic growth, improve infrastructure, social protection, human resources (youth and women), business climate and good governance and state-building. See

tious at a time when the Yemeni state structures were at their weakest, and it is therefore not surprising that officials in Sana'a described the document as "a 'wish-list' of donor demands that was too big and unwieldy to be implemented during the transitional period" (Hill et al. 2013, 38). This is especially telling as the MAF is an attempt to boil down "the many actions of the (TPSD) Resources Matrix".⁴⁴⁰

Donor coordination and aid absorption have been ongoing problems in Yemen and it was clear that something had to be done. Donors, led by the World Bank, therefore decided to create the Executive Bureau for the Acceleration of Aid Absorption & Support for Policy Reform, referred to as the Executive Bureau to secure the absorption of pledges and support the implementation of Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF). Although the Executive Bureau was meant to support absorption in the transitional period it was not launched until December 9, 2013 on the basis of Republican Decree No. 22 of 2013. The Executive Bureau itself was managed by the World Bank on a financing arrangement, which expired in June 2015.⁴⁴¹

The Executive Bureau reports that only 35% of the pledged funds had been disbursed by January 2014, with donors commonly citing lack of transparency and government capacity as main reasons.

Table 8.1. Overview of donor pledges, June 2013-November 2014 (percent)

Dates	Pledged	Allocated	Approved	Disbursed
June, 2013	100	86.1	44.9	25.0
September, 2013	100	87.4	51.3	28.0
January, 2014	100	91.0	59.8	34.8
March, 2014	100	93.2	61.2	35.8
May, 2014	100	93.9	66.0	36.6
August, 2014	100	95.2	69.6	38.1
November, 2014	100	95.7	70.0	38.7

Source: Executive Bureau, Annual report 2014 (20 December 2014).

Transitional Program Priorities and Resources Summary Matrix, 2012-2014. It should also be noted that despite the donor pledges, the TPSD was heavily underfunded according to the Yemeni Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. See also this article in Yemen Times: "Where Yemen is at: Donor Pledges vs. government action", 25 March 2014: <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1766/business/3643/Where-Yemen-is-at-Donor-pledges-vs-government-action.htm> (Last accessed 5 May 2016).

⁴⁴⁰ Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF), section Two.

⁴⁴¹ World Bank project documents related to the Executive Bureau can be read here: <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P145338/?lang=en&tab=documents&subTab=projec>

This, however, seems a little paradoxical as the donors are citing the very reasons for pledging aid in the first place, i.e. the economic and political crisis, as a reason for not disbursing funds. In this context, it is especially noteworthy that the first commitment of donors in the MAF is to “Commit to allocate financial pledges in accordance with priorities of TPDS and the PIP⁴⁴² by the end of 2012 at the latest, reflecting the urgency of the transition” (MAF 2012).

Hence, in September 2012 donors pointed to the need to allocate funds quickly due to the urgency of the situation in Yemen, but actual disbursements were limited. The donors opted for a parallel structure, the Executive Bureau, but it was not functional until early 2014. This was in part due to disagreements between the donors and the Yemeni government over the mandate of the Executive Bureau. The Executive Bureau is formally part of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) and is placed in the same compound but in a separate building.⁴⁴³ While the Executive Bureau displayed a high degree of ambition and a desire to reflect a professional organization, it was not given a full mandate to oversee projects from start to finish as originally intended. Instead, the Executive Bureau was to work with line ministries, which were given the responsibility of implementation. Hence, the Executive Bureau had a somewhat ambiguous mandate, which was described as the result of a compromise between extra-regional donors that wanted to give the Executive Bureau a strong mandate and resistance from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation as well as other ministries.⁴⁴⁴

The Executive Bureau was built to communicate with and make donors feel comfortable. An example is the English webpage, which is professional and with a high level of transparency, especially compared to other Yemeni organizations’ webpages. The Executive Bureau also published different information materials and had a presence on media like Twitter.⁴⁴⁵ The staff was highly skilled and ambitious Yemeni, including the managing director,

tDocuments (Last accessed 12 February 2016). The Executive Bureau was funded by the UK, USAID and DANIDA.

⁴⁴² PIP stands for Public Investment Plan.

⁴⁴³ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation is responsible for donor coordination and cooperation between Yemen and international donors.

⁴⁴⁴ In addition to the problem of absorption, it has been a problem that some states make grand promises but never actually make the funds available. According to the EB homepage, for example, Kuwait pledged 500 million dollars but disbursed only 2% of that. Generally, the GCC countries pledge larger amount than Western countries but are more unwilling to disburse the funds (<http://www.ebyemen.org/en/content/donors-pledges>, last accessed 29 March 2016).

⁴⁴⁵ <http://www.ebyemen.org/en> (Last accessed 29 March 2016).

Amat Alim al-Soswa, who was Yemen's first female minister (Minister of Human Rights) and later Assistant Secretary-General with the UNDP, who could speak 'the language of donors'. As argued in new institutionalism, the ceremonial aspects of organizations can be highly important as they can legitimate organizations with relevant stakeholders, and in the case of the Executive Bureau this seems to be primarily external actors (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 351).

Internally, the position of the Executive Bureau was more complicated, as it could be argued to have ended up with a weak mandate while simultaneously being criticized for being a parallel structure that undermined government capacities. The Executive Bureau was given a mandate to support the different ministries, either by providing technical assistance, capacity building or advocacy from within the government, in addition to a projects unit focusing on removing bottlenecks for implementation of donor-supported projects and an evaluation and monitoring unit focusing on documenting the flow of funds.⁴⁴⁶ The mandate did not provide mechanisms for the Executive Bureau to push the line ministries. Instead, the Executive Bureau described itself as a response to a lack "of capacity from within the government to implement the projects so that they can absorb the funds".⁴⁴⁷ In addition to lack of capacity, however, the Yemeni bureaucracy can display substantial inertia and quiet resistance towards change or shifts in responsibilities. Resort areas are often guarded, which makes cooperation across ministries challenging and not particularly amendable through external support mechanisms.⁴⁴⁸

This created frustrations within the Executive Bureau, which were openly voiced on the webpage in a blog written by the managing director, Mrs. Amat Alim al-Soswa. For example: "In short, the Yemeni government and its international development partners have put a considerable amount of effort into drafting action plans, frameworks, strategies, project documents and legislation, but very little has translated into results" (EB homepage, blogs).⁴⁴⁹ Donors were attracted to the idea of an "elite unit" that could side-step some of the usual constraints related to corruption and lack of capacity. However, although its relatively weak mandate made the Executive Bureau more acceptable to the Yemeni bureaucracy, it also hampered the Bureau's

⁴⁴⁶ Interviews, Sana'a 2014 (15). An organizational chart over the Executive Bureau is also available on the homepage: <http://www.ebyemen.org/en/about/organizational-structure-eb> (Last accessed 29 March 2016).

⁴⁴⁷ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (15).

⁴⁴⁸ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (4).

⁴⁴⁹ <http://www.ebyemen.org/en/about/blogs> (Last accessed 29 March 2016).

ability to have a real impact. This was described in an interview with an employee of the Executive Bureau:

For example, our division here, although it is on the surface seen as a parallel structure, but in reality we do not implement anything. We only support, document, monitor, do these things, but we do not implement any projects. And as a consequence of that we have got billions of dollars of donor aid which is literally just sitting there for years, some of it since 2006, some of it since 2011, and we are just looking at it and saying “Well, we’re not going to create a parallel structure to get that money to the people, we are going to wait for this government to be a better government”⁴⁵⁰

The dilemma was seen as quite clear: either continue to rely on the government structures and nothing will get done or create a parallel structure and a real change can be made in the lives of people. However, in another interview, the Executive Bureau was criticized for being a parallel structure, which was more about showing donor efficiency than actually making a long-term difference in people’s lives:

So, how do you get a lethargic government to function? Simple, don’t get the government to function. Create a parallel structure to yield the results that you want to report to the head office.⁴⁵¹

This speaks to a difference in perspective; the first quote focuses on the lack of capacity of the government to which a parallel structure is seen as a solution, whereas the second quote focuses on parallel structures as a way donors can produce quick results that do not really change anything on the ground. In this case, the discussion became obsolete as events on the ground, the power grab by the Houthis in September 2014 followed by the Saudi intervention in March 2015, meant that the Executive Bureau ceased to function about a year after becoming functional (Lackner 2016, 63).

In sum, donors faced a dilemma in Yemen: the Yemeni government and President Hadi depended on their willingness to disburse funds to the Yemeni state, but the donors were not prepared to trust these structures with donors funds. Instead, the donors opted for the creation of the Executive Bureau, intended as an ‘elite unit’. However, the Executive Bureau was resisted by internal actors who saw it as undermining their authority. Although donors themselves accentuated the need for urgent allocations of funds to the Yemeni state, disbursement of funds progressed slowly at the most critical time in the transition, indirectly adding to the increasing frustration that or-

⁴⁵⁰ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (15).

⁴⁵¹ Interview, Sana’a, 2014 (13).

dinary Yemeni were experiencing as living conditions were declining while political negotiations dragged on. This frustration helped pave the way for the Houthi takeover of the state. During the period where the Executive Bureau was operational, that is from early 2014 to early 2015, disbursement levels rose. Hence, parallel structures might be an expedient way to secure short-term results. It is more unclear how parallel structures can be constructed in a way where they do not, at least indirectly through brain drain and increased competition, undermine state structures.

8.2.4. The future of the Yemeni state: the case of the National Dialogue and federalism

In this section, I argue that regional and extra-regional actors attempted to engineer a transition that would see Yemen ruled by a president dependent on external legitimacy. Initially, the process seemed relatively successful as the fragmentation of power for a period led to a sort of stalemate between different internal elite actors. However, president Hadi, who was selected to take the role as president, was seeking to use his external backing to gain internal power vis-à-vis internal elite actors, initially Salīh and Islāh (Ali Mohsin and the al-Ahmars). These actors were simultaneously trying to increase their relative resources to gain control with the state. These internal elite struggles remained contained until key decisions were made on the future structure of the state.

The GCC deal was an elite pact that sought to secure a level of stability by primarily catering to the internal elite actors that had undergirded Salīh's regime. The deal consists of two fairly short documents as outlined in table 8.2, where I have also included Resolution 2014, UN's formulation of support to the GCC's role in Yemen's transition.⁴⁵² In reality the relationship between the UN and the GCC was described as more "difficult" than what the official documents reveal.⁴⁵³ Officially, however, the UN supported the involvement of the GCC and definitely shared the concern for the collapse of Yemen. The GCC deal was seen as a stabilization tool, and the level of international pressure did seem to have some disciplining power, possibly because Yemen is dependent on foreign aid (Transfeld 2014).⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² See Resolution 2014 (2011), available from un.org.

⁴⁵³ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (2).

⁴⁵⁴ Salīh might have been influenced by the threat of personal sanctions – which were implemented in 2014, preventing him from travel and freezing his assets (Salisbury 2015b, 10).

Table 8.2. Key texts in relation to Yemen's transitional framework

No.	Title	Author	Genre	Length	Year
1.	The Gulf Cooperation Initiative (signed 23 November, 2011)	Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)	Policy document	2 pp.	2011
2.	The Implementation Mechanism (in accordance with the GCC Initiative)	-	Policy document	9 pp.	2011
3.	Resolution 2014 (2011) (Adopted 21 October, 2011)	UN Security Council	Resolution	3 pp.	2011

Ali ‘Abdullah Salih formally relinquished power to his long-time vice-president, ‘Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, on 23 November 2011, after a prolonged process of negotiations.⁴⁵⁵ Both the GCC deal and the Implementation Mechanism refer only to two parties, Yemen's ruling party, the GPC and the opposition, meaning JMP, headed by Islāh.⁴⁵⁶ The GCC deal focuses on the transference of the presidency from Salih to Hadi in return for which Salih and his close associates are given immunity from prosecution. This included the formation of a national government where ministerial portfolios were evenly split between the GPC and JMP. Salih was also allowed to continue as head of the GPC, hence he remained leader of the party to which Hadi belongs.⁴⁵⁷ The second document saw a stronger involvement of the UN in its formulation. In fact, the fusion of the two documents was described as a clever move by Jamal Benomar as it established the UN's role in the transition.⁴⁵⁸ This role was not self-evident as in the words of one centrally placed observer: “The UN was not going to come here for one day if it was not for King ‘Abdullah” (the Saudi King).⁴⁵⁹ The second document is more inclusive and outlines a more detailed transitional process, which includes the set-up

⁴⁵⁵ The GCC was presented in April 2011, but it took prolonged negotiations with Salih to push him to sign. Moreover, Salih was seriously injured in a bomb attack in early June and had to leave Yemen for medical treatment. It was hoped that he would not return, but he did in late September 2011.

⁴⁵⁶ The GCC deal and the Implementation Mechanism are two distinct documents; the UN was more involved in the formulation of the latter. They are, however, often referred to in unity for ease; a practice which I will continue.

⁴⁵⁷ Many youth activists were very unhappy with this as it did not constitute the fresh start they had hoped for. A report from Amnesty International refers to it as “a smack in the face for justice”, a widely shared sentiment (See Amnesty International, “Yemen urged to reject amnesty law for President Saleh and aides”, 9 January 2012.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2012/01/yemen-urged-reject-amnesty-law-president-saleh-and-aides/> (Last accessed 3 May 2016).

⁴⁵⁸ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (2).

⁴⁵⁹ Interview, Sana'a 2013 (2).

of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which is to be an inclusive process to feed into the formulation of a new constitution.

These three documents show that Hadi's transitional regime had substantial regional and extra-regional legitimacy as the best choice for an internally acceptable, yet externally amenable president. The GCC deal sidelined the youths, Hirak and the Houthis as power was divided between GPC and Islāh (JMP) (Alley 2013b, 75).⁴⁶⁰ It reflects that the primary concern of regional and extra-regional actors was to ensure Yemen's stability. The US, UN and the GCC countries greatest fear is a collapsed, anarchic Yemen where al-Qaeda has free reigns to develop (Colombo 2013, 171).

The National Dialogue Conference was a centerpiece in the transition and pivotal for the UN as it was to be an inclusive process that could lay the foundation for the future Yemeni state and thus signal a break from the centralization of power during Salīh's regime.⁴⁶¹ On July 2012, the so-called Technical Committee was established to prepare for the NDC.⁴⁶² Seats in the NDC were allocated to political parties, civil society organizations and selected constituencies, including women and youth.⁴⁶³ The majority of seats were allocated to the existing elites with 112 seats allocated to the GPC, Salīh's party, and 50 seats allocated to Islāh. Independent youths were given 40 seats, but not all were in reality independent as underlined in one interview:

⁴⁶⁰ Hence, despite the youth's central role in the onset of protests and their continued symbolic importance, they were largely excluded from the negotiations to settle Yemen's future (Alwazir 2016, 2). In part this was facilitated by the youths' lack of political experience, in combination with especially Islah's long-time involvement in politics, which left it feeling entitled to political influence and capable of overtaking the process through its stronger organization.

⁴⁶¹ The NDC was primarily funded by the UN through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. Later, the UN oversaw the formation of a multi-donor trust fund to channel international aid to the NDC.

⁴⁶² The technical committee was established through presidential decree: <https://presidenthadi-gov-ye.info/en/archives/presidential-decree-establishing-technical-committee-for-preparing-for-comprehensive-national-dialogue/> (Last accessed 5 May 2016).

⁴⁶³ The participants of the NDC were drawn from 11 "constituencies" under the general guidelines, which stated that 50% were to come from the South, 30% were to be female and 20% youth. Jamal Benomar was heavily involved in the actual distribution, which gave 263 seats to the political parties (Islah, YPC, GPC, Rashad (Salafi) and Justice and Construction Party), Hirak, had 85 seats and women, youth (independent) and civil society had each 40 seats. Hadi was given 62 seats (Murray 2013). See also: <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1629/news/1666/National-Dialogue-Conference%E2%80%99s-share-distribution-decided.htm> (Last accessed 26 March 2016). Criticism has been raised of the concrete distribution and how these categories reproduce singular categories, which had been challenged through the collective action in the squares during the uprising (Yadav 2013a).

We were representing different people, for example some of us were representing GPC although we are independent. Part of us was representing Islāh – in a way or another. It was not really very independent – the youth group.⁴⁶⁴

This points to the inherent difficulty in selecting representatives for constituencies that per definition did not have an organizational structure. In the end, the General-Secretary of the NDC, Ahmed Awadh bin Mubarak, who had participated in the youth protests, and Jamal Benomar became particularly involved in the selection of and subsequently in supporting the youth group.⁴⁶⁵ Moreover, most of Hirak boycotted the NDC including the faction headed by Ali Salem al-Bidh, the former leader of South Yemen, who agreed to unity in 1990 (Schmitz 2014a). It was important for the legitimacy of the NDC that it was seen as geographically representative, especially if it was to find a solution to the Southern Issue (another term for the continued calls for secession in the former South Yemen). The Technical Committee formulated a 20-point plan of trust-building measures, aimed to increase southerners' trust in the process and lay the foundation of the negotiations in the NDC.⁴⁶⁶ However, almost none of the 20-points were implemented, demonstrating the lack of political will to really address difficult issues.⁴⁶⁷ In the end, President Hadi largely handpicked those who represented the Hirak, led by Muhammed Ali Ahmed, a former governor of Hadi's home governorate. Still there were several boycotts and resignations, including by Ahmed Ali, who left the NDC and endorsed secession.

The NDC was inaugurated on 18 March 2013 with 565 representatives divided into nine working groups as explicated in table 8.3.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁴ Interview, Sana's, 2014 (28). There were also actual independent youths.

⁴⁶⁵ Interviews, Sana'a 2014 (15), (16), (19) and (28). Similar problems were reported in relation to the women's group.

⁴⁶⁶ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (22). The Technical Committee was expanded from 25 to 31 members, a move that was described as a unilateral decision by Hadi to cater to existing elites who wanted more influence in setting up the process by a member of the Technical Committee.

⁴⁶⁷ Several members of the Technical Committee withdrew because of the lack of action on the 20 points and Jamal Benomar's heavy involvement in the process (Interviews, Sana'a 2014 (22) and (16)). See also Murray 2013.

⁴⁶⁸ From the NDC homepage, excluding the rapporteur from each group.

Table 8.3. Overview of working groups in the National Dialogue

	Title								
	Southern issue	Sa'ada issue	Transitional justice	State-building	Good governance	Military/security	Special entities	Rights/freedoms	Development
No. of members	42	52	83	58	52	52	63	83	80

The decision-making process aimed at securing consensus; 75% of a working group had to be present and there had to be a 90% majority in favor for the outcome to pass.⁴⁶⁹ Subsequently, the working groups decisions would be submitted to the plenary for final improvement.⁴⁷⁰ This structure had the indirect consequence of turning outcomes into long wish lists whereas prioritizing was difficult.⁴⁷¹ Some working groups were more contentious than others, especially the Southern Issue group and the State-building group.⁴⁷² These were given extra attention to the extent where Jamal Benomar would become involved in facilitating discussions in the Southern Issue group.⁴⁷³

One of the most contentious issues was the future structure of the Yemeni state but it was notably absent from the agendas of both the Southern Issue and the State-building working group. In fact, the leadership of the Southern Issue working group was told to avoid getting in to the substance of the southern issue as the timing was not right.⁴⁷⁴ Then, a few days before the NDC was scheduled to finish, the question of federalism was deferred from the State-building group to the Southern Issue group. The Southern Issue group made a sub-working group, the so-called 8+8, as it consisted of eight

⁴⁶⁹ The rules are specified in the “Bylaws of the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference (Dialogue Rules)” and were confirmed in interviews.

⁴⁷⁰ The procedure was similar to that of the working groups. The plenary was convened three times: in an opening session, a mid-term session and a closing session.

⁴⁷¹ Moreover, although the working groups had the option to call in experts and were given some assistance in terms of facilitation, the mandate of each working group was unclear and there was limited communication and coordination between them. A so-called Consensus Committee, consisting of the heads of the working groups and additional representatives selected by the NDC presidium, was set up to secure coordination and to catch overlaps or contradictions but the process was described as problematic both for practical reasons due to the large number of outcomes and for political reasons as it was difficult to suggest changes to outcomes that working groups had already agreed on. Interview, Sana’a 2014 (16).

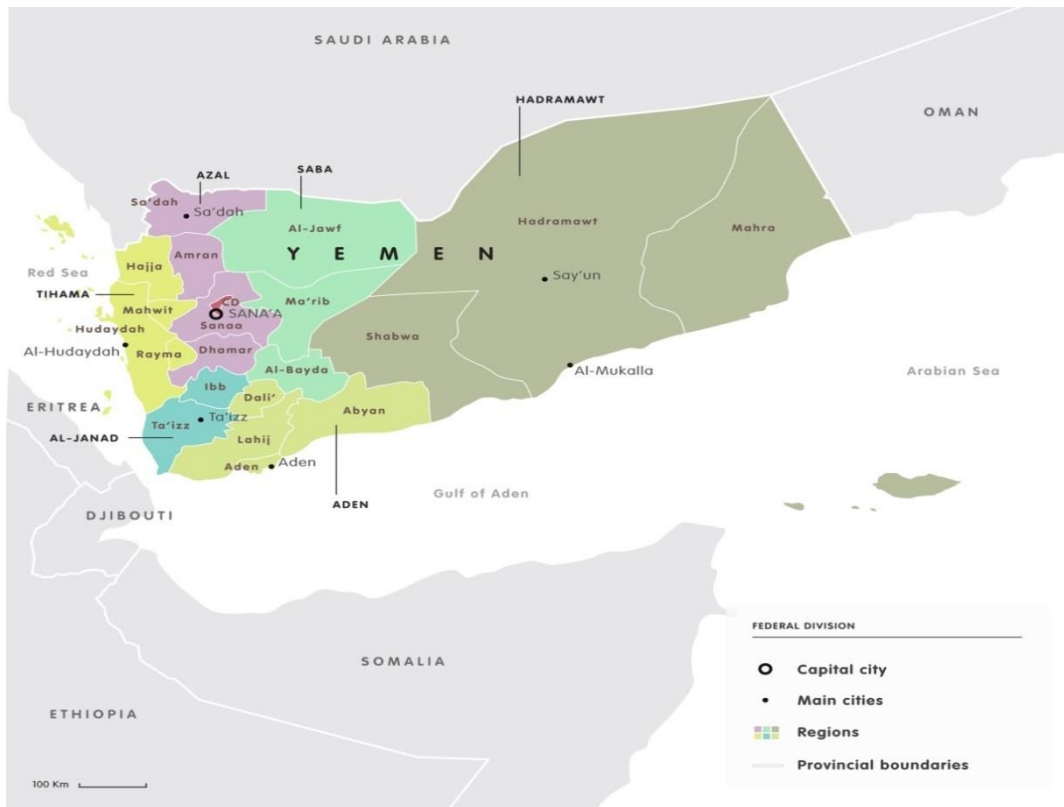
⁴⁷² The Sa’ada group was relatively uncontentious, which might be surprising considering the subsequent events (Multiple interviews, Sana’a 2013 and 2014).

⁴⁷³ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (16).

⁴⁷⁴ Interview, Sana’a 2013 (3).

members from the south and north respectively, to reach an agreement.⁴⁷⁵ The group decided that Yemen was to become a federal state, consisting of two or six regions. With this decision, the NDC was finally concluded on 25 January 2014 with a total of around 1800 outcomes but without a final decision on the number of future regions in Yemen and explicit opposition from the Houthis, who did not want to sign the final document.

Figure 8.4. Map of federal divisions



Source: European Council on Foreign Relations, Mapping the Yemen Conflict (<http://www.ecfr.eu/mena/yemen>).

After the NDC had closed, President Hadi established the so-called Regions Committee whose 22 members were tasked with making the decision on the number of regions in future Yemen.⁴⁷⁶ Two weeks later, the committee recommended that Yemen be divided into six regions, two regions in the former

⁴⁷⁵ The 8+8 was formally considered a sub-working group of the Southern Issue working group, but with the special provision that the remaining members of the Southern Issue group agreed to accept the decisions of the sub-working group. However, the group was broadly conceived to be working under a specific mandate from Hadi to recommend federalism.

⁴⁷⁶ The committee was formed by presidential decree. See <https://presidenthadi-gov-ye.info/en/archives/presidential-decree-forms-committee-to-determine-regions/> (Last accessed 5 May 2016).

South Yemen and four regions in what was North Yemen before unification in 1990 (Gaston 2014). The map shows the suggested regional divisions.

There are two main approaches to federalism in Yemen; the first approach sees federalism as a way to change the political and economic structure of Yemen, thus presenting a break with the “Salih era”. It envisions a large degree of self-determination to the regions as a way to prevent future centralization of power. The second approach sees federalism as decentralization but prefers to use the term “federalism” to signal a break from the previous experiences with decentralization that did not *actually* lead to decentralization (Al-Akhali 2014a). Hence, the second approach is more concerned with how federalism will work on the ground than the political implications it will have for elite actors in Sana’a. Here I focus on the first approach to federalism as the question of the federal regions was a key arena for internal elite struggles in the NDC as it touches directly on the distribution of power and resources (Transfeld 2014).⁴⁷⁷

Internal elite actors had very different views of federalism which moreover evolved as internal power relations developed. Figure 8.5 provides a crude overview of main actors’ preferences going into the discussion on federalism in Yemen and will be used as a reference point throughout this analysis.

External actors, most notably the UN saw federalism as a solution to the political and regional fragmentation in Yemen.⁴⁷⁸ Thus, for the “peacebuilding practitioners” from the UN federalism was a way to introduce power-sharing while taking heed of regional differences without jeopardizing national unity (Lewis 2014; Salisbury 2015b, 4-5). Especially Ethiopia was accentuated as a positive example, but experiences from South Sudan and Iraq were also utilized (Billon 2015; Day 2006).⁴⁷⁹ It was clear throughout the NDC that southern secession was not supported by the UN. Although Jamal Benomar recognized the marginalization of southerners as a major problem, which could not be ignored, UN reiterated a “strong commitment to the uni-

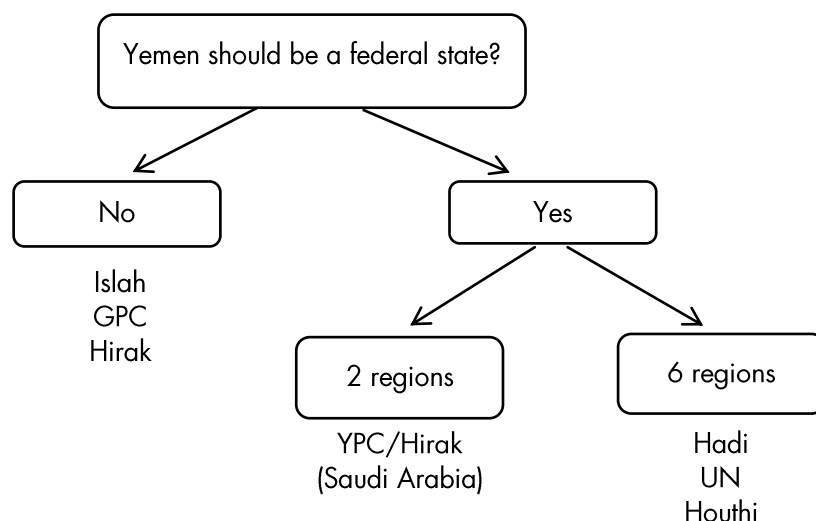
⁴⁷⁷ This is distinctly an elite discussion. The National Dialogue Secretariat’s homepage reports a survey in which only 44.3% of respondents have heard about federalism (<http://www.ndc.ye/ar-news.aspx?id=2784>, last accessed 25 March 2016). This was confirmed through interviews.

⁴⁷⁸ The discussions on federalism in Yemen were distinctively characterized by the lack of shared definition of federalism. Here I focus on the political debates surrounding the concept, and less on what it would actually entail.

⁴⁷⁹ The German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) invited the Constitution Drafting Committee to Germany to introduce the members to the German system. One of the advisors to the transitional process, Dr. jur. Naseef Naeem, is an expert on the Iraqi federal system. During an interview, the Sudanese case was also brought forth as an example for the Yemeni transition (Skype interview, 2014).

ty, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen” as stated in the beginning of all UNSC resolutions on Yemen.⁴⁸⁰

Figure 8.5. Approaches to federalism in the NDC



Whereas the UN and Jamal Benomar in particular was held in high esteem in the beginning of the process, internal actors gradually became more critical of Jamal Benomar’s involvement to the degree that it was argued that he became like a politician in the course of the NDC.⁴⁸¹ It was also noted that the UN, as other external actors, sometimes seemed more preoccupied with their own agenda than with what was best for Yemen.⁴⁸²

Saudi Arabia’s position on federalism was less clear, at least to the Yemeni involved in the NDC. The Yemeni are generally suspicious of Saudi Arabia; Yemen might depend on Saudi money but Saudi Arabia is considered the main enemy of an independent and strong Yemen (Halliday 2000, 64).⁴⁸³ In

⁴⁸⁰ Jamal Benomar, for example, suggests confidence-building measures to be implemented by the Yemeni government, i.e. Hadi, and specifically mentions the unjust dismissal of southerners from civil service positions and the military after 1994 and the confiscation of land and property, which also happened following the civil war. Both elements are part of the 20-point plan, which was never implemented. (See Security Council, 6878th meeting, Tuesday, 4 December 2012 – S/PV.6878).

⁴⁸¹ Interviews, Sana’a 2013 (2).

⁴⁸² In one interview, the focus on early marriage during the NDC was given as an example of “Western bias”, as early marriage in itself, disregarding the social and economic reasons for it, became an important topic. It was remarked that the general poor state of the health system was a far more serious threat to women’s health in Yemen. Although early marriage is a problem, it is seen as a symptom of other, larger problems, and thus the focus on early marriage became a symbol of Western preoccupations with specific topics and ignorance of the full context (Interview, Sana’a 2014 (28)).

⁴⁸³ The “problem” of Saudi Arabia was repeatedly referred to in interviews.

one interview it was argued that at least factions within the Saudi leadership wanted an independent Hadhramawt, but “Of course they can’t get the secession of Hadhramawt without first pushing the country of Yemen into disintegration.”⁴⁸⁴ In 2014, another interviewee echoed this perspective and said that there were indications that Saudi Arabia was focusing on stabilizing the border between Saudi Arabia and Hadhramawt:

Southern borders for Saudi Arabia can be Hadhramawt. ... I mean, they were talking about creating a stable region for their pipes of oil.⁴⁸⁵

There are links between Saudi Arabia and Hadhramawt due to a group of influential expatriate business men from Hadhramawt living in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁸⁶ However, it is not clear that Saudi Arabia would be able to sustain control over an independent South Yemen, nor would it remove the issue of what to do with the Houthi-controlled northern part of Yemen.⁴⁸⁷ Others argue that a Saudi-led coalition wants to maintain Yemeni unity because they fear that secession could lead to internal chaos in the South (Al-dawsari 2015, 4).⁴⁸⁸ Although the intentions of Saudi Arabia were debated, there was agreement that Saudi Arabia was monitoring the progression of the NDC. Those most critical of Saudi Arabia read this as an expression of Saudi Arabia’s concern that they would not be able to control the NDC or that it might lead to solutions that would lead to a stable, united Yemen – something that Saudi Arabia wanted to avoid.⁴⁸⁹

For internal elites federalism was a highly contentious concept because it not only contained the question of potential southern independence but came to be seen as the key to breaking up the previous regimes’, especially Salih’s and the al-Ahmars’, control of Yemen’s natural resources.

President Hadi saw federalism as a way of undercutting Salih’s power by devolving decision-making and control of resources to the regional level (Salisbury 2015b, 11). In a sense, Hadi and the UN seemed to be engaged in a cooperative relationship. Hadi, however, was trying to use the NDC as a platform for increasing his power vis-à-vis alternative elite actors while weaken-

⁴⁸⁴ Interview 2013 (3).

⁴⁸⁵ Interview 2014 (28).

⁴⁸⁶ The demand to make Hadhramawt a separate region was raised in the NDC during the discussion on the number of regions, interview 2014 (15).

⁴⁸⁷ Historically, Saudi Arabia was wary about unification and backed the southern secessionists in 1994 (Salisbury 2015c, 4).

⁴⁸⁸ Salim Ali al-Bidh, the former president of South Yemen, turned Hirak leader is for example also said to have close ties to Iran.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (22).

ing their influence. He did not have the internal resources or legitimacy to directly challenge the multiple internal elite actors. Instead, Hadi sought to use his dominant position within the NDC to influence the outcomes, specifically the decision on federalism.⁴⁹⁰ It was argued in one interview that Hadi tried to “use” Benomar by pushing him to take on a more active role.⁴⁹¹ The way that Jamal Benomar on multiple occasions voiced a concern over “spoilers”, specifically pointing to Salih, for example arguing in December 2012 that “Former President Saleh remains active as the leader of the GPC party – and often acts as the leader of the opposition, demonizing the Government of National Unity”, was seen as a result of Hadi’s influence.⁴⁹² This type of rhetoric where Hadi was placed in the realm of good whereas named actors, specifically Salih and later the Houthis, are referred to as spoilers who should be excluded from the negotiation process, simplifies the complex elite struggles that were taking place.

The representatives close to Salih (GPC) and the al-Ahmars (Islah) were against federalism and instead spoke of decentralization, as they feared that federalism would weaken their power.⁴⁹³ In the end, they grudgingly agreed to multiple-entity federalism (Alley 2013b, 82). The discussion on federalism was difficult because it is not just about one political system over another, but a decision that can potentially disrupt the entire system of concentric governance. As argued in one interview:

You are talking about millions of dollars. It’s not a joke. It’s not just writing articles, you know, it was not about federalism as a system – that we have 6 regions and people will have their own parliament – it was mainly about the resources.

The Yemeni oil and gas resources would mainly be located in two regions, Sheba and Hadramawt, which means that a federal state system where the regional level gained more control over resources would limit the old regimes’ access to these resources and thus their ability to sustain their patronage networks. The NDC outcomes are rather unspecific when it comes to

⁴⁹⁰ Interview, Sana’a 2013 (2).

⁴⁹¹ Interview, Sana’a 2013 (2).

⁴⁹² See Security Council, 6878th meeting, Tuesday, 4 December 2012 – S/PV.6878).

⁴⁹³ Interviews, Sana’a 2014. Salih was excluded from dialogue, and although both Hamid al-Ahmar and Sadiq al-Ahmar were chosen as representatives for Islah, they both chose to withdraw. However, it was well known that these elite actors had a number of representatives with whom they coordinated (Transfeld 2016, 10). It was described how members would occasionally excuse themselves to go make a call seemingly to be told how to respond to a specific topic, or members would go back on agreements made the day before if the elite actors thought they had been too accommodating.

the distribution of resources, suggesting that national resources are the property of the people of Yemen and that the management of resources should be divided between the federal levels as specified in federal law.⁴⁹⁴ It should also be mentioned that it was not only internal actors who followed the discussions on federalism and natural resources closely; the French ambassador took such a keen interest in this part of the NDC that he was referred to as the “Total-ambassador”.⁴⁹⁵ This speaks to the importance of Yemen’s oil resources in this process.

The Southern representatives were also not satisfied with the six-region solution. Hirak is included in two spaces in figure 8.5 as being both for and against federalism. The majority of the Hirak movement is pro-secession and therefore boycotted the NDC as it was not an option within the NDC framework. However, a minority within Hirak was prepared to accept a two-state federal solution under the premise that the South would be allowed to have a vote on independence within a set timeframe.⁴⁹⁶ This was also the approach favored by YPC representatives (and others from the South). It was not just about having “your own region” but also about being equal with the North, which has both an emotional and a practical component as each region will be represented at central level (in a senate), thus giving the North a numerical advantage in the six-regions system.⁴⁹⁷

Finally, the Houthi representatives participating in the NDC were generally supportive of federalism as a way to increase the Houthis’ regional autonomy.⁴⁹⁸ However, the inclusion in the Azal region, being combined with the Sana’a area, led the Houthis to denounce federalism. Instead of being part of a “horizontal” region, they wanted a “vertical” region, which would give them access to a port at the Red Sea.⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, the Houthi position became gradually more demanding as the Houthis increased their power considerably during the 10 months’ duration of the NDC. As negotiations were ongoing in the NDC, the Houthis were engaged in a military campaign, which shifted power from the al-Ahmars to the Houthis, changing the Houthi self-perception from marginal to main power.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁴ NDC outcomes, Southern Issue Working Group.

⁴⁹⁵ This was a reference to the French company, Total. The ambassador was described as pushing for decentralization instead of federalism as federalism would “complicate” getting contracts in Yemen due to the potential involvement of more levels of government. Interview, Sana’a 2014 (28)

⁴⁹⁶ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (14).

⁴⁹⁷ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (28).

⁴⁹⁸ Interviews, Sana’a (14) and (28).

⁴⁹⁹ Interviews, Sana’a 2014 (28).

⁵⁰⁰ Interview, Sana’a 2014 (14).

By the end of the NDC, it was clear that these three groups had little to win by federalism. At the same time, the advantages of federalism for Hadi are clear. If successful, the six-region federal state would weaken all three major challengers; the remnants of the previous regime (Salih/al-Ahmars), the Hirak and the Houthis. Consequently, Hadi used a number of strategies to try to embed federalism in the Yemeni context. The initial focus was to place loyal people in key positions, which was not an easy task for a man with limited internal backing. Hadi relied on a combination of old relations and kinsmen from Abyan, Hadi's home governorate, and some of the independent youths.⁵⁰¹ Most notably, the Secretary-General of the NDC, Ahmad Awadh bin Mubarak, was a close associate of Hadi's. Second, Hadi used the transitional framework and the wide executive powers he was given within the transitional framework to announce a series of appointments, as well as the structure of the group established after the NDC to determine the exact number of regions. In effect, Hadi was ruling by decree. And finally, Hadi seems to have hoped that the power struggles between the Houthis and the al-Ahmars/ Ali Mohsin (Islāh), which were ongoing throughout the NDC, would weaken – or just distract – both parties enough while Hadi could build an alternative powerbase. The Houthis were gradually moving closer to Sana'a, defeating tribal fighters loyal to the al-Ahmars, but although Hadi formally controlled the army, he would not have been able to defeat the Houthis in battle.

In sum, the National Dialogue Conference was key to defining the future structure of the Yemeni state; as one representative from the NDC formulated it: "NDC was for me really the chance to build a state".⁵⁰² Federalism quickly became a buzzword to signal a new beginning and an end to centralized rule. Yet, as those elites who were to give up power were engaged in the discussions, and still held considerable power, Hadi struggled to embed federalism in the Yemeni context. Hence, as argued in a recent article on the transition in Yemen: "Even in Yemen, where they (UN) intervened most consistently and where dependency on external aid and a credible threat of international sanctions provided significant leverage to them, they were not able to determine outcomes" (Asseburg and Wimmen 2016, 13). Hadi (and the UN) could partly control the limited space of the NDC, thus successfully push through a decision (barely), but while the focus was on the NDC internal elite struggles had continued unabated outside the NDC, and thus as Hadi's power did not extend much beyond the NDC, real problems began after the NDC closing ceremony.

⁵⁰¹ Interviews, Sana'a 2013 (2).

⁵⁰² Interview, Sana'a 2014 (14).

8.2.5. The collapse of the Yemeni state: an update

The state is now taken over, basically, and completely sidelined by Ansar Allah (Houthis). If they continue like this the state will die. I mean, the state has already been a suspended animation for a long time, but now it is dying. The institutions of the state are going to cease to exist because Ansar Allah are taking over their functions. It is just a matter of time. This house of cards collapses.⁵⁰³

In September 2014, the Houthis took over Sana'a. This was facilitated by three factors: President Hadi's unwillingness and perhaps inability to deploy the military against the Houthis; the Houthis' alliance with Salih, who controls key parts of the military; and public support driven by the deteriorating living conditions offset by anger over a hike in petrol prices due to the lifting of subsidies.⁵⁰⁴

The Houthis had slowly been nearing Sana'a for months, also during the NDC, defeating tribes loyal to the al-Ahmars and consolidating their control over the Amran governorate, an area just north of Sana'a, the capital (International Crisis Group 2014b, 2-4). In the process, military units loyal to another key power broker in Yemen, Ali Mohsin, were overrun and looted (Schmitz 2014b; Schmitz 2014c). When the government removed fuel subsidies in late July 2014, it provided the golden opportunity for the Houthis to call for mass demonstrations, a change of government and economic reforms (Baron 2015). The UN at this time was still seeing the Yemeni transition as a success, because of the NDC, but the NDC was an elite exercise taking place at Möwenpick, a luxury hotel in Sana'a, jokingly referred to as the "Möwenpick republic", and few ordinary Yemeni had any detailed understanding of what was being discussed.⁵⁰⁵ Instead, living conditions had been deteriorating as the Yemeni state was crumbling under the standstill created by the "all-eyes-on-NDC" situation. The ministries were in hold and wait position, and resources were directed into the high politics of the transition instead of into the low politics of water, food and electricity.⁵⁰⁶ This created the space for the Houthis and underlined Hadi's weakness as he (and the UN) had no choice but to negotiate. Especially, because there was an initial acceptance towards the Houthis as formulated in one interview:

The reason there has been such an acceptance of Ansar Allah is the government's performance. The state leadership has been so poor to the extent

⁵⁰³ Interview, Sana'a, 2014 (13).

⁵⁰⁴ Salih and the Houthis initially denied the relationship, but it was considered common knowledge and later reaffirmed by Salih and events on the ground.

⁵⁰⁵ Interviews, Sana'a, 2013 (2) and (3).

⁵⁰⁶ Interviews, Sana'a, 2013 and 2014 (4) and (24).

that Ansar Allah has become an acceptable alternative and maybe to a lot of people, a better alternative than this completely ineffective state.⁵⁰⁷

However, despite the state's poor performance, many others felt that the Houthis' control with the state institutions constituted a final blow to the state and a source of insecurity.⁵⁰⁸ The result was the so-called Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), which focuses on establishing a new government, economic reforms and implementation of the outcomes from the National Dialogue Conference.⁵⁰⁹ It quickly became clear that the provisions in the PNPA were only partly adhered to; the Houthis kept a substantial armed presence in Sana'a while consolidating and expanding territorial control under the pretext of fighting al-Qaeda (Alley 2014). While these events were on-going, the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), a committee established via presidential decree on 8 March 2014, was working on the first draft to the new Yemeni constitution based on the outcomes from the NDC.⁵¹⁰ In the fall of 2014, the feeling was that if the CDC did not finish the process there would soon be no state to apply the constitution to. As one political activist noted:

... the reality on the ground moves very quickly and in the end we didn't find Yemen and we didn't find federalism – we didn't find the state because it is now collapsed.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (13). See also (Heinze 2014).

⁵⁰⁸ Several interviews, conversations and personal observations in November/ December 2014.

⁵⁰⁹ The Peace and National Partnership Agreement can be found here:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/darp/dv/darp20141204_05_/darp20141204_05_en.pdf (Last accessed 27 March 2016). Initially, the Houthis took an inclusionary approach, and demanded the inclusion of all marginalized groups including Hirak. However, the Houthis and the Hirak share little except having been excluded for decades and opposition to the federal division of six regions. As the Houthis moved south, they have been engaged with heavy fighting led by local resistance group associating themselves with the call for an independent South Yemen. Thus, for many in the South, the events in Sana'a has just underlined that southern independence is necessary to avoid being part of the political chaos of the north (Alley 2014).

⁵¹⁰ The composition of the Constitutional Drafting Committee can be seen here:

<https://presidenthadi-gov-ye.info/en/archives/presidential-decree-forming-constitution-drafting-committee-issued/>. Moreover, a presidential decree specified the mechanism for the work of the CDC. See <https://presidenthadi-gov-ye.info/en/archives/presidential-decree-determines-mechanism-of-constitution-drafting-committee/> (Both last accessed on 27 March 2016).

⁵¹¹ Interview, Sana'a 2014 (18).

The first draft of the constitution was awaited but it was also clear that it might reignite controversy due to the unsettled question of the number and division of the federal regions. The CDC published its first draft of the constitution in January 2015, which specifies that the federal Yemen will consist of six regions, four in the north and two in south, as previously recommended. Shortly thereafter the Houthis kidnapped the president's chief-of-staff, Ahmed Awadh bin Mubarak, and put the president and a number of key officials under house arrest. A week later the cabinet and the president resigned (Baron 2015). This signaled the beginning of Houthi rule in Sana'a and the complete breakdown of what has been called "Saudi-backed order" (Alley 2014).⁵¹²

8.2.6. Hadi gaining and losing power: a review

This section has argued that Hadi was chosen as a consensus candidate that was internally accepted because he had limited internal resources and legitimacy. This made him less threatening to vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. Yet, Hadi also showed some savviness and political ambition in the period where he was acting president because Salih was receiving medical treatment in 2011. Hadi was however in a difficult position as he was trying to establish his authority and gain power vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. The economy was near collapse as oil revenue was decreasing. The Yemeni state had very limited taxation ability, and corruption was increasing, while investments dropped due to the security situation. The state's monopoly on violence, was, although never having fully existed, further weakened as the military had fractured during the uprising, demonstrating its patrimonial character. Hadi did have some initial internal legitimacy, but mainly because he represented a change from Salih. Hadi's greatest asset, the fig leaf sustaining his presidency, was external legitimacy.

However, as the first case, the Executive Bureau suggests, external actors had limited faith in Yemeni state structures and were not prepared to "gamble" with funds to support structures that were viewed as corrupt and lacking capacity. Hence, while external actors pledged more than eight billion dollars following the transition to build the Yemeni state, the majority of these pledges were not disbursed because the state was considered too weak to ab-

⁵¹² Saudi Arabia declared both the Houthis and The Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organizations in March 2014. The decision elicited limited response from the Houthis; supposedly the Houthi leader 'Abdul-Malik al-Houthi commented that he understood the Saudi Arabian decision but hoped they change their mind (See <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1763/news/3590/Saudi-Arabia-blacklists-Yemeni->

sorb the funds. The donors, led by the World Bank, were pushing for a strong elite unit to oversee donor projects, whereas Hadi and the Yemeni government preferred to see the funds channeled through the existing state structures. Not until December 2013 was the Executive Bureau established by presidential decree, hence a year and a half after the major donor conference in September 2012. The Executive Bureau had a weaker mandate than originally perceived by external actors but was still thought of as a parallel structure. But more importantly, although the Executive Bureau did seem to be able to increase disbursement, progress was (too) slow, and in the end the deteriorating living conditions experienced by Yemeni following the transition was a major blow to Hadi's internal legitimacy.

The second case, the National Dialogue Conference was a cornerstone in the transition as envisioned by the UN. Initially the National Dialogue was hailed as a success, even as a central component of the Yemeni model that could potentially serve as an example for other transitions. However, criticism has also been intense. Those who remain positive point to how the NDC successfully brought all these very different actors together to engage in an unprecedented level of dialogue. This should be evaluated against the backdrop of a country on the verge of civil war, which caused some doubt that Hadi would be able to convene even the first meeting (Day 2013). However, as is also clear from the subsequent events, the NDC failed to create a broad buy-in in key decisions, most notably the decision on federalism, which allowed the Houthis to expand beyond their capabilities. Hadi held substantial power in the "Möwenpick republic", a phrase used to signal the detachment between reality on the ground and the discussions in the luxury hotel, but Hadi lacked capacity vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. In a sense the transitional setup gave Hadi widespread powers but left him with a government and a state structure that was dominated by Salih loyalists. Thus, Hadi preferred to disregard the political organizations that Salih had drawn on and instead largely ruled per decree.⁵¹³ This deepened the detachment between the decisions of the NDC and realities on the ground, which in the end facilitated the Houthis takeover.

In sum, a key problem for Hadi was that the transitional deal largely left the political system created and headed by Salih to function unabated. It could be argued that in the "new" system, the only change was that Hadi moved out from behind Salih and became the public face of the Yemeni state. However, as Salih remained in control of the GPC and large parts of the mili-

groups.htm and <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=57091>, last accessed on 27 March 2016).

⁵¹³ Interview, Sana'a 2014. See also Hadi's homepage where the practice of ruling per decree is documented.

tary, he remained the probably most influential man in Yemen. Hadi had external backing but his lack of internal resources and legitimacy made it difficult to embed external intervention in the Yemeni context. Thus, external legitimacy was not exchanged or used to create internal legitimacy, perhaps rather the opposite where the close cooperation between Hadi and external actors further delegitimized him internally for example in relation to the drone program and through the lack of positive changes in the lives of ordinary Yemeni.

8.3. Conclusion

This chapter as shown how first Salih and later Hadi has attempted, with varying success, to embed external interventions in the Yemeni context. The analysis showed how Salih used the American preoccupation with al-Qaeda to increase his coercive capacities vis-à-vis alternative elite actors at a time where his internal resources and legitimacy was diminishing. Salih played on the American fear of al-Qaeda as he positioned himself as the only possible partner for the American counter-terror program. This had the dual benefit of increasing his coercive capacities and giving him some space to apply coercion. However, although on the surface leading to the largest expansion of centralized power in Yemen's history, the centralization of power was unstable.

As it became clear that Salih was no-longer a guarantor for stability, external actors sought a new internal partner. This marks the ascendance of Hadi. Hadi was chosen because he did not control neither state nor non-state political organizations. However, the lack of internal resources and legitimacy made him a less efficient partner for external actors as he was unable to embed external intervention in the Yemeni context. Hadi tried to use his power within the framework of the NDC to push through a version of federalism, which, if implemented, would weaken the main internal power centers and undercut Hirak's and the Houthis' calls for regional autonomy or even independence. Hadi's power outside the NDC was limited to a degree which perhaps neither Hadi himself nor his regional and extra-regional backers realized. The remnants of the existing power elites resisted the idea of federalism as it would limit their power and access to Yemen's natural resources. This paved the way for the Houthi takeover.

The GCC deal favored stability and as such left the existing elites in a favorable position to continue their control over Yemen's resources and political structure. Hadi received support from the external actors, but in reality had limited options as he lacked internal resources and legitimacy. The NDC seemed to be built on a notion that it would be possible to pause the political

process outside what was being engineered in the NDC. However, while the NDC succeeded in creating a unique opportunity for debate on the future of the Yemeni state, elite internal actors were engaged in fierce battles over the Yemeni state outside the NDC. This underlines the importance of internal actors in the processes of state-building.

Chapter 9.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to contribute to the state-building literature and the specialized literature on Yemen. This has taken a number of steps; from the development of a theoretical framework to explain what shapes state-building interventions in so-called fragile states, over the analysis of the emergence and spread of the fragile state concept to the specific case of Yemen. In this chapter, I summarize my findings and contributions.

The main argument of this thesis is that state-building, understood as the *strengthening or (re)creation of governance structures*, is shaped by how internal elite actors embed external intervention in the local context. The study argues that internal legitimacy was key to the European state formation experience, but an empirical understanding of legitimacy that emphasizes the establishment of dependency relationships between elites and populations in the specific context. This is juxtaposed to current state-building interventions where the legal-rational source of legitimacy, in combination with elections, has come to equal a legitimate political system. The ideal of the Weberian state undergirds the use of the fragile state concept which is used to legitimate interventions. The study argues that this is facilitated by the use of the fragile state concept. The “fragile state” concept is shown to an essentially contested concept, meaning that its meaning is disputed and has strong normative inferences. Thus, the fragile states concept creates a hierarchy of states where those defined as fragile become amenable to intervention.

The theoretical framework underlines the importance of internal actors who are engaged in internal political struggles where they seek to maintain or (re)gain power. This is the context in to which external actors intervene. Internal actors will try to embed external interventions into the local context in ways that maximize their position vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. The strategies that internal actors can apply in the face of external intervention depend on their resources, including internal legitimacy, external legitimacy and material capacities. The external actors, on their part, will choose a strategy towards the internal actor based on their interest in the state and their evaluation of the relationship to the internal actor. Hence, external actors influence state-building interventions through the choice to intervene or not to intervene and the type of intervention, but the outcomes of the specific intervention are shown to depend on the internal actors and how they embed the intervention in the local context.

In the second part of the thesis the theoretical framework is applied to the Yemeni case. The Yemeni case is investigated through a number of sub-cases, or micro-cosmoses of state-building, to illustrate in the concrete how the abstract notion of embedment plays out in a specific context. This illustrates how state-building is a dynamic process that takes place simultaneously at multiple levels.

I will elaborate on these general conclusions in the following, first focusing on the contributions of this study to the Yemeni case. This is followed by a brief update on the most recent developments in Yemen. Second, I discuss the implications for the state-building literature and present two brief case studies to see how the theoretical framework holds up outside the Yemeni context.

9.1. Analyzing state-building in Yemen as strategies of embedment

This section summarizes the results of the analysis of the Yemen case and in the process reflects on the sub-research question: *How have internal elite actors shaped state-building interventions in Yemen?*

The case study shows how internal elite actors, specifically focusing on Salih and Hadi, have sought to embed external intervention in the Yemeni context. The case study is divided into four main phases. In the first phase, Salih had limited internal resources and was trying to gain power through the embedment of an extra-regional intervention. In the second phase, Salih had emerged as the most powerful internal actor and was thus trying to maintain power through embedment of extra-regional interventions. In the third phase, Salih was still the most powerful internal actor, but his power was waning. He thus sought to embed the American counterterror intervention in the Yemeni context in a way that allowed him to increase his overall coercive capacities. In the final phase, Hadi became president as part of a heavily externally supported transitional plan. Hadi had limited internal resources, but was trying to use external legitimacy to strengthen his position vis-à-vis alternative elite actors.

Chapter 7 focuses on the first two phases. In the first phase, which covers the late 1970s and 1980s, Salih was trying to gain power after becoming president. Salih's internal resources were limited vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. First, although Salih had support in the military, the military did not have a monopoly of violence. Second, although the 1970s and 1980s were a period of rapid economic growth in Yemen, this benefitted foremost local communities through remittances. Hence, although the state also experienced increased revenues, local communities had a large degree of independence

from the state. In sum, Salīh was internally weak vis-à-vis alternative internal elite actors but he was a skilled networker which was how he became president in the first place. However, Salīh was seeking to gain power and lessen his dependence on alternative elite actors. Although Saudi Arabia was the main external actor, Salīh was looking to gain added advantage vis-à-vis alternative elite actors and was thus looking to expand his external support. The solution was the Local Development Associations (LDAs), which had attracted some extra-regional attention as positive examples of bottom-up rural development. Salīh was able to embed the extra-regional support to the LDAs in the Yemeni context in a way where the extra-regional focus on legal-rational structures ended up undermining the independence of the LDAs. Instead, Salīh used them as a vehicle for the expansion of his network as they became integrated in the General People's Congress, the political organization that Salīh made to increase his internal influence. This way, Salīh not only weakened what could have developed into a challenge to his regime while strengthening his relationship to extra-regional actors, but was also able to extend his reach further into the Yemeni periphery than previous presidents. The integration of the LDAs into the state could also be seen as the first indication that Salīh would continue to seek extra-regional legitimacy as a constitutionally elected president in a transitional and struggling democracy.

In the second phase, which covers the period following the civil war and until the late 2000s, Salīh had emerged as the most powerful internal actor and was thus seeking to maintain power. During this period Yemen became a rents-based economy, which meant that Salīh controlled the main source of resources, although key tribal figures continued to hold substantial influence. Salīh did not have a monopoly of violence, but the capacity of the military had grown. Moreover, Salīh had some internal and external legitimacy, not least due to the lack of internal alternatives to his rule. The section investigates two cases: decentralization and basic education. Decentralization appealed to both internal and extra-regional actors. Salīh was thus under some pressure to decentralize but sought to embed the push for decentralization in the Yemeni context without having to delegate any real power. Extra-regional actors' demands continued to focus on legal frameworks and elections. Thus, for Salīh the solution was to build façade institutions with limited real power, while actual power remained centralized. The second case is basic education. Basic education is put forth as a priority for donors as well as the Yemeni regime. I argue, however, that the donor reluctance to hand over responsibility to government structures in part facilitated a system where government structures became further weakened by having to coordinate between the many different actors and projects. The result is a system

that is fairly ineffective in delivering services but that, because of its diversity, ambiguity and overlapping fields of responsibility, creates ample space for maintaining patronage relations. It is argued that Salih used a strategy of saying yes; yes to projects, yes to donors, while at the same undermining the government's coordination ability. This allowed Salih to present himself as a "good" partner to primarily Western donors and gain external legitimacy, while being able to redirect funds into his concentric network.

Chapter 8 focuses on the last two phases. In the third phase, which covers the period from the late 2000s until Salih was forced to step down following the uprising in Yemen in 2011-2012, Salih was experiencing declining internal legitimacy but still had substantial material resources. Salih was experiencing multiple conflicts and growing discontent, in part because living conditions deteriorated as oil revenues declined. The sub-case focuses on al-Qaeda, which has defined the relationship between Yemen and US for the past decades. It shows how the American preoccupation with AQAP on the one hand made it difficult for Salih to avoid engaging in a "partnership" with the Americans in the "war against terror", but that, on the other hand, the partnership provided Salih with access to resources, most notably military, he could use to suppress internal opposition. Salih sought to embed the American intervention in the Yemeni context by using the extra-regional assistance to bolster his coercive capacities and to target internal opposition under the pretext of fighting terrorism. This also meant that Salih was not interested in seeing a total defeat of al-Qaeda as this would most likely lead to declining levels of extra-regional support. In addition, Salih had to avoid an image as an American puppet to protect his internal legitimacy. Salih therefore occasionally pushed back against the Americans while avoiding to completely annihilate al-Qaeda in Yemen. Obviously, this was a difficult balancing act.

The fourth and final phase covers Hadi's short and tumultuous period as president until he had to flee Yemen. Hadi had very limited internal capacities. The economy was near collapse following the uprising, and the military had fractured according to elite loyalties, most notably towards Salih and Ali Mohsin. Hadi had some initial internal legitimacy as the Yemeni population was prepared to give him a chance; not because of anything he did or represented, but because there were no alternatives. Hadi's main strength was the support of both regional and extra-regional actors. Thus, whereas Salih always had some leeway, Hadi's dependence on external actors was clear to everyone. Consequently, Hadi was trying to "exchange" external legitimacy for internal legitimacy and increased internal resources to improve his relative position vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. The first sub-case focuses on aid absorption. External actors, both regional and extra-regional, recognized

that the Yemeni economy was on the verge of collapse and this would have negative consequences for the transition. Thus, substantial pledges were made for support to Yemen. However, donors lacked faith in the capacity of the Yemeni state and therefore pushed for the development of a parallel structure, an elite unit, called the Executive Bureau, to facilitate aid absorption. The case highlights an apparent dilemma for donors: the state is in acute need of aid not to collapse but donors lack faith in the capacity and/or willingness of state structures to handle donor funds. The donor unwillingness to support state structures, as reasonable as it might have been, left Hadi in an economical vacuum with very little independent space of action. This further undermined his internal legitimacy.

The second sub-case analyzes the National Dialogue Conference, which was presented as a key site for negotiating the future structure of the Yemeni state, including providing key input to a new constitution. While Hadi, with the strong support of the UN, was able to partly control what was happening within the NDC, outside the NDC internal political actors were battling to take advantage of the short-term vacuum left by the Salih's downturn in 2011. The UN pushed federalism as a peacebuilding mechanism whereas Hadi saw it as a way of weakening internal competitors. This made federalism the only game in town inside the NDC, but a variety of actors, for different reasons, opposed federalism. As the UN had committed itself to Hadi, it seems to be an example of full cooperation between an extra-regional actor, the UN, and Hadi. However, whereas the limited space of the NDC could be controlled with the assistance of external actors, Hadi did not have the internal resources to embed the externally supported decisions in the Yemeni context. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of the Houthi take-over of Sana'a.

In summary, the sub-case studies function as concrete cases for how internal actors, based on their internal resources and legitimacy seek to embed intervention in the local context. The strategies internal actors apply are shaped by their position vis-à-vis other internal elite actors, including their level of internal and external legitimacy. This approach to state-building has the advantage of highlighting the complexity and the dynamic character of state-building but it is not very helpful in deciphering how much more (or less) state was the result of each intervention. Instead, it provides an alternative perspective, that of embedment, to interventions. The case study, however, does also suggest some more general lessons. First, both Salih and Hadi had limited internal resources when they became presidents. However, whereas Salih was able to use external support to increase his internal resources, this was not the case for Hadi. This first of all underlines how external legitimacy is secondary to internal resources. Hadi had substantial exter-

nal legitimacy but his internal position was so weak that he was not able to “exchange” external support for internal legitimacy. Indeed, the inability to embed the external intervention in the Yemeni context over time came to further undermine Hadi’s internal legitimacy as it was seen as a deliberate prioritization of external actors or a lack of ability. A lack of internal resources and internal legitimacy tend to increase dependence on external legitimacy. This can increase external actors influence. However, too little internal capacity leads to a lack of implementation capacity that cannot be remedied with more external legitimacy unless the internal actor is given enough leeway by external actors to be able to embed the intervention in the local context. Second, in the Yemeni case, especially Saudi Arabia but regional actors in general, have had the largest impact on the structure of the Yemeni state. Neither Salīh nor Hadi has been able to prevent regional actors from penetrating the Yemeni state and non-state organizations. In this situation, extra-regional actors have come to play a role as a counterweight to the regional actors. The lesson seem to be that, all other things being equal, internal actors have more leeway in how to embed extra-regional interventions in the local context due to their more limited interventions and less intimate knowledge of the internal context. The Yemeni case also suggest that when internal actors have internal resources, the involvement of multiple external actors can provide increased space of action as it becomes possible for the internal actor to navigate between different external actors. However, if there are limited internal resources the involvement of multiple external actors can limit the internal actors space of action as resources are devoted to coordinating between external actors instead of embedding the interventions in the local context.

Third, the external interventions described here are all part of a larger narrative, whether a focus on rural development, democracy or counterterrorism. This narrative helps legitimate the intervention, but in a sense also conditions how external actors intervene. This seems counterproductive in a time where it is increasingly recognized that interventions that are context sensitive have the largest impact. The cases suggest that when external actors have a direct interest in the intervention, it increases the resources they are prepared to commit to the intervention, such as in the case of American counterterrorism activities. This limits the available space for internal actors to embed the intervention in the local context.

The period covered by this study ends with the Houthis takeover in 2014 but events are still unfolding in Yemen. Thus, before assessing the theoretical implications of the study, I briefly bring the Yemeni case up to date. This includes some brief reflections on the usefulness of the fragile state concept and the implications it has had for Yemen.

9.2. Reflections on a “fragile” state: a look into the future

The Yemeni case study began with the historical account of when an Imam ruled Yemen and order was upheld by tribesmen “wearing an old Canadian gun”. This image remains vibrant in narratives of Yemen; President Hadi recently cautioned in *New York Times*, that if Saudi Arabia and other Arab states had not intervened in March 2015, “Yemen’s future might have been that of a largely lawless and feudal society”.⁵¹⁴ It invokes an image of backwardness and state failure which must be fixed through external intervention. In the introduction the quote was used to illustrate the incapacity of the current state, but in the narrative the presented by president Hadi and Saudi Arabia the Houthis, the heirs of the Yemeni Imamate, represent chaos and backwardness.

Saudi Arabia began its military intervention in Yemen on 26 March 2015 and legitimized it in two interrelated ways: (1) It is taking place at the request of Yemen’s legitimate president and should be considered an act of self-defense in the face of Houthi aggression; and (2) Yemen has become a fragile state on the verge of collapse, and the intervention is happening in “support of the Yemeni people” under the pretext of wanting to secure “a stable and democratic Yemen”.⁵¹⁵

Thus, Saudi Arabia and Hadi are seeking to define their intervention as a defense against chaos represented by the Houthis as Iran-backed proxies.⁵¹⁶ Yet, from a Yemeni perspective, the Saudi intervention reflects the Saudis’ desire to see a Yemeni government amenable to their continued influence in Yemen. In this perspective, Saudi Arabia uses the language of state fragility to legitimize its intervention to an extra-regional audience, most notably the UN and the US. This way, Saudi Arabia tries to position itself as protecting

⁵¹⁴ See Yemen’s President: A Path to Peace, the *New York Times*, 29 March 2016: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/30/opinion/yemens-president-a-path-to-peace.html?emc=edit_tnt_20160329&nlid=63649401&tntemailo=y&r=0 (last accessed 29 March 2016).

⁵¹⁵ See the announcement of the Operation Decisive Storm, as the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen was originally called, here: <http://www.mofa.gov.sa/sites/mofaen/ServicesAndInformation/news/MinistryNews/Pages/ArticleID201532694612863.aspx> (Last accessed 30 March 2016).

⁵¹⁶ The GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, have traditionally depended on American military support. This is still the case, but the thaw in the US-Iran relationship in terms of the nuclear deal might have left the GCC states fearing that the US would no-longer be as staunch an ally (Al Shayji 2014; Chubin 1996, 10; Echague 2012). The US has backed the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen with intelligence and logistical support, while arms sales to Saudi Arabia continue (Carapico 2015).

not only the Yemeni state, personified in President Hadi, but also the Yemeni people from Iranian-backed insurgents.

Saudi Arabia has pushed the narrative of the Houthis as Iran's puppets. Iran has been the most supportive of the Houthis, but the extent and form of that support are very unclear. It has frequently been claimed by Saudi Arabia and the previous and current president of Yemen that the Houthis are Iranian proxies, but so far very little evidence substantiates the claims (Whitaker 2015). Iranian officials have expressed some support for the Houthis but have chosen to remain relatively silent as the conflict has unfolded.⁵¹⁷ Houthis in Yemen recognize that organizations such as Hezbollah serve as a source of inspiration and there have probably been some exchanges of trainings and ideas.⁵¹⁸ However, the Houthis deny being directed by Iran. There is so far no evidence of a substantial Iranian presence in Yemen. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that Iran controls or directs the actions of the Houthis – they are first and foremost an internal group (Baron 2015, 5). The Houthis have denied direct interference of Iran, but this is unsurprising as it would be an internal liability if the Houthis came to be seen as Iranian puppets (International Crisis Group 2014b, 10).⁵¹⁹ This is both because the accusation of being someone's puppet is always salient in Yemen and because the Houthis have been able to unite larger segments of the Yemeni population under the banner of being marginalized. If the sectarian profile becomes too strong or too "foreign" this is likely to dissipate. Thus demonstrating how internal legitimacy is more important than external legitimacy.⁵²⁰

However, this uncertain actual degree of Iranian involvement notwithstanding, the narrative is strong in Saudi Arabia and appeals to international audiences. Saudi Arabia and Iran both aspire to be seen as leaders of the Islamic world, and both draw on a combination of geopolitical and ideological

⁵¹⁷ The most cited example was an Iranian official, a representative in the Iranian parliament, who is quoted as saying that Sana'a will be the fourth Middle Eastern capital that joins the Iranian revolution. See Middle East Monitor, "Sanaa is the fourth capital to join the Iranian revolution", <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/14389-sanaa-is-the-fourth-arab-capital-to-join-the-iranian-revolution> (Last accessed 28 March 2016).

⁵¹⁸ Interview, Sana'a, 2014 (20). (See also Salisbury 2015c, 7).

⁵¹⁹ There have been speculations about whether there is a Twelver minority within the Houthi movement, but generally the movement's leadership is committed to Zaydism (Salisbury 2015c, 6).

⁵²⁰ It is also quite unlikely that Iran would commit substantial resources to support the Houthis as this would in effect commit Iran to a war against Saudi Arabia. Currently, Iran can commit a minimum of resources and still benefit from the Houthis' victories.

sources of legitimacy (Mabon 2013, 2).⁵²¹ Hence, the *perception* of the Houthis being linked to Iran can be argued to be sufficient to make it necessary for Saudi Arabia to reassert its geopolitical dominance in Yemen.

The notion of President Hadi as the legitimate president has been supported by the UN. Formally, the Saudi intervention was requested by President Hadi, who repeatedly called upon the UN Security Council, in his capacity as president of Yemen, to issue a binding resolution under Chapter VII, article 51, in the UN Charter, to support his government against the Houthis' aggression with all means. In a letter dated 24 March 2015, President Hadi furthermore informs the Security Council that he has requested, both through the GCC and the Arab League, military intervention to stop the Houthi aggression.⁵²² The UN has followed the situation closely and has applied diplomatic pressure and issued sanction against named individuals; Salih and several Houthi leaders. The UN adopted three resolutions in February-April 2015 in addition to Resolution 2140, which was adopted on 26 February and first established a freeze of assets and a travel ban on named individuals (S/RES/2140 (2014)). The resolutions share a general concern with al-Qaeda activities in Yemen and the deteriorating security situation's impact on international security, but the Houthis begin to emerge as a primary concern (S/RES/2201 (2015); S/RES/2204 (2015); S/RES/2216 (2015)). The resolutions reaffirm the UN Security Council's support for the legitimacy of President Hadi and condemn the Houthi takeover. Former president Salih is specifically mentioned as a "destabilizing" factor. Finally, the resolutions call for negotiations and that "all Yemeni parties, in particularly the Houthis" abide by the GCC deal. Hence, the UN supports, at least tacitly, the Saudi-led intervention and backs president Hadi as the legitimate president. The targeted sanctions are considered largely symbolic in Yemen but signal that the UN Security Council is following the situation with concern.

Hence, Hadi has external legitimacy. However, the question of internal legitimacy is more complex. The Yemeni economy has collapsed and even the

⁵²¹ In addition to the geopolitical competition, Iran and Saudi Arabia compete at an ideological level, a religious competition of sorts, which has gained saliency since the Iranian revolution in 1979. The royal Saudi-Arabian family portrays itself as protectors of the two holy places of Islam and as possessing special religious legitimacy. This has been challenged by Iran, which adheres to a Shia interpretation of Islam but also sees itself as a more historically embedded state (Mabon 2013, 4-5).

⁵²² See http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_217.pdf (Last accessed 30 March 2016).

semblance of a national military can be upheld.⁵²³ An additional problem for Hadi is that he is the president who provided legitimacy to the Saudi-intervention. This has seriously hurt any internal legitimacy he might have had prior to the intervention. He lacks a strong internal power base and although his recent appointment of Ali Mohsin as vice-president might be an attempt to garner support among northern tribes and Islāhis, it will undoubtedly alienate other groups further. Curiously, the reaction from the Hiraq has been relatively restrained. The Houthis have been weakened by the Saudi intervention but remain one of the most powerful groups in Yemen. They possess internal legitimacy among parts of Yemeni society as an alternative to existing elites and as a symbol of the prospect of real changes in ordinary people's lives (International Crisis Group 2014b, 6). Their leader, "Abdul Malik al-Houthi, is considered charismatic and they boast a battle-trained militia now armed with looted military material. Hence, in practical terms the Houthis and Saudi Arabia might have to find some sort of accommodation (Salisbury 2015c, 11).

By all accounts, Salih remains the most powerful internal actor as he controls the largest and best-trained remainder of the Yemeni military and still has a functional, widespread network of supporters at different levels of his concentric network. On 26 March 2016, the Houthis and Salih each called for separate demonstrations to protest the Saudi-led campaign on its one-year anniversary. Salih's demonstration outmatched that of the Houthis and was described as more of a Salih election campaign than a protest.⁵²⁴ Thus, five years after the uprising in Yemen calling for the ouster of Salih, demonstrations, numbering at least tens of thousands participants, in effect celebrate his return. Salih has been able to exploit the chaos following the uprising in 2011 to present himself as the guardian against further chaos in Sana'a. It would be an amazing comeback if Salih were to reclaim the presidency, and it is possible that he is instead paving the way for his son Ahmed Ali, his intended heir.

In sum, the Saudi intervention has deepened conflict lines in Yemen, and although the narrative that Hadi is the legitimate president and the Houthis

⁵²³ The humanitarian situation has further deteriorated due to the Saudi military intervention. Fuel shortages and restrictions on imports, on which Yemen relies for more than 90% of its staple foods, have reduced the availability of essential food commodities and caused food and fuel prices to soar. The shortage on fuel impacts the availability of clean water, which is often pumped from the underground. Currently approximately 82% of the population (21 million) is in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and more than 14 million are food-insecure.⁵²³ Official reporting suggests that the Yemeni GDP contracted by 28% in 2015 from its already weak starting point, and annual inflation reached around 30%.

⁵²⁴ Facebook update, Siris Hartkorn, 26 March 2016.

are Iranian-backed insurgents may hold some external validity, the Saudi intervention is highly unpopular inside Yemen. Hadi struggles to build internal alliances and while Saudi Arabia has been preoccupied with the Houthis, al-Qaeda has benefitted from the chaos and has consolidated its presence in especially southern Yemen. Until recently Saudi Arabia has chosen not to target well-known al-Qaeda locations (Al-dawsari 2015).⁵²⁵ In fact reports indicate that al-Qaeda is fighting alongside forces supported by the Saudi-led coalition.⁵²⁶ Thus, the current situation is highly unpredictable as no internal actor has the capacity to set the agenda effectively.

9.3. Implications for state-building theory

This section sums up the study's contribution to the state-building literature. There are at least five contributions.

First, it contributes to the literature on the fragile state concept by pointing to the inherent political character of the fragile state concept. The events of 9/11 elevated fragile states to the top of the international agenda as they were identified as one the main threats to international security (Einsiedel 2005). The key sentiment was expressed in the American National Security Strategy from 2002, which stated that "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones."⁵²⁷ The documents analysis in chapter 5 demonstrated how the use of the fragile state concept rose significantly in the years following 9/11, as state failure was used to legitimize interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, although the concept has been critique before, this study strengthens this critical literature by showing that "fragile state" is an "essentially contested concept", i.e., a concept with multiple meanings and strong normative inferences. This is used to make the point that the fragile state concept is not a neutral description of reality but its use creates a hierarchy of states with fragile states at the bottom. It has implications to be defined as fragile as the categorization of a state as fragile leaves that state amenable to intervention by weakening the norm of non-intervention. In fact, in fragile states, interventions are argued to strengthen the state, as state fragility is linked to conflicts that are solvable through external intervention to the benefit of both internal populations and international security. This is facilitated by a simple understanding of internal actors in fragile states as either spoilers or partners (with weak capacity). This

⁵²⁵ The US continues to carry out drone strikes and has hit some of these sites.

⁵²⁶ See for example this report: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35630194> (last accessed 27th March, 2016).

⁵²⁷ See <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf> (Last accessed 4 April 2016).

way, external actors, the interveners, become agenda setters, and agency is removed from internal actors. Thus, the study moves from the analysis of the emergence and spread of the fragile state concept to argue that the assignment of a specific state to the fragile state category facilitates a certain type of foreign policy towards that state, that of state-building. State-building interventions can basically entail any type of intervention as their main shared characteristic is the claim to intervene to strengthen the state, which, because of the contested nature of the fragile state concept, can mean almost anything.

Second, the theoretical framework adds the distinction between internal and external legitimacy. External legitimacy is relevant to understand the scope and form of the intervention, but internal legitimacy is key to understanding how internal actors can embed the intervention in the local context. Moreover, internal legitimacy is empirical, meaning that sources of legitimacy can vary depending on the specific context. In the European states, the legal-rational structures associated with the Weberian state have coalesced in a way where the state holds great internal legitimacy. However, the fact that the state holds internal legitimacy in one context does not mean that this specific set-up will hold the same level of internal legitimacy if transferred. In other words, it cannot be assumed that the state holds internal legitimacy just *because* it is a state.

Third, the understanding of internal actors in fragile states is nuanced. This way a binary understanding of internal actors as bad/informal/traditional versus good/formal/modern is replaced by an understanding of internal actors in fragile states as political actors, seeking to gain or maintain power. When I continue to apply the distinction between state and non-state actors it is because being *recognized* as a state actor entails access to internal and external resources.

Fourth, the study specifically brings attention to the variety of external actors involved in state-building interventions. There is a tendency in the state-building literature to focus on UN-led interventions yet, other actors, most notably regional actors, are more directly influenced and therefore more likely to intervene. Moreover, since regional actors typically have more knowledge of the internal context as well as relations to multiple internal actors, internal actors will have less space of action to embed interventions by regional actors in the local context. Regional actors will be better placed to identify if internal actors are not amenable to their agenda, and better positioned to identify alternative internal actors as replacements.

Fifth, the key contribution of the study is to bring in the notion of “embedding” to the study of state-building interventions. Although state-building interventions per definition include an external intervention, inter-

nal actors shape state-building interventions. Internal actors will seek to (re)gain or maintain power depending on their current internal position. The position is evaluated based on military and economic resources as well as internal legitimacy. The position of the internal actor, in combination with its external legitimacy, provides the space of action for the internal actor to respond to the intervention. The responses can best be understood as a continuum that ranges from complete cooperation and shared agendas between internal and external actors to a complete lack of shared agendas and active subversion. It is suggested that in most cases the result will be somewhere in-between as the internal actor embed the intervention in the local context in a way that seeks to maximize benefits from working with the external actor and minimize drawbacks. This way, the study shows that state-building interventions are shaped by internal actors who are seeking to embed the intervention in the local context in a way that strengthens their position vis-à-vis alternative elite actors.

9.4. The usefulness of the approach beyond Yemen

This study has investigated how internal actors embed external intervention in the local context as a way to understand what shapes state-building interventions. The strategies of embedment depends on internal actors military and economic resources, as well as internal and external legitimacy. This places agency with internal actors and thus nuances the tendency in the state-building literature to categorize internal responses as either spoiler behavior or incapacity. This study has focused on Yemen as a case but claims to be of more general value to understand how state-building interventions are shaped in so-called fragile states. To explore how well the theoretical framework travels, I explore two additional cases; Somalia and Afghanistan. These cases are only dealt with superficially and through secondary literature, but they support the relevance of the argument of the thesis.

9.4.1. Somalia

Somalia has continuously been considered one of the most fragile states in the world and is frequently described as a failed state in the sense that central government has been largely absent since 1991 (Dibeh 2011; Hagmann and Peclard 2010). Unsurprisingly, Somalia has been targeted for state-building by a variety of actors applying different tools including military interventions, capacity-building and humanitarian interventions. Indeed, Ken Menkhaus has argued that Somalia has been “the scene of some of the most

ambitious, precedent-setting external stabilisation operations in the post-Cold War period” (Menkhaus 2010, S320). This makes Somalia an obvious case for investigating how the theoretical framework travels.

Somalia has remained recognized as a state despite the widely shared belief that the state has hardly functioned in decades. Because the state is considered absent, the involvement of external actors has largely been perceived as unproblematic. A specific intervention may have been questioned, but not the notion of external intervention. The current government structure, federalism, has, sort of like in Yemen, emerged as an externally backed political solution to state-building in a divided country. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was established in 2012 after more than a decade of transitional governments (Bryden 2013).⁵²⁸ This led to celebrations declaring the “end” to state failure in Somalia and accentuation of the legitimate government.⁵²⁹ However, the Federal Government is generally not viewed as particularly representative, nor is it in control of much of Somalia outside of Mogadishu, the capital. This suggests that the Federal Government relies more on external than internal legitimacy.

The current Federal Government and its predecessor the transitional federal government have all received substantial international backing. This includes support to the Federal Government to fight the terrorist organizations al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda. Like in Yemen, the US has carried out drone strikes (although at a much smaller scale) and sees Somalia as a terrorist safe haven that poses a threat to international security.⁵³⁰ The Somalian government is openly working with the Americans.

The UN has also been continuously involved in Somalia, in recent time through the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), which in 2013 was scaled down and became the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). The UN works with and sees the Federal Government as

⁵²⁸ At least since 2000 there have been repeated attempts at gatherings such as the Somalia National Peace Conference in 2000 where 810 traditional leaders met to try to find political solutions. At similar conferences in 2002 and 2007, terms for a truce were agreed on along with the sharing of natural resources and a time plan for elections (Bryden 2013).

⁵²⁹ In 2015, Nicholas Kay, the outgoing representative for the UN Secretary General in Somalia, declared: “Somalia is no longer a failed state”. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/23/somalia-no-longer-a-failed-state-just-a-fragile-one-says-un> (Last accessed on 3 April 2016).

⁵³⁰ The Bureau of Investigate Journalism estimates that between 19 and 23 drone strikes have been carried out in Somalia since 2007, the latest in March 2016 where 150 al-Shabaab operatives were killed in a training camp. See <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones/drones-graphs/> (Last accessed 3 April 2016).

key to state-building in Somalia. The focus is on stability, democratization (elections), security sector reform and capacity building.⁵³¹

Finally, Somalia has seen extensive regional involvement. This includes a bilateral military intervention by Ethiopia in 2006/2007 in response to Islamists taking control of the capital and most of the territory of south-central Somalia (Menkhaus 2010, S332). Ethiopia was able to quickly defeat the Islamists and take control over the capital, which was followed by the eventual arrival of peacekeepers from the African Union (the AMISOM). The al-Shabaab and other Islamist insurgency groups have since been engaged in conflict with the federal government, which remains weak and poorly functioning. Critics have argued, much in line with arguments made about Saudi Arabia in Yemen, that “Ethiopia is determined to keep Somalia perpetually weak and divided in order to pre-empt the re-emergence of a strategic rival” (Bryden 2003). Participation in the AMISOM can thus be used to further individual agendas in Somalia.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia, which is consistently one of the worst in the world, has led to an influx of funds. Between 2000 and 2008, Somalia was among the top ten recipients of humanitarian aid, but the challenging security environment has made it difficult for aid agencies to operate in Somalia (Bradbury 2010, 14).⁵³² A great deal of resources, both financial and other kinds, have been invested in the Federal Government as the main internal partner for Western donors (Menkhaus 2014, 158). The Federal Government depends on international support, but it lacks internal resources including internal legitimacy to a degree where it has inhibited its ability to embed external interventions in the local context. It has thus struggled to exchange external legitimacy for internal capacity. Here, I briefly outline some of the main strategies that the regime has used to try to embed the external interventions, as outlined above, in the local context.

First, the regime has on different occasions attempted to use the external support to increase its coercive capabilities to gain a monopoly of violence. This has resulted in widespread suppression of the population (Menkhaus 2010, S334). The foremost example is of course Siyad Barre’s administration with support from the Soviet Union in the 1980s, but as described, the Federal Government is currently receiving military support in addition regular US drone strikes against terrorists. The international support to the Federal Government has been described as a process where: “Essentially, since 2007

⁵³¹ Details about UNSOM can be found here: <http://unsom.unmissions.org/> (Last accessed 3 April 2016).

⁵³² There are close to one million registered Somali refugees in the Horn of Africa area and more than 250,000 in Yemen. See <http://data.unhcr.org/horn-of-africa/regional.php> (Last accessed 4 April 2016).

state-building has been a partisan project supporting one side of the conflict in a confrontation in which the opposition controls the majority of the territory under dispute” (Hammond and Vaughan-Lee 2012, 9). Hence, the Federal Government’s coercive capacities have been augmented through the different programs aimed at capacity building and arming the central Somali army and police force (Hills 2014). This is done to sustain the Federal Government, which would otherwise most likely not be able to survive. There are consistent reports of human rights violations and misuse of funds, but these are generally ignored by the UN system. Ken Menkhaus argues that: “TFG (Transitional Federal Government) security forces whose salaries and training had been paid for by the international community were actively complicit in the humanitarian disaster”, but because the UN had committed itself to the TFG, it tried to downplay the humanitarian crisis and frame the TFG as a solution instead of an aggravation of the problem (Menkhaus 2010, S334). In this sense, the Somali case also demonstrates how an external actor becomes so integrated with an internal actor, in this case the UN, that disengagement becomes difficult. In 2009, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General at that time, Ahmedou Ould ‘Abdallah, published an opinion piece where he argued that he saw “no peaceful or lasting alternative to this government (the TFG)”, and continues to attempt to de-legitimize opponents to the federal government by referring to them as “criminals”, “foreign fighters” and other groups “without any mandate”.⁵³³

Second, the Somali regime has sought to embed external interventions through the construction of façade organizations that mimic organizations associated with the Weberian state, for example NGOs, which in reality are used to siphon funds to elites (Menkhaus 2010). This happens both at central and local level as local actors who are “seeking to capitalise on growing international interest in decentralisation – are creating “briefcase” administrations that have no local constituency or even on-the-ground presence” (International Crisis Group 2011c, 8). Moreover, the Federal Government now uses the language of counterterrorism, democracy and federalism to establish itself as a reliable partner to external actors.

In sum, the Somali state has seen substantial involvement of regional and extra-regional actors. These have successfully set up a transitional federal government, but this government lacks internal resources and legitimacy. The Somali government is weak vis-à-vis alternative elite actors and has not been able to “exchange” external legitimacy for internal capacity or legitimacy. Instead, it has come to rely on coercion.

⁵³³ See <http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Opinion/-/440808/615326/-/4lc84a/-/index.html> (Last accessed 3 April 2016).

9.4.2. Afghanistan

Afghanistan is another prominent state on the fragile state agenda. This discussion will focus on Afghanistan after 2001 when the country came to figure prominently in the American “war on terror” as Operation Enduring Freedom was commenced in response to 9/11.

In 2001, the Americans entered Afghanistan in an intervention that had widespread international support. The goal was dual; it was a mission against al-Qaeda as the main perpetrators of 9/11, but it also aimed to remove the Taliban regime, which was seen as having given sanctuary to al-Qaeda. Although initially envisioned to be a relatively small-scale operation, the military intervention turned into a major international effort to stabilize Afghanistan and at its peak involved more than 130,000 troops. Afghanistan is also the single largest recipient of official development assistance in the world (Paris 2013, 538; Suhrke 2011, 19).

The Bonn Agreement was signed on 5 December 2001 and is a relatively short document formulated under the auspices of the UN, which functioned as an overall framework of the early phases of the transition.⁵³⁴ It formulates a number of steps to transform Afghanistan into a democratic and stable state. These include setting up an Interim Authority, followed by the convening of an Emergency *Loya Jirga*, a sort of grand council with delegates from different regions and various political, religious and ethnic groups, to agree on a Transitional Authority. The *Loya Jirga* appointed the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA) headed by Hamid Karzai to oversee the drafting and approval of a new constitution (Lister and Wilder 2007, 242). In the 2004 presidential elections, Hamid Karzai won by a large margin.

There were high hopes to the Karzai-administration but these were largely dashed. In part this has been blamed on the Bonn Agreement itself as it favored existing elites and stability by incorporating warlords who have subsequently expanded their power bases (Rubin 2004). Hence, a government was created, but not a state with the capacity to provide basic services including security. Another critique focuses on how Hamid Karzai’s internal legitimacy was tarnished by his close links to the US intervention. Although he was later elected through popular vote, he was first chosen by the US and therefore seen as an American puppet by some (Suhrke 2009, 229).

Afghanistan is a central state but with a level of decentralization envisioned in the 2004 Constitution.⁵³⁵ According the UNDP, the aim was to

⁵³⁴ See <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm> (Last accessed 5 April 2016).

⁵³⁵ See <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf> (Last accessed 6 April 2016).

“promote effective democratic governance and service delivery”.⁵³⁶ Consequently, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) was established to coordinate these subnational governance structures, including appointing Provincial and District Governors and Mayors as well as coordinate democratically elected Provincial Councils.⁵³⁷ However, local governance seems to suffer from many of the same weaknesses as pointed to in regards to Yemen, including weak separation of powers and overlapping and confusing policies.⁵³⁸

Afghanistan is and has since the military intervention in 2001 been completely dependent on external aid. For example, in 2004/2005 more than 90% of the total budget came from external funds (Suhrke 2009, 231). It has been argued that the presence of aid discouraged the state from building local administrative capacity, instead relying on external rather than internal legitimacy. This in part happens because internal actors, in this case the central state, become handlers or intermediaries of aid, which underlines their relative weakness vis-à-vis external actors. The regime becomes focused on external legitimacy, but without internal legitimacy the regime is unable to extend its internal reach.

The UN is involved through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which was established in 2002, originally to support the Bonn Agreement. The current, formal mandate is to “continue leading and coordinating international civilian efforts in assisting Afghanistan, guided by the principle of reinforcing Afghan sovereignty, leadership and ownership”.⁵³⁹ The UN mandate is renewed yearly and shows how Afghanistan remains on the agenda.

Furthermore, regional actors have played a large role in Afghanistan. The border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan remains the most unstable part of both countries. It has also been claimed that both Iran and Pakistan have supported local militias (Rubin and Armstrong 2003). Hence, although none of Afghanistan’s neighbors are interested in its total collapse, interventions have taken the form of cross-border incursions, support to militias and proxy fighting rather than actual regional efforts to build a stable Afghanistan (Price 2015).

⁵³⁶ See

http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/asgp.html (Last accessed 6 April 2016).

⁵³⁷ See <http://idlg.gov.af/en/page/idlg> (Last accessed 6 April 2016).

⁵³⁸ See http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1240.pdf (Last accessed 6 April 2016).

⁵³⁹ See <https://unama.unmissions.org/mandate> (Last accessed 6 April 2016).

Thus, the Afghani regime has neither military or economic capacities, nor internal legitimacy. It primarily depends on external support for its survival. In this section, I briefly outline some of the main strategies that the regime has used to try to embed the external interventions, as outlined above, in the local context. Like in Somalia, the regime has sought to use the external support to increase its coercive capacities. The US has used drones extensively to fight terrorism, but this intervention distinguished itself from the drone strikes in Yemen and Somalia by happening in tandem with allied air force strikes until 2015 when it became a counter-terrorism mission hunting al-Qaeda and its allies.⁵⁴⁰ The American focus on terrorism gradually shifted public opinion, which was initially positive towards the American intervention, as security remained precarious and the civil population came under dual pressure from the US forces on the one side and al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations on the other. Civilian casualties came both from “collateral damage” from American attacks and strikes by al-Qaeda on civilian targets, including the use of suicide bombings, a new strategy in Afghanistan associated with foreign fighters (Suhrke 2009, 238). The US invested substantial resources in building an Afghan army and police force as it was a key priority to secure future peace and stability in the country. However, this was done largely outside of the Afghan government structure. Additionally, Afghan militias have been supported to go after local Taliban rivals (Suhrke 2011, 15). In some instances, actors responsible for human rights violations have been integrated in state structures to stabilize the situation. In effect, this means that if an internal actor is sufficiently powerful it is not only possible to avoid prosecution, but the actor can build a position as a *de facto* partner of external actors (Barakat and Larson 2013, 33-34). The presence of armed groups makes all other activities problematic and underlines the weakness of the central government (Lister and Wilder 2007, 248-249).

Second, there has been a proliferation of façade organizations, including NGOs. Over 1,600 NGOs were registered in 2003, many of them façade organizations as a way to get access to donor funds. Indeed, the influx of funds has created an informal economy and is perceived to have increased corruption (Barakat and Larson 2013, 32).

Third, since the Afghan government structures were considered lacking capacity, donors have been inclined to build parallel structures. In 2004/2005, only \$1.4 billion of \$4.9 billion of public expenditure were channeled through the government budget (Rubin 2006b, 179). Consequent-

⁵⁴⁰ See the Bureau of Investigative Journalism:

<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2016/01/07/get-the-data-a-list-of-us-air-and-drone-strikes-afghanistan-2016/> (Last accessed 4 April 2016).

ly, there were NGOs that worked as envisioned, but was criticized for undermined state structures because of their superior funding, which for example allowed them to attract the most skilled personnel (Lister and Wilder 2007, 247). These NGOs and parallel structures within the state, were able to hire in skilled Afghans from the outside, largely paid for and supported by external actors to support the Afghan government and increase aid absorption. However, these contracts were typically relatively short term and with little interaction with regular Afghan employees (Suhrke 2009, 236). There has also been continued reliance on foreign contractors and private security companies to secure key foreign interests. These practices increased short-term aid absorption, but were less successful in building state capacity.

In sum, the current state of Afghanistan is the result of external interventions and the strategies internal actors have applied to embed these interventions into the Afghani context. Afghanistan arguably distinguishes itself from Somalia and Yemen by the extensive presence of external military forces, but as the brief case study illustrates the strategies of embedment have substantial similarities.

9.5. Reflections and implications

The two additional cases show that the theoretical framework seems to travel fairly well. Indeed, the additional case studies highlight how the categorization of states as fragile seems to facilitate not only interventions, but interventions that seem quite similar. The Afghani and Somali cases display a larger degree of internal coercion than the Yemeni case did. In the Yemeni case, coercion increased as the regime, Salih in the late 2000s, began to lose power vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. Coercion is considered an ineffective way to rule, and indeed, the additional case studies suggest that the Somali and Afghani regime both depend on sustained external support to sustain their level of coercion. This is the case because both regimes are so internally weak that they have been unable to exchange external support for internal capacity.

This points to a more general question: what can external actors do differently? The two brief additional cases presented here suggest that the challenges met in Yemen were in no way unique, and that both problems identified and solutions prescribed are quite similar. Thus, despite a focus on context-sensitive approaches, state-building interventions in fragile states seem to be built on the same basic template.

The theoretical framework suggests that the evaluation of state-building interventions should be more nuanced than a failure/ success dichotomy. It should allow for the agency of internal actors so that alternative outcomes

might in fact be considered successes even though they were not originally envisioned in the project. This also entails moving away from a strict focus on central state structures. As state-building interventions are not top-down unilateral processes, the success/ failure dichotomy will always swing towards failure if it in reality measures the external actors' ability to force through an agenda.

Appendix A

Interview guides

Questions (2013)

Topics	Questions
Presentation	Name – could you briefly present yourself?
National Dialogue	<p>What were the reasons that led to the uprising in Yemen?</p> <p>What were the key moments in the uprising?</p> <p>Who are the main political actors in Yemen?</p> <p>The NDC has been described as cornerstone in the Yemeni transition – is it living up to its promise so far?</p> <p>How would you describe the progress of the National Dialogue so far?</p> <p>(I read someone saw it as a rehearsal in parliamentary politics because it is a compilation of different actors who are trying to find political solutions through dialogue – do you agree with that? – how?)</p> <p>What are the main challenges in the NDC?</p>
Outcomes of the National Dialogue	<p>Can the National Dialogue be extended in its current form? What will be the consequences?</p> <p>What has been the impact of the events in 2011 on the political system in Yemen?</p> <p>How can new political actors sustain their influence past the National Dialogue?</p> <p>Do you think there will be elections in 2014? (why)</p> <p>What do you think will happen? Do you think elections will result in any changes?</p>
Tribes	<p>How would you describe the role of tribes in Yemeni politics and society? (Is it possible to separate between the state and tribes?)</p> <p>(Is the role of tribes sometimes overestimated?)</p> <p>What role do you think that tribes will play in a future state? (undermine the state, but does also provide some order)</p> <p>Do you think that some elements of tribalism could be used in building the Yemeni state? (tribal law)</p>
Accountability	<p>Elections are meant as a mechanism to secure that the politicians are responsible to the people – do you think elections have this function in Yemen?</p> <p>What measures would secure that the Yemeni elite are held accountable?</p> <p>Decentralization seems to be mentioned frequently as a method of solving both developmental and political challenges – What does decentralization mean? (What would require both at central and local levels?)</p>

	<p>What are the strongest arguments for decentralization in your mind?</p> <p>Do you think decentralization will make political leaders more responsive to the people? (accountability)</p> <p>Do you think decentralization will result in improved service delivery?</p> <p>Do you think that the LDAs in the 1970's can serve as a model?</p> <p>How is elite accountability secured if decisions are decentralized?</p> <p>(Local Authority Law – secure that it's not just decentralization on paper)</p> <p>How can trust be established between people and political institutions?</p>
The influence/ role of external actors	<p>Speaking to representatives from the international community it was highlighted that they try to coordinate their efforts and to have a division of labor – is this something you can recognize?</p> <p>What is the role of external actors in Yemen?</p> <p>What do you think are the interests of the most influential external actors in Yemen? (GCC, Saudi, US, UN)</p> <p>What role should external actors have in Yemen?</p> <p>Have you experienced that the priorities of external actors differ from those of the Yemeni?</p>

Questions (2014)

Topics	Questions
Presentation	Can you tell me a little about (yourself, the institution etc.)
National Dialogue/ federalism	<p>First, what is your take on the decision to have a National Dialogue and the format it took (including selection of participants, structure of working groups etc.)</p> <p>Do you think the NDC has been the inclusive process it set out to be? What has been the impact of the NDC?</p> <p>(Elite level & for ordinary Yemeni)</p> <p>What were the biggest victories of the NDC? What were the biggest failures?</p> <p>Can you explain why the federal solution was chosen? And was it, in your view, the right decision?</p> <p>Where do you stand on the discussion of the number of regions? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different numbers of regions?</p> <p>Can you explain the future relationship between the central state and the regions?</p> <p>What will be the division of responsibilities/ distribution of resources?</p>
Decentralization	<p>Has there been any discussion of the role of states or districts below regional level?</p> <p>Can you explain what decentralization means in the Yemeni context? And why it is so popular?</p> <p>In your view, how will decentralization influence the relationship between the center, Sana'a and the rest of the country?</p> <p>Do you think decentralization will have an effect on service delivery?</p>

	<p>What are the main challenges of decentralization? Do you think there is a risk that decentralization will increase existing inequalities? (How is the accountability of leaders ensured in a decentralized system?)</p> <p>The LDAs have been mentioned as an example of decentralized governance – do you think they can be used as an example for decentralization – and why/ why not?</p> <p>How can local participation be secured in a top-down process of decentralization?</p> <p>Another example is the Local Authority Law from 2000 which formulated a legal framework for decentralization but implementation has been difficult – what are your thoughts on the issue of implementation?</p> <p>What are some of the main challenges related to implementation (capacity, skilled personal, resources, transference of responsibilities both political and financial)</p>
The state in Yemen	<p>How would you characterize the current Yemeni state if you were to explain its most central features to someone who had never heard of Yemen?</p> <p>How did the Yemeni state come to have these characteristics? (Is the Yemeni state a state? – What do you think of terms such as fragile or failed states?)</p> <p>Who are the main political actors in Yemen?</p> <p>Are there actors in Yemen who act as alternatives to the state? Is that a problem? Is it necessary to have a state, why?</p> <p>Can you explain the meaning of the term “dawla madaniya” (civil state)?</p>
The role of tribes	<p>What is the role of the tribe in Yemen?</p> <p>(How it has evolved over time?)</p> <p>How would describe the role of the sheikh? What are the rights and duties of tribal leaders? How do these differ from that of political leaders in the state?</p> <p>Can you give an example of how and when tribal leaders interact with the state in the function of tribal leader?</p> <p>What role do you think that tribes will play in a future state? (order/undermine)</p> <p>Do you think that some elements of tribalism can or should be incorporated into the future Yemeni state? (tribal law)</p>
The influence/ role of external actors	<p>What is the role of external actors?</p> <p>Do you think the US, the UN or Saudi Arabia can help Yemen? Why/why not? How?</p> <p>Why has this actor become involved in Yemen?</p>

English summary

This study is about state-building. It asks the overall question: “*What shapes processes of state-building in so-called fragile states?*” The question is answered through three sub-questions;

1. How has the fragile state concept emerged and what are the implications of its use?
2. How do internal elite actors shape state-building interventions?
3. How have internal elite actors shaped state-building interventions in Yemen?

State-building as a response to state fragility has emerged as a key international priority. Existing scholarship mainly focus on identifying the causes of fragility and improving their measurement and/or identifying the factors which can move states out of fragility. While this study fully acknowledges the analytical difficulties that the diversity of definitions and measurements of state fragility produce, it suggests that this is an inherent part of the fragile state concept. This study argues that the fragile state concept is an essentially contested concept. Essentially contested concepts are concepts with multiple meanings and a normative dimension. Hence, the first contribution of this study is to show, through a detailed account of the emergence and spread of the fragile state concept, that the fragile state is a highly political concept and that its use has implications. It creates a hierarchy of states where those categorized as fragile become amenable to state-building interventions.

The literature on state-building is huge and diverse but in part influenced by having developed in response to the professed problem of state fragility. Consequently, it attempts to pinpoint what makes a state well-functioning, often implicitly or explicitly using the Weberian ideal state as its measuring stick. Yet, the ambiguity of the fragile state concept means that state-building becomes equally ambiguous. The study argues that the European state formation experience was characterized by the development of internal legitimacy but that current state-building interventions emphasize external legitimacy. This happens because internal actors are viewed through a binary; modern/traditional or formal/informal, where external actors must take the lead to strengthen state capacity to overcome the informal structures which are seen as holding back the state.

These discussions feed into the construction of a model of factors that shape state-building in so-called fragile states. The backdrop to this model is

an understanding of internal actors as key to understanding state-building as they possess substantial agency, conceptualized through a focus on how interventions are embedded in the local context. The model is based on some fairly simple assumptions: first that the main concern of internal actors is to (re)gain or maintain power and second, that external actors intervene to secure a level of stability. External actors can intervene in four overall ways; increase support to the internal actor, target alternative elite actors, disengage or overtake the entire state or parts of it. External actors will choose their strategy depending on the internal elite actors external legitimacy. The internal actor will seek to embed the intervention in the local context. The space of action of the internal actor is defined by its internal capacity, specifically focusing on military and economic capacity, and internal legitimacy. Thus, in sum state-building interventions are shaped by a combination of internal actors power position vis-à-vis alternative elite actors, including their capacities, and how the external actor intervenes, as these factors combined defines how the internal actor is able to embed the intervention in the local context.

In the final part of the study, I investigate how this plays out in a concrete case. Yemen provides ample opportunity to observe these practices because of the level and variety of external interventions including the ongoing transition following the uprising in 2011. The case study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter, chapter 6, presents the case. This includes a brief overview over Yemen's current state-building history, an outline of the Yemeni regime to briefly present the basic nature of the Yemeni political system and an introduction to the main political organizations: tribes and political parties. Finally, the chapter finishes by detailing, through an analysis of UN documents, how Yemen became a fragile state and how that by establishing Yemen as a fragile state; haunted by Al-Qaeda, Yemen's sovereignty was made contingent. Chapter 7 focuses on two periods where Salih was first trying to gain power and second, trying to maintain power. Salih was initially a weak president that lacked internal capacity and legitimacy, but he was able to embed an extra-regional intervention in the Yemeni context in a way that expanded his, and in a sense, the state's reach. Gradually, Salih gained power and became the most powerful internal actor. In the second period, where Salih is described as maintaining power, he continues to show considerable adeptness in embedding external interventions in the Yemeni context in ways that increase his relative influence vis-à-vis alternative elite actors. Chapter 8 sees first the decline of Salih in the late 2000s until the uprising and transition in 2011. This section shows how internal legitimacy is key to sustaining power and that coercion is a poor substitute for legitimacy. The second section focuses on Hadi's ascendance to power. He was heavily exter-

nally backed, although as the section shows, this did not necessarily materialize in the ways he needed the most. Hadi lacked economic and military resources, as well as (increasingly) internal legitimacy. This made it difficult for him to embed the external intervention in the Yemeni context. In sum, the case study shows how internal resources and legitimacy is key to understanding how processes of state-building are shaped.

The study is based on conceptual analysis and data collection in Yemen. Methodologically, it is explorative and inductive and thus should not as such be understood as a theory-testing study. Instead, the study has developed through a dynamic interaction between induction and interpretation as data and theories interacted throughout the study. In the last part of the conclusion, I conduct two short case studies of Somalia and Afghanistan to show how the theoretical framework has value outside of the Yemeni context in which it was originally conceived.

Dansk resumé

Denne afhandling handler om statsopbygning. Den stiller følgende overordnede forskningsspørgsmål: *“Hvad former statsopbygningsprocesser i såkaldt skrøbelige stater?”* Dette besvares via tre underspørgsmål:

1. Hvordan opstod begrebet “skrøbelige stater” og hvilke konsekvenser har brugen af begrebet?
2. Hvordan former interne aktører statsopbygningsinterventioner?
3. Hvordan har interne aktører formet statsopbygningsinterventioner i Yemen?

Statsopbygning som en reaktion på forestillingen om skrøbelige stater har international bevågenhed. Eksisterende forskning fokuserer primært på at identificere årsager til skrøbelighed og forbedre hvordan årsager måles og/eller identificere faktorer, der kan løfte stater ud af skrøbelighed. Dette studie erkender fuldt ud de analytiske udfordringer, der følger af uklare definitioner, men argumenterer for at denne problematik er en indbygget del af ”skrøbelig stat” begrebet. Dette skyldes, at ”skrøbelig stat” begrebet er et væsentligt omstridt begreb. Væsentligt omstridte begreber er begreber med flere betydninger og en normativ dimension. Dette projekts første bidrag er at vise, via en detaljeret analyse af fremkomsten og spredningen af ”skrøbelig stat” begrebet, at det er et politisk begreb, hvis brug har konsekvenser. Brugen af begrebet er med til at skabe og legitimere et hierarki af stater, hvor de stater, der defineres som ”skrøbelige” bliver mere tilgængelige for interventioner, præsenteret som statsopbygningsinterventioner.

Der er en stor og forskelligartet litteratur om statsopbygning, som er påvirket af at være blevet udviklet på baggrund af et problem defineret som ”skrøbelige stater”. Dette betyder, at denne litteratur, ligesom litteraturen om skrøbelige stater, fokuserer på at identificere hvad der skaber velfungerende stater, ofte med den europæiske stat som et implicit eller eksplicit ideal. Men eftersom denne litteratur bygger på en uklar forståelse af hvilket ”problem” der skal løses, så bliver den ligeledes uden et klart fokus. Denne afhandling argumenterer for, at den europæiske statsdannelses proces var karakteriseret ved skabelsen af intern legitimitet, men at dette element bliver nedprioriteret overfor ekstern legitimitet i statsopbygningsinterventioner. Det skyldes, at statsopbygning har fokus på den eksterne aktørs forståelse af hvordan stater skal se ud og fungere. Skrøbelige stater forstås vis simple dikotomier: moderne/traditionel eller formel/uformel, hvor mere stat kan ses som en løsning på et hvilket som helst problem.

Disse diskussioner danner baggrund for udviklingen af en model over hvad der former statsopbygning i disse såkaldte skrøbelige stater. Modellen antager, at interne aktører spiller en central rolle i statsopbygningsinterventioner og at de derfor påvirker resultaterne. Modellen bygger på to antagelser. For det første, at interne aktører ønsker at øge eller bevare deres magt og for det andet, at eksterne aktører ønsker stabilitet. Eksterne aktører kan intervenere på fire overordnede måder: (øget) støtte til den interne aktør, underminere alternative interne aktører, trække sig ud af staten eller i en periode overtage staten (eller dele af staten). Eksterne aktører vælger deres strategi på baggrund af den interne aktørs eksterne legitimitet. Den interne aktør vil forsøge at indlejre interventionen i den lokale kontekst. Den interne aktørs handlingsrum i relation til hvordan interventionen kan indlejres, er defineret af den interne aktørs niveau af ressourcer, primært militære og økonomiske, samt intern legitimitet. Kort sagt, denne afhandling argumenterer for at statsopbygningsinterventioner er formet af hvordan interne aktører indlejrer interventionen i den lokale kontekst med henblik på at øge deres relative magt.

I den sidste del af denne afhandling undersøger jeg hvordan dette udspiller sig i en konkret case. Yemen er en såkaldt skrøbelig stat, der har set omfattende interventioner inklusiv en igangværende transition. Case studiet er opdelt i tre kapitler. Det første kapitel, kapitel 6, præsenterer casen. Dette inkluderer en kort oversigt over Yemens statsopbygningshistorie, en introduktion til det yemenitiske politiske system og de mest centrale politiske organisationer. I den sidste del af kapitlet viser jeg, hvordan Yemen i stigende grad er blevet karakteriseret som en skrøbelig stat. Jeg argumenterer for at ved at Yemen blev defineret som en skrøbelig stat, plaget af al-Qaeda, blev Yemens suverænitet gjort betinget. Kapitel 7 fokuserer på to perioder, hvor Salih var præsident og først forsøgte at øge sin magt og senere at opretholde den. Salih var indledningsvist en svag præsident, der manglede interne ressourcer, men den første sub-case viser hvordan han var i stand til at indlejre en ekstra-regional intervention i den yemenitiske kontekst på en måde, hvor han øgede sin magt. I de to næste sub-cases er Salih den mest magtfulde interne aktør, men han er fortsat afhængig af andre interne aktører og regional støtte. Ved hjælp af to cases, decentralisering og grunduddannelse, viser jeg hvordan Salih indlejrer ekstra-regionale interventioner, på en måde der understøtter hans magtposition. Det sidste empiriske kapitel, kapitel 8 fokuserer først på Salih, der oplevede øgede udfordringer mod hans regime i sidste årti. Særligt Salih's økonomiske ressourcer blev mindre, hvilket gjorde ham mere afhængig af magtanvendelse. Casen viser, hvordan Salih var i stand til at indlejre amerikansk støtte til at bekæmpe al-Qaeda i den yemenitiske kontekst på en måde, hvor det øgede hans kontrol med den yemenitiske stat.

Den sidste case fokuserer på den sidste periode, hvor Hadi blev valgt som overgangspræsident efter at Salih blev tvunget til at træde tilbage i 2011. Hadi havde ekstern støtte, men manglede interne ressourcer og, i stigende grad, intern legitimitet. Casen viser, at ekstern støtte gjorde det muligt for Hadi at skabe et begrænset rum, som han kunne kontrollere, men at han ikke var i stand til at indlejre interventionen i den yemenitiske kontekst, fordi han manglede interne ressourcer. Det understreger, at interne ressourcer og legitimitet er afgørende for at forstå hvordan statsopbygningsprocesser formes.

Denne afhandling er baseret på begrebsanalyse og dataindsamling i Yemen. Projektet er eksplorativt og induktivt. Det betyder, at den teoretiske model er udviklet via en dynamisk interaktion mellem induktion, deduktion og fortolkning, idet teorier og data interagerede undervejs. På den måde er den teoretiske model knyttet til den yemenitiske case, men modellen er udviklet med henblik på mere general anvendelse. I det sidste kapitel sammenfatter jeg afhandlingens resultater og viser hvordan tilgangen kan generaliseres via to korte case studier.

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