

Gender Relations and Development in the Yemen: Participation and Employment

By Carol J. Riphenburg

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Growing academic interest among political scientists in the subject of community, communities and politics reflects the fact that the community and politics theme permeates political analysis at all levels of inquiry. The theme of community is especially relevant to the analysis of women in the Middle East and therefore in Yemen upon which this paper will focus.

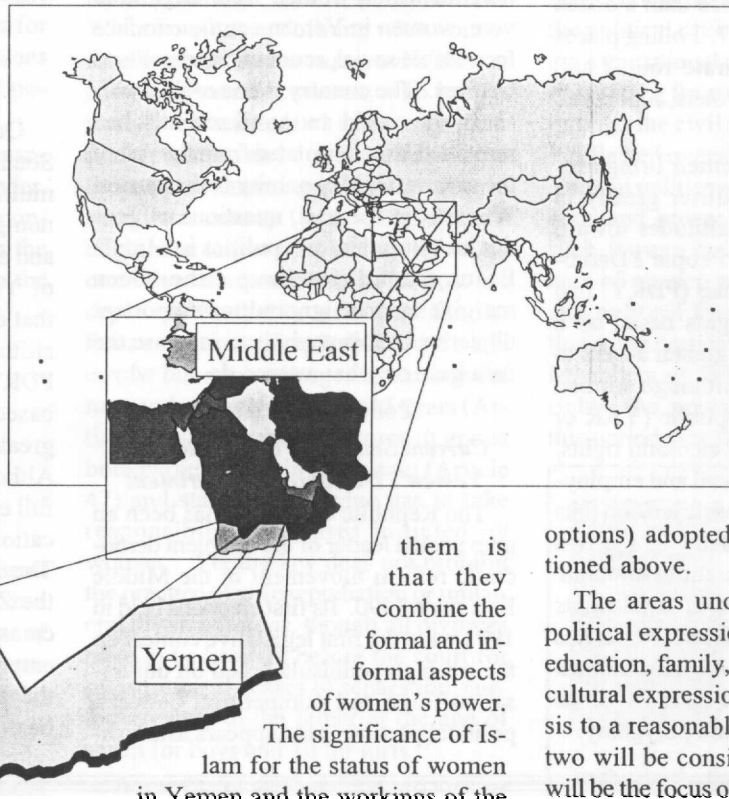
In Yemen, the dominant paradigm continues conceptually to divide society into two realms — the public and the private. The public realm, usually thought to be the domain of men, includes the field of political activity. The private realm is assumed to be the domain of affective relations, where women interact, but with little political import or consequence for the state's interconnection with society. Such a paradigm distorts an understanding of society and politics and ignores the centrality of gender roles for those in power as well as those in the opposition. Both the terms, public and private, are contested and highly political.¹

The boundary line between public and private is not only socially, juridically and politically constructed; but, definitions of what is private and public are significantly influenced by sex, race, and class. Anyone familiar with the Middle East in recent years recognizes that the negotiation of public space by women is a central and divisive political question that brings to mind issues of power and subordination. The line between public and private has long been a matter for public debate in the West and is evolving in developing countries. When such debate occurs, certain configurations of power likely have a stake in the issue under discussion. Questions of power,

resources, and influence are involved in seeking to draw a definitional line between public and private.

Confounding the Public-Private Paradigm

To confound the public-private paradigm, this study will adopt the concept of life options as formulated by Janet Z. Giele² to serve as the dependent variables in this analysis. Life options are major types of activity performed in every known society. What is appealing about



them is that they combine the formal and informal aspects of women's power.

The significance of Islam for the status of women in Yemen and the workings of the political process will be discussed; but, the position of Yemeni women will not be attributed to so-called attributes of Islam itself. Islam will not be regarded as more or less patriarchal than any other religion. Moreover, while political Islam is a powerful force in the Middle East today and often raises alarm among academics and policymakers, it is not monolithic. Indeed, every Islamic movement must be judged within the political context of its own country, its own goals and its own ideological orientation.

Yemen is a country undergoing a democratization process, where an Islamist party competes for power in a multiparty system. The case of Yemen is instruc-

tive as a case study, not for providing a model of political Islam which could be replicated in other countries. Islah is a nonviolent, non-revolutionary Islamist political party made up of northern tribes and urban Islamists. It has pledged to honor the results of elections and play by the constitutional rules. Thus, there are many Muslim countries and many Islamist movements. Each needs to be understood on its own terms and its own context.³ Women's roles and status will

thus be seen as structurally determined by state ideology (regime orientation and juridical system), level and type of economic development, and class location. These factors will serve as independent variables in this analysis and will be examined in terms of their impact on a six-dimension framework of women's status (the life

options) adopted from Giele, as mentioned above.

The areas under consideration are: political expression, work and mobility, education, family, health and fertility, and cultural expression. To keep this analysis to a reasonable length, only the first two will be considered here; the others will be the focus of another study. While democracy is a highly adaptable form of governmental system, the general consensus among democratic theorists is that it functions best in nations with a large middle class, an educated populace, and an adequate standard of living for its citizens. Also, groups within these countries whose citizens have higher levels of income and more education tend to participate more. From this perspective, Yemeni women, who rank low on these indices, could be predicted to have low levels of political participation. In the area of paid employment and changes in women's work brought on by modernization, development has meant gains for some and losses for others; change has

had a differential impact on women's lives dependent on region and class, level of economic development, and official policy.

Recent History

On November 22, 1997, the Republic of Yemen held its first parliamentary election since the country's brief but bloody civil war in 1994 and its second since North and South Yemen were united in 1990. These were the first legislative contests on the Arabian Peninsula based on universal suffrage and competition between political parties. Yemeni women were interested and earnest participants, although only a few more than a dozen ran as candidates in 1997. Polling places generally offered separate rooms and ballot boxes for female voters, supervised by women.

The Republic of Yemen brings together two states that differ greatly in terms of their official attitudes toward women. Women in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) had enjoyed broad legal rights based on a liberal family code and greater access to work and education. Although women in the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR or North Yemen) held full electoral rights, they had fewer educational and employment opportunities. A basic tension thus exists between the legacies of the two states: leftist parties sought to continue the progressive tradition of legal rights for women, and the Islamist parties favored more traditional roles for Yemeni women regarding legal issues such as divorce, child custody and polygamy.

The sex/gender system and all that it involves is undergoing profound change in Middle Eastern countries. Benefit can derive from country-specific studies as opposed to those more broadly comparative, since there is no prototypical Middle Eastern woman, but conversely, women immersed in diverse socio-economical, political and cultural arrangements. According to V.M. Moghadam, "To study the Middle East and Middle Eastern women is to recognize the diversity within the region and within the female population."⁴

Despite the onset of democratic elections in which women were eligible to vote, women in Yemen continue to face formidable social, economic and political barriers. The country is one of the poorest in the world and until recently had remained largely isolated from the rest of the international community for centuries. Whereas in the past, questions of gender, development and politics in Middle Eastern countries have either been marginalized or ignored, an important objective of this study is to increase the data base on what women do and why.

Political Expression

Current Setting: Women's Role in Yemen's Democratic Experiment

The Republic of Yemen has been an unexpected leader of the incipient democratic reform movement in the Middle East since 1990. Its first elections held in 1993 were the first legislative contest on the Arabian peninsula based on universal suffrage and competition between political parties. This appears astonish-

ing given that Yemen is one of the poorest Arab countries and has an undereducated population and a diminutive middle class. While other nations in the region, such as Jordan, Morocco and Kuwait have made strides toward parliamentary democracy, Yemen has held more transparent elections, established stronger democratic institutions and permitted a more participatory process than other countries within the region.⁵ Women, however, encounter a number of problems with regard to public participation in this impoverished, mostly rural, village-centered country with a traditional population.

Legal Underpinnings:

The Constitution and

Personal Status Law of 1992

Only since 1990, when North and South Yemen were united, has Yemen had multiple political parties, independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and a relatively free press. The Republic of Yemen brought together two states that differed greatly in terms of official attitudes toward women. Women in the PDRY had enjoyed extensive legal rights based on a progressive family code and greater access to work and education. Although women in North Yemen held full electoral rights, they had fewer educational and vocational opportunities. The decades after the 1962 overthrow of the Zaidi Shi'a imam witnessed an increase in veiling and seclusion, as the emerging middle class sought to imitate the respectable lifestyle of *sayyid* families. Although comparatively liberal so-

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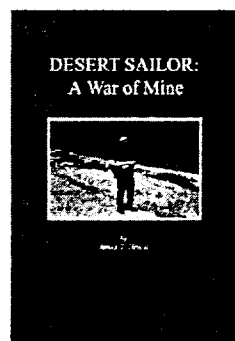
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cial legislation allowed such rights as pregnancy leave, voting, driving, travel, running for office, and property ownership — and several women were notable television broadcasters — in most northern urban areas, women covered their faces, received little education and avoided public places.⁶ Thus, basic tension exists between the legacies of the two states as leftist and Islamist groups differ in philosophy regarding the role of women in Yemeni society. While the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), ruling party of the South, and other leftist parties would continue the progressive tradition of legal rights for women, the Islamist parties favor more traditional roles for Yemeni women regarding legal issues such as divorce, child custody and polygamy.⁷

The unification constitution guaranteed equal rights on the basis of gender. Approved by referendum, the new constitution, while saying that Islam is the religion of the state and the *shari'a* the main source of legislation held that:

All citizens are equal before the law. They are equal in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them based on sex, color, ethnic origin, language, occupation, social status or religion.⁸

In addition, it declared the universal right to receive an education, to vote, and to run as a candidate for the House of Representatives. However, the government sent mixed signals to women in the immediate post-unification period. President Salih appointed 12 women as deputy ministers, but also approved a personal status law that had a dramatic effect on Yemeni women. The unified parliament had put off consideration of a family code, which might have raised contentious issues of women's rights. Bypassing the legislature, the Presidential Council issued a personal status law to regulate marriages and divorces.⁹

The new law, embodied in the Decree of March 1992, reproduced the 1978 northern law, but with a few changes. These changes were not concessions to the PDRY law of 1974 but instead segments from the League of Arab States' Unified Model Arab Personal Statute Law.¹⁰ For women of the former PDRY, the decree rolled back a woman's right to

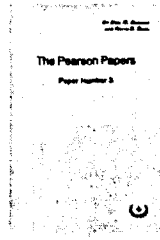
sue for divorce and lifted the legislative restrictions on polygamy. The decree also eliminated the PDRY's limitation on bride price (*mahr*), the money families could demand in payment for consenting to the marriage of a daughter.¹¹

In clauses specifically affecting women in the areas of marriage, divorce and custody of children, the 1992 Personal Status Law is clearly closer to the situation prevailing in the former YAR. It does, however, explain that marriage is a partnership between the couple involved and that "any contract established on the basis of compulsion (*ikrah*) on the husband or wife is invalid (Article 12)." When it comes to defining what constitutes consent by a woman, a distinction is made between a woman who has already been married, who has to give explicit consent, and a woman for whom this is the first marriage, for whom silence constitutes consent (Article 23). Permitting a man to marry up to four wives on condition of equitableness ('*adl*), it accepts male authority within the family. Four conditions of equitableness were laid down. The minimum age for marriage for men and women was set at 15 years (Article 15).¹² Regarding divorce, it grants both parties the right to petition (Article 47) and states that a judge has to take responsibility for cases initiated by women. Yet the law does not prohibit the practice of wife repudiation or unilateral divorce (*talaq*), though all divorces have to be brought before the court for registration. In cases of separation, custody reverts to the father at the age of seven for boys and 10 for girls.¹³

A number of parliamentarians and jurists opposed the presidential decree, arguing that the Presidential Council did not have the authority to enact such legislation without the approval of parliament. A group of women in Aden, supported by lawyers and civil rights activists, held a demonstration in April 1992 against the implementation of the decree.¹⁴ Organized opposition by women in the South, however, was relatively ineffective in the face of general abandonment by the Yemeni Socialist Party of its commitment to progressive, secular social policies — possible reaction to popular disenchantment with the socialist government. Beyond organizing some demonstrations, the official women's or-

ganization, the General Union of Yemeni Women, did little lobbying to secure or protect women's rights. One explanation is that the Women's Union was more a tool of the state leadership than an expression of support from below. Lacking political leadership from the top of the YSP, little time or effort was expended on the issue.¹⁵

As Maxine Molyneux has ascertained, the personal status decree enacted as a common legal code for a unified Yemen did not represent a new national system based on shared values, or the capacity of the state to impose a new pattern of family relations. Rather, it was a result of the political divisions in contention during a transitional period in Yemen's politics running from unification in May 1990 through the civil war of May-July 1994. It reflected overall shifts and conflicts in Yemeni politics and the balance of influence and power in the new state. As such, it was a measure of both the weakness of women as an identifiable social and political force and the importance that some parties attributed to this issue. In matters of family law and women's rights, the prevailing tendency during this period was the narrowing of the di-



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vision between the two political and legal systems—that of the conservative, tribal north and a secular, Marxist south—by the northern code eventually prevailing over the southern.¹⁶

With victory over the south in the civil war of 1994, the authority of the North's political ideology and configurations prevailed with little opposition. In the Constitution, amended in September 1994 after the war, Islam was designated "the source of all legislation (Article 3)." No mention was made of discrimination, although citizens were deemed all equal in rights and duties (Article 40). In addition, Article 47 states that: "The state shall guarantee to its citizens their personal freedom, preserve their dignity and their security." Statements relating specifically to women's rights uphold the government's adherence to the UN Charter and the International Declaration of Human Rights as well as guarantees of state protection of mothers and children and sponsorship of the young. Yemen has signed and ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, although this treaty is not mentioned in the Constitution. The Constitution further affirms that:

Women are the sisters of men. They have rights and duties, which are guaranteed and assigned by *shari'a* and stipulated by law (Article 31).¹⁷

Any references to the specific rights of women, however, were removed from the Constitution. Women were affected in the aftermath of the war, both by the cost of the war in general and by the influence that the Islamists came to hold in the new government in Sana'a. The result has been ever greater victory for the North despite continuous claims that the end-product represented a compromise.

Yet, it is safe to assume that in the absence of a strong central state, local legal practices and interpretations vary. Legal matters pertaining to the family may be settled in accordance with a variety of authorities and interpretations of *shari'a*. In the Zaidi areas (in political terms the most conservative part of the country), *ijtihad*, or interpretation of *shari'a*, is, in general terms, more favorable to women than in the Shafi'i regions, where more orthodox constraints, mediated through

the Sunni interpretation of the law, apply. This variety of legal practices in the North is compounded by the prevalence in tribal areas of elements of tribal law, known elsewhere as *'urf* (tradition), but in Yemen also as *akham al-aslaf* (rules of the ancestors). The legal system is characterized by heterogeneity and by considerable pragmatism with regard to interpretation.¹⁸

Candidates and Voters

On April 27, 1997, Yemen held its second parliamentary election and the first since North-South tensions led to a two-month civil war in 1994. Relations between North and South remained so strained that the largest southern opposition party, the Yemeni Socialist Party, boycotted the election. Women were eager and serious participants, although only a dozen ran as candidates. International observers noted that women played an important role in the administration of the elections as party agents, election monitors, voters, and candidates, although there were fewer women candidates than in the previous election.¹⁹ One delegation, covering the immediate pre-election period, was encouraged by steps taken by election officials, political parties and non-governmental organizations to increase the number of women who registered to vote. The increase in women's registration was dramatic in a significant number of parliamentary constituencies, it noted. In some constituencies, however, the number of women registered was quite low. In two constituencies, no women were registered to vote. In addition, the requirement for a photograph on voter identification cards may have caused many women who registered not to obtain the cards, the delegation suggested. This would have prevented them from voting. It recommended voter education to avoid this problem and statements by religious leaders that women may be photographed in order to participate in elections.²⁰

Separate facilities for women, overseen by women were offered at election sites. One observer witnessed an incident in which the woman chairing the election committee made clear to the male governor, when he approached and questioned her, that she knew the rules better than he.²¹ Female turnout was much greater in the urban areas than in the vil-

lages, but nationally it was a solid 30 percent, up from 19 percent in 1993.²² Concerted outreach and education efforts by the Supreme Elections Committee, the political parties and the Arab Democratic Institute contributed to this increase.²³

Prior to 1997, just two of 301 members of parliament were women; a number which did not increase with the new round of polling. During the last elections in 1993, the 43 female candidates encountered so much hostility that only three have chosen to run again. In 1997, only 16 of more than 2,000 candidates were women; most of them ran as independents because major parties refused to back them. Nonetheless, even the Islah party, whose extremist wing barred the use of musical instruments in its campaign jingles, signed up women voters in its strongholds, wagering that most of them would vote as their husbands did.²⁴ Islah won 62 seats in the parliament in 1993 partly by busing women to the polls. During voter registrations for the 1997 election, Islah was the most active party in signing women up to vote. Among other social questions, the party focused considerable attention on women. It had a women's organization associated with the party and advocated an Islamic solution to the woman question. It blamed Western influence for promoting inappropriate ideas of conflict between the sexes, and for recommending identical social roles for men and women. Islah stressed the need for women to achieve equality with men by performing their role in the home. While most Islamists did not, in principle, oppose the right of women to go out to work, they regarded this as acceptable only with the permission of the husband and as an activity subordinate to the domestic duties of women. Islah also spoke out against co-educational schooling, or what it called social mixing (*takhallut al-ta'lim*). Overall, the party blamed social problems on Yemen's divergence from the path of true Islam.²⁵ In 1997, Islah won only 53 seats, although six independents eventually declared their support for the party.²⁶ Even with this loss, the general pattern, true to Islah's assumptions, is that women rarely challenge male ascendancy when they vote.²⁷

In general, the political parties remain ambivalent about women as candidates. All political parties in their election pro-

grams declared support for increasing women's participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. Prior to the 1997 election, Islah allowed the head of its women's division to give a brief speech at the party conference — then had her escorted back to a separate room. It presented a paper at an Arab Democratic Institute (founded by Dr. Raufa Hassan after the 1993 election to encourage public participation by women) seminar stating that women could be elected to any position — except president. The sister of an Islamic lawyer was among Islah's cadre of female activists in the city of Hodeidah. Yet, when asked if they would consider running for parliament, she and her colleagues glanced at their male supervisors and said the time isn't right. "Allah did not prohibit women to be voters, or to be candidates," explained Muhammad Qahtan, Islah's political director. But "there is another point of view within the Islah that still rejects such a change."²⁸ The ruling General People's Congress (GPC) has also been indecisive. During the pre-election period in Sana'a, party leaders promised to work to elect at least 20 women in parliament. However, when the ruling party's list of 221 candidates came out, the names of only two women appeared. A party official explained that there were not enough qualified women to choose from.²⁹

In the makeup of the ruling establishment, the role of women has been limited, although they have gained a bit of visibility. Only two women serve in the parliament: both from the General People's Congress and both from Aden. None are in the 29-member Cabinet or in the 59-member upper house, the Consultative Council.³⁰ The highest-ranking woman in the government is Undersecretary of Information Amat Aleem As-Suswa. In early March of 1997, she learned that parliament had passed legislation lifting the ban on marriage for girls under fifteen. She contacted the legal adviser to Salih, who then sent the law back to parliament without his signature. Despite weak representation in parliament, a highly placed, influential woman can occasionally make a difference.³¹ Yet, female presence in senior government positions remains a rarity. Besides the just mentioned deputy minister, there are two assistant deputy ministers, a dean

of education, department heads in education, health, and social affairs, and a few general managers who are women.³² Even where women are appointed to top government positions, they are predominantly assigned to specific areas such as education, health, and social welfare. This has the effect of ghettoization, prolonging women's ineligibility for traditionally male preserves. One woman has been appointed to the 15-judge Supreme Court. Yet, all women judges appointed by the former PDRY have been removed from the bench.³³ Twenty-six women are serving in Yemen's diplomatic corps.³⁴

Explanatory Variables Class Structure

Yemen, the most impoverished country on the oil-rich Arabian peninsula, has embarked on a process of political liberalization. Women have played a prominent role in this democratization process as campaign supporters, candidates, election monitors and voters. However, they have not reaped the fruits of their labors. It is difficult for women to take on the task of political leadership when basic needs (overcoming illiteracy, a high birth rate, inadequate health care facilities, etc.) are not met and true gender balance has not been achieved in other areas of life. Democratization does not automatically lead to victory for women; it can mean increased hardship. Their concerns will not necessarily be taken up by freely elected governments, nor will their participation in politics necessarily be intensified. Conservative and Islamist forces may gain representation, promoting neo-traditionalist female roles.

Women in Yemen are not strong enough as a political force to make their voices heard or to counter their influence. Middle class women, benefiting from greater economic opportunity, education, mass communications and eventual legal reform, are usually at the center of change. This social stratum is tiny in Yemen. As yet, no women's movement obtains in Yemen. A Yemeni Women's Union with various branches exists. Largely a creature of the government, it has fallen on hard times, receiving little political and financial support. Some of its units are being aided in development as non-governmental organizations by the Dutch. Other non-governmental women's organizations have been established, but no mass movement is within

sight. In fact, a basically all-male leadership has restricted official concern about women to matters of population policy and education. The link between quality of life, education, and fertility has been recognized in the National Population Strategy. Yet, most of the activity related to women's basic needs has come from international donors.

Regime Orientation

Regime orientation and ideology are shaped by the overwhelming victory of the General People's Congress (GPC), the party of the North, in the April 1997 elections. The YSP boycotted the elections — contributing to the huge margin of victory for the GPC (239 seats) — and was entirely shut out of legislative participation. While women in Yemen have voting rights and a grant of equality in the Constitution, their lives are shaped by a personal status law based on the *shari'a* and the conservative family code of the former YAR. In effect, the personal status law is not in conformity with the Republic of Yemen's Constitution. The only credible opposition party is Islah, the tribal/Islamist party, a coalition of tribal forces, committed urban Islamists, and conservative merchants, which had shared power in the pre-1997 coalition government. The radical Islamist wing of Islah suffered heavily in the April elections, while the more traditional tribal elements held their ground. Given the fractious make-up of Yemen, the GPC cannot afford to appear as domineering. Thus, for the sake of national unity, the government includes some non-GPC members — although they are admitted as participants, not partners. Therefore, unlike previous coalitions, the government's program is that of the GPC, not a piecemeal compromise.³⁵ The question of women's rights in Yemen depends upon the overall goals of the country's politics and the balance of forces prevailing within it. Although constrained by patriarchal structures, limited in their earning capacities, playing a token role in contemporary political life, Yemeni women can vote and drive and are, at least in some aspects, more liberated — if not more well-off — than their sisters in the Arabian peninsula.

Economic Development

Yemen's economy provides little security for women and is thus unable to

provide a foundation of material support for political activity. Yemen has witnessed a staggering economic downturn since unification in 1990. Some reasons for this are the merging of two administrations without applying efficiency standards, the return of almost one million migrants after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and a dramatic drop in the level of foreign donor support for Yemen³⁶ — some of which is returning. Intent on economic reform, the country negotiated a three phase program of economic restructuring with the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1995. Its latest phases, which removed subsidies on many staple items from gasoline to flour, wheat, and cooking gas, led to a week of riots and demonstrations against the resultant price rises which left more than 50 people dead.³⁷

IMF and World Bank loans come with conditions of varying severity, known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs).

breakdown in law and order due to tribal unrest (tribal kidnapping of foreigners) and hostility in the South, and a festering border dispute with Saudi Arabia, all serve to detract politicians from the needs and concerns of women.

Employment

Regime Orientation, Class Structure, and Economic Development as Significant Explanatory Variables Regime Orientation and Juridical System

Economic development takes place in Yemen in a political system characterized by a absence of a comprehensive civil code. Since unification, personal status law especially is governed by Islamic canon law, the *shari'a*. Similar to the laws and traditions of other world religions, Islam does not prescribe gender equality and equal treatment before the law. As a result, state law, limited industrialization, and cultural attitudes combine to keep

as a result of a World Bank and International Monetary Fund structural adjustment policy package. The country has experienced riots and demonstrations against price rises, stemming from IMF reforms. The austerities required by debt servicing and structural adjustment, subsequent social disparities and the resultant political repression tend to delegitimize governments leaning toward Western-style systems and revive questions of cultural identity. In this context, Islamist movements often renew calls for greater control over female mobility. With the victory of the tribal and Islamic north in the civil war, the *shari'a* has been declared the sole source of legislation. While Islah, representing conservative, Islamic, and tribal interests, has thus far worked within the system — first as part of a coalition and now in opposition, it is home to a more radical Islamist strain. In times of economic hardship and social change, polemics surrounding women and the family emerge as possible responses, a means of coping in patriarchal societies undergoing modernization and demographic transition. This exists as a potential danger in Yemeni politics — along with tribal unrest and a more general lack of law and order, owing to the government's inability to address the fundamental needs of the population and provide essential services.

Class Structure

Whether modernization and paid employment have resulted in an increase or a lessening of women's economic status continues to be a matter of debate. Historically, development has had a differential impact on people's lives, particularly on those of women. Its effects have been positive as well as negative, depending on region, culture, and class. The following analysis of the current economic status of Yemeni women demonstrates the complexity of this process.

Economic Development

The catastrophic state of the Yemeni economy remains the government's most pressing burden. Oil accounts for more than 80 percent of total exports and its falling price is making things difficult for the 16 million Yemenis. The government was receiving 70 percent of its revenue from oil a couple of years ago; now its income has been halved. Officials face the dismal task of cutting 25 percent from

Table 1
Basic Indicators Relevant to Political Participation of Yemeni Women

	Women in Population 1995	Illiteracy Women Men 1990	Population of Women in Parliament 1995	Right to Vote Won By Women 1970
Yemen	51%	74% 50%	<1%	1970

(Seager 1997, 102-103)

These programs require governments to reduce state subsidies and social spending, and to increase economic growth through privatization and international trade. These social and economic "adjustments" particularly affect those most vulnerable to cuts in social services and government support: the poor, single-earner households, and those on the economic margins. Women, left out of the policymaking process in the first place, are always among the hardest hit. Women also serve as the shock absorbers of economic crisis for their families and households, using their labor to compensate for loss of household income and cutbacks in government services, and curtailing their consumption first.³⁸

A social fund has been set up to help the poor. However, the experience of other countries demonstrates that such funds are woefully inadequate. Consequently, economic problems, a pervasive

women in a situation of economic dependency and limited labor force participation. State policy reflects that of the former North Yemen, the victor in the 1994 civil war. Government officials remain tied to the ideology of domesticity and refrain from encouraging female participation in the paid labor force.

In some countries, a regime's search for political legitimacy, a larger labor force, or an expanded social base have led it to construct health, educational, and welfare services conducive to greater work participation by women and to encourage female activity in the public sphere. Examples are the Iraqi Baathists during the 1960s and 1970s, the Pahlavi state in Iran of the same period, and Tunisia under former president Bourguiba. This has not been the case in Yemen. Instead, an authoritarian regime, adopting the trappings of democracy, has had to impose austerities on its population

the 1999 budget — on top of a 30 percent cut last year. (With average income per person only \$348, this will be painful).³⁹ Pumping close to its maximum capacity of approximately 400,000 barrels a day, the country remains a minor player among the oil producing nations. Deposits of natural gas have been found, especially in association with oil; but, exploitation of reserves has taken a lower priority than oil development and exploration.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) classification of 1990 placed Yemen in the group of the 40 least developed countries in the world, with an estimated per capita gross national product (GNP) of slightly over \$500. The World Bank categorizes the country as a moderately indebted, middle-income nation. The country continues to rely heavily on foreign development aid as did both Yemens prior to unification in 1990. The industrial sector of the Yemeni economy is relatively small, employing about 11 percent of the workforce. As a whole the economy is at a low level of integration with only weak linkages between various sectors. The distribution system remains primitive, with much of the country isolated from the main urban centers where services are concentrated.⁴⁰

Women's Work in Yemen: The Current Scene

The following analysis demonstrates that a combination of state law, limited industrialization and cultural attitudes serves to keep women in Yemen in a situation of economic dependency and limited formal labor force participation.

The Invisibility of Women's Work

One of biggest difficulties in research on development is accounting for the multiple roles of women and making women's work count. Within the household, the division of labor is such that men are seen to be the primary producers while women are the consumers and have overall responsibility for reproduction and domestic work. In reality, however, women fill the multiple roles of both producers and consumers, in addition to being home managers, mothers and community organizers.

Methodological problems exist in measuring certain aspects of women's work. The most invisible work of all work,

done by women the world over, is domestic work, which continues to go unrecognized, unpaid, undervalued and largely ignored by the law despite its cru-

decisionmakers, some jobs, such as in education or clerical work, were considered more suitable for women than others. Factory work or construction by

Table 2

Women in the Labor Force (1994)

	Proportion of Women in Labour Force	Labor Force Percentages by Gender	
		Women	Men
Yemen	11%	12%	88%

(Seager 1997, 102-103)

cial importance to society. Social values are usually such that most women whose job description reads "housewife and/or mother" do not consider themselves economically active.⁴¹

Ghettoization of the Female Work Force

Labor force participation rates (see Tables 2, 3, and 4) show how many women are in the labor force but do not show what work they do. Differences between women and men in where they work and what they do are as important as differences in their participation rates. According to a survey by the International Labour Organization (ILO), women's activities in developing countries remain highly concentrated in low-wage, low-productivity and precarious forms of employment that tend to lie outside the range of labor regulations and are more prone to exploitation. Moreover, a high percentage of women work in the informal sector or in agriculture, where wages are generally among the lowest.⁴²

Women remain localized in certain occupations in all regions of the world, whatever the level of development. In the industrial sector women tend to be concentrated in a limited number of manufacturing jobs — such as the garment industry. Most women in manufacturing are categorized as laborers, operators and clerical workers. According to the ILO report, most women outside the agricultural sector earn on average about three-fourths of the male wage for the same work in both industrial and developing countries, and the gap is not narrowing.⁴³

In Yemen, the status-ranking of jobs means that women's traditional activities in the rural areas in agriculture and construction are accepted as the norm (although excluded from official data), but in an urban environment and among top

women is regarded as low status in the towns and cities. Work in the health services suffers from prejudice. Nursing and other paramedic activities are of low status, although the position of occupation of doctor is esteemed even for women.⁴⁴

Women's Productive Activities in the Rural Sector Animal Husbandry

Women play a major role in agriculture throughout Yemen. In fact, women's traditional activities in agriculture (and in construction) in the rural areas are accepted as the norm, although excluded from official statistics.⁴⁷ In an occupational survey of the town of Al-Mahwit, the only full-time occupation held by women and recognized by both sexes as a legitimate vocation for women was agriculture.⁴⁸ The proportion of economically active women working in the agricultural sector in Yemen in 1994 percentages is between 26 and 50 percent, according to one estimate.⁴⁹ Women's role in cultivation varies depending upon such factors as social status, land tenure, region and crop. Throughout most of the country, women are responsible for the care of cattle and other livestock. Circumstances of animal husbandry differ significantly in the highlands and the coastal areas. Other than range-land grazing and camel breeding, which are the responsibility of children and men respectively, animal husbandry is almost entirely the domain of females. Women are occasionally involved in hand-feeding camels in the highlands, in the same manner as cows are sustained in the highland areas.

In coastal areas, households can maintain more cattle, which are grazed outdoors. Cattle-owning households may have up to six head, since husbandry demands much less time and effort than in

Table 3
Employment (1993)

	Employers and Own Account Workers* (% of economically active population)		Employees (% of economically active population)		Unpaid Family Workers (% of economically active population)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female+	Male
Yemen	3.1	33.8	2.5	37.1	14.6	8.9

(World Bank 1997, 48-49)

*Employers operate, alone or with one or more partners, their own economic enterprise, or engage independently in a profession or trade, and hire one or more employees on a continuous basis. +Another study puts the percentage of economically active women in Yemen at 17% and the percentage of those noted as working as unpaid family workers at 71%, particularly in agriculture and foodprocessing. It states that the extent to which these latter activities are accounted for as part of GNP is likely to be variable. Other crucial household tasks, such as fetching food and water, providing health and home remedies, caring for children and the elderly, cooking, cleaning and sewing, and provision of shelter and house repairs — activities which provide the crucial precondition for any other work to take place — are not included in economic models but are the foundation for all other aspects of life.⁴⁵

Table 4
Labor Force Structure

	Average Annual Growth (%)*		Female % of Labor Force		Share of Labor Force in Agriculture (%)**	
	1980-95	1995-2010	1980	1995	1980	1990
Yemen	4.1	4.2	33	29	70	58

(World Bank 1997, 44-45, 148-9)

*% Average annual growth rate of the labor force is computed using the exponential end point method.

**Data on the labor force in agriculture should be used with caution. In many countries much of the agricultural employment is informal and unrecorded. This is especially true for women's contribution. One study holds that the proportion of economically active women working in the agricultural sector in Yemen in 1994 (percentages) is between 26 and 50 percent.⁴⁶

the highlands. In the highlands, cows are raised according to typical Yemeni husbandry practice, which necessitates the full-time labor of one person per cow. Cattle are the most valued livestock, especially in the highlands. Families usually have one cow, very rarely two. Cows are not grazed but hand-fed sorghum stalks wrapped in alfalfa. Feeding cows in this manner takes approximately three of four hours a day and is usually done by elderly women. In addition to hand-feeding, cows have to be watered and washed and their quarters cleaned.⁵⁰

In other areas of livestock production, chiefly the province of women, donkeys are kept as beasts of burden in all parts of the country. Camels are found principally in the lowlands. Chickens are raised almost everywhere. Goats and sheep are mostly herded by children in villages,

who take them in the fields for grazing and are paid according to the number of head they supervise. Cleaning of their pens is, however, women's work. In towns and areas where no grazing is available, they are fed alfalfa, which is either grown — and cut and collected — by women of the household or bought in the market.⁵¹

Agriculture

Throughout Yemen, the majority of cultivation tasks are performed by women. Cereals, sorghum, millet, wheat, and barley, mostly rain-fed but sometimes irrigated, are the most popular crops. Vegetables most commonly grown are leeks, tomatoes, potatoes, and alfalfa for animals. In cultivating these crops, women do most of the work, with the exception of ploughing and threshing which are primarily male activities but occasionally

engage women. Cash crops are usually not considered women's work. *Qat*, a mildly narcotic plant chewed in Yemen and other countries on the other side of the Red Sea, particularly, is generally cultivated by men. Women's only role in its cultivation may be weeding. This is viewed not as weeding the *qat* but rather as collecting animal fodder. Other cash crops such as coffee and grapes are also male preserves. While women's work in growing other fruits and vegetables has increased in the last decade, they do not participate in marketing. The use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides is now defined as a male task, although previously women spread manure on the fields. Nonetheless, there are areas, especially in the southern governorates, where women do apply fertilizer. This task, on the whole, however, appears to be an example of a task converted from a female to a male undertaking when it changes from traditional methods to modern technology.⁵²

Women's tasks involve sowing, planting, transplanting, thinning, weeding, most harvesting, winnowing, pulling out roots, manure application, and, in some areas, irrigation. At peak harvesting times, women may spend up to eight hours a day in the fields. In Hadhramawt, women on average contribute 39 percent of the labor in wheat farming. In harvesting and winnowing, women do 80 percent of the work. Alfalfa is almost entirely a women's crop. Date production is mainly a male activity, although women do 48 percent of the trimming, 52 percent of the picking, and 80 percent of the sorting. Women can be seen throughout the day working in the fields in Wadi Hadhramawt at all times of the year.⁵³

The Household

The participation of women in village life is vital. In addition to agricultural tasks, women are exclusively in charge of the household. Girls are socialized from an early age to take part in this activity. A woman's duties can average up to 16 hours a day for a mother with small children, fields to cultivate and livestock to keep, without any assistance from a male relative. Under 10 percent of rural women are literate. Women have little time to attend school, may be discouraged or forbidden by men to seek an education

and may deem it irrelevant to the heavy workloads and responsibilities of the rural sector.⁵⁴

Women in rural areas are responsible for housework, ranging from water and fuel collection to cooking, cleaning and child care. These tasks can take varying amounts of time depending on circumstances, which may be related to the number of children in the family or whether the home has running water. If water must be fetched from a remote well or spring over difficult terrain, it undoubtedly will take longer. The acquisition of fuel takes two main forms: collecting firewood, done once or twice weekly and often taking half a day or more, and the manufacture of dung cakes, which can take about five hours weekly, and includes collection of animal droppings near the house. With the introduction of bottled gas and paraffin cookers, as well as the almost total disappearance of trees, this is a task which is quickly vanishing except for the very poorest women.⁵⁵

Exceptions to these generalizations about women's role in agricultural production exist. One such is the area known as Wadi Rima in the Tihama (no other details known). Another pertains to women of the *sada* group who would suffer a loss of status by working the land. In the area of Jabal Sabr, near Ta'izz, women own and cultivate *qat* for their own benefit and even sell it themselves in the *suj* (market).⁵⁶

Transition to a Money Economy

Remittances from male relatives working in the oil-rich nations of the area helped raise the standard of living in most villag and rural households in the 1970s and 1980s. Electrification brought television, video, refrigeration and food processing appliances which changed women's routine and often helped reduce their labor. Remittances also helped improve village water supplies, either from standpipes or with piping to each house from boreholes and were sometimes used to build an independent house or buy a vehicle. Along with state initiatives, they also financed road construction and telephones with access to new facilities and products, traditional cultivation began to be neglected. This was due to increased acreage devoted to growing *qat* at the expense of food crops, the

heavy labor demands and low yields of refined sorghum cultivation and the unreliability of rain, the absence of young men to carry out heavy farm labor, and the low subsidized prices of imported grains.⁵⁷

Women's lives were greatly affected by the remittance economy. A few women suffered abandonment by their emigrant husbands. The influx of remittances led to the development of new class differences. Cynthia Myntti's research in a community in southwestern Yemen discovered growing class distinctions among households resulting from emigration.⁵⁸ Newly affluent women abandoned work outside the home while the poorest went to work in the community for wages. Local agricultural production suffered, since sharecroppers and hired laborers cultivated the fields less carefully than women previously had tilled their family-owned lands. Women were left in the care of a male family member or neighbor who took over household decisionmaking. Women were left with heavier household and child-rearing duties without acquiring increased responsibility or power.⁵⁹

The world's agricultural labor force is shrinking year by year. The usual assumption is that women make up an increasing proportion of the labor force that remains, with the result that agriculture becomes more "feminized" than it has been traditionally. Myntti's research suggests that the domestic effects of migration were not simply to fill the vacuum created by the absence of men.

Emigration slowed considerable in the 1980s, with fewer opportunities available for migrants in the Gulf. As the Gulf crisis unfolded in the second half of 1990, the Republic of Yemen was obliged to accommodate 800,000 of its nationals forced to leave Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other states of the region.⁶⁰ The mass repatriation, resulting in losses for many of the migrants and a swelling of the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed, created difficulties for women. They suffered both from the loss of remittances and from the generally arduous economic situation that resulted from the loss of this significant portion of national income.⁶¹ Life was often harsh in the camps established for the returnees. Women had to cope with limited resources, worry

about water, guard against theft, try to keep children clean and clothes washed, and see to medical care. One measure of the situation was the suspension of the normal codes of modesty and seclusion. Women were not confined to their compounds, often did not veil, and, like men, sought every occasion to get food or aid and aggressively demand services.⁶²

Employment in Urban Areas

Yemen has been experiencing rapid urbanization. While 20 percent of the population was living in urban areas in 1980, the percentage had jumped to 34 percent in 1995.⁶³ Rural to urban migration has been occurring, a by-product of socioeconomic transformation, spurred by the influx of wealth from migrant workers. The era of prosperity ended abruptly when Iraq invaded Kuwait in early August 1990. Between 800,000 and a million Yemenis were forced home from neighboring oil-rich countries as a result. This represented a population increase of about eight percent.⁶⁴ Most returnees were reluctant to return to the farm work they had sought to escape through work abroad. Where 52 percent had been agricultural workers before migrating, less than four percent intended to return to farming.⁶⁵ Migration had created a relative labor shortage, even for day laborers. The return reversed this trend and drove unemployment from around four percent to 25 percent. Peddling and begging proliferated.⁶⁶ While data is virtually nonexistent regarding the impact of this repatriation on women, the sharp economic downturn and social dislocations which followed certainly had an effect.

Women at Home

Women's workload is usually eased upon moving to an urban area in a city or smaller town. Housework is their primary occupation, made easier by electricity, purchased fuels and running water in the house. Along with a major reduction in workload, urban life provides an improvement in status for women, displayed by veiling which may take a variety of forms depending on social standing. In the city, life is centered around housework, child care, and socializing. While mornings are devoted to housework and cooking, afternoons revolve around meetings with other women. Socializing is determined by a woman's po-

Continued on page 16

GLOBAL SITUATION REPORT OF CURRENT UNITED

An unofficial tabulation compiled
Numbers apply as of 31 March 1999 and include

United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH)
Established-December 1995
HQ: Sarajevo

CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

ARGENTINA: 34	FRANCE: 128	KENYA: 11	RUSSIAN FED.: 36
AUSTRIA: 36	GERMANY: 164	LITHUANIA: 2	SENEGAL: 18
BANGLADESH: 33	GHANA: 99	MALAYSIA: 50	SPAIN: 57
BULGARIA: 46	GREECE: 15	NEPAL: 41	SWEDEN: 54
CANADA: 29	HUNGARY: 37	NETHERLANDS: 56	SWITZERLAND: 4
CHILE: 29	ICELAND: 3	NIGERIA: 22	THAILAND: 5
DENMARK: 39	INDIA: 102	NORWAY: 24	TUNISIA: 2
EGYPT: 34	INDONESIA: 22	PAKISTAN: 94	TURKEY: 30
ESTONIA: 5	IRELAND: 35	POLAND: 51	UKRAINE: 32
FJI: 20	ITALY: 22	PORTUGAL: 58	U.K.: 70
FINLAND: 30	JORDAN: 150	ROMANIA: 20	U.S.A.: 195

TOTAL: 2,039



Multinational Force and Observers (MFO)
Established- 1979
HQ: Rome, Italy

CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH is unavailable at this time

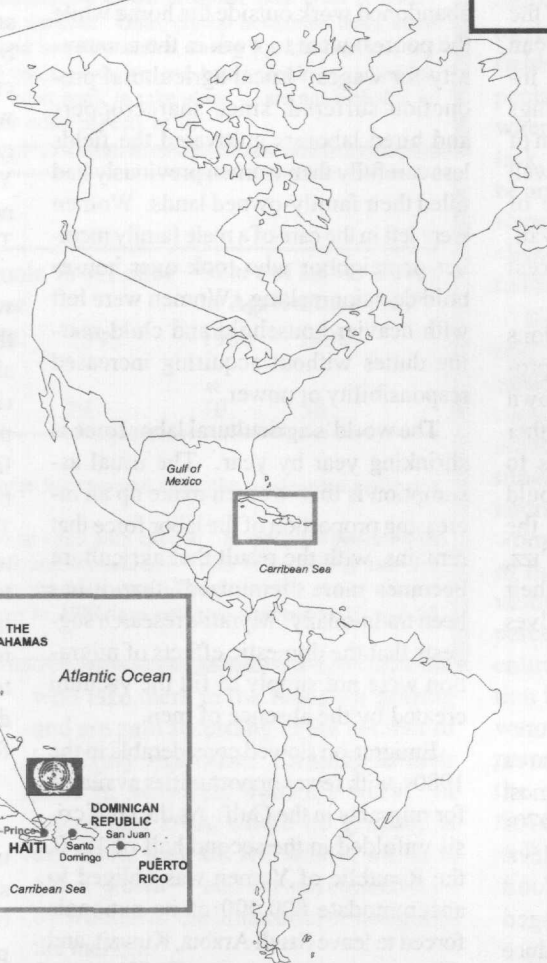
North Atlantic Ocean

UNITED NATIONS CIVILIAN POLICE MISSION IN HAITI (MIPONUH)
Established-December 1997
HQ: Port-au-Prince

CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

ARGENTINA: 145	NIGER: 5
BENIN: 9	SENEGAL: 8
CANADA: 24	TOGO: 7
FRANCE: 36	TUNISIA: 3
MALI: 20	U.S.A.: 30

TOTAL: 287



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (MINURCA)
Established-April 1998
HQ: Bangui

CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

BENIN: 2	FRANCE: 6
BURKINA FASO: 126	GABON: 128
CAMEROON: 1	MALI: 130
CANADA: 51	PORTUGAL: 2
CHAD: 126	SENEGAL: 132
C.D. IVORIE: 234	TOGO: 126
EGYPT: 205	TUNISIA: 1

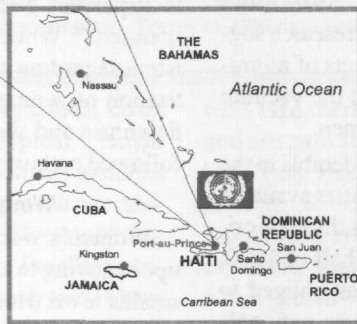
TOTAL: 1,270

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (MINURCA)
Established-April 1998
HQ: Bangui

CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

CHINA: 1	KRUGVYAS
INDIA: 4	NEW ZEALAND
KENYA: 1	TOTAL

Pacific Ocean



Summary (by country) of Troop Contributors to Peacekeeping Operations

ALBANIA: 1	CHINA: 36	HONDURAS: 12	NEPAL: 648	SLOVAK REP.: 37
ARGENTINA: 701	CZECH REP.: 7	HUNGARY: 156	NETHERLANDS: 171	SLOVENIA: 29
AUSTRALIA: 32	DENMARK: 69	ICELAND: 3	NEW ZEALAND: 10	SPAIN: 57
AUSTRIA: 728	EGYPT: 262	INDIA: 728	NIGER: 4	SWEDEN: 84
BANGLADESH: 864	EL SALVADOR: 2	INDONESIA: 35	NIGERIA: 36	SWITZERLAND: 17
BELGIUM: 9	ESTONIA: 6	IRELAND: 709	NORWAY: 39	THAILAND: 10
BENIN: 11	FJI: 610	ITALY: 93	PAKISTAN: 114	TOGO: 133
BRAZIL: 1	FINLAND: 556	JAPAN: 29	POLAND: 1048	TUNISIA: 6
BULGARIA: 49	FRANCE: 457	JORDAN: 162	PORTUGAL: 64	TURKEY: 42
BURKINA FASO: 126	GABON: 128	KENYA: 25	ROMANIA: 26	UKRAINE: 35
CAMEROON: 1	GERMANY: 188	KYRGYZSTAN: 1	KOREA REP.: 12	U.K.: 400
CANADA: 305	GHANA: 769	LITHUANIA: 2	RUSSIAN FED.: 81	URUGUAY: 26
C.D. IVORIE: 234	GREECE: 25	MALAYSIA: 69	SENEGAL: 163	U.S.A.: 254
CHAD: 126	GUINEA: 3	MALI: 150	SINGAPORE: 6	VENEZUELA: 5
CHILE: 36				

TOTAL: 12,069

UNITED NATIONS TRUCE SUPERVISION ORGANIZATION (UNTSO)
Established-June 1948
HQ: Government House, Jerusalem

CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

ARGENTINA: 3	ESTONIA: 1	NORWAY: 12
AUSTRALIA: 12	FINLAND: 12	RUSSIAN FED.: 4
AUSTRIA: 7	FRANCE: 4	SENEGAL: 6
BELGIUM: 6	IRELAND: 11	SLOVAK REP.: 2
CANADA: 11	ITALY: 8	SLOVENIA: 2
CHILE: 3	NETHERLANDS: 12	SWEDEN: 11
CHINA: 5	NEW ZEALAND: 7	SWITZERLAND: 8
DENMARK: 10		U.S.A.: 1

TOTAL: 152

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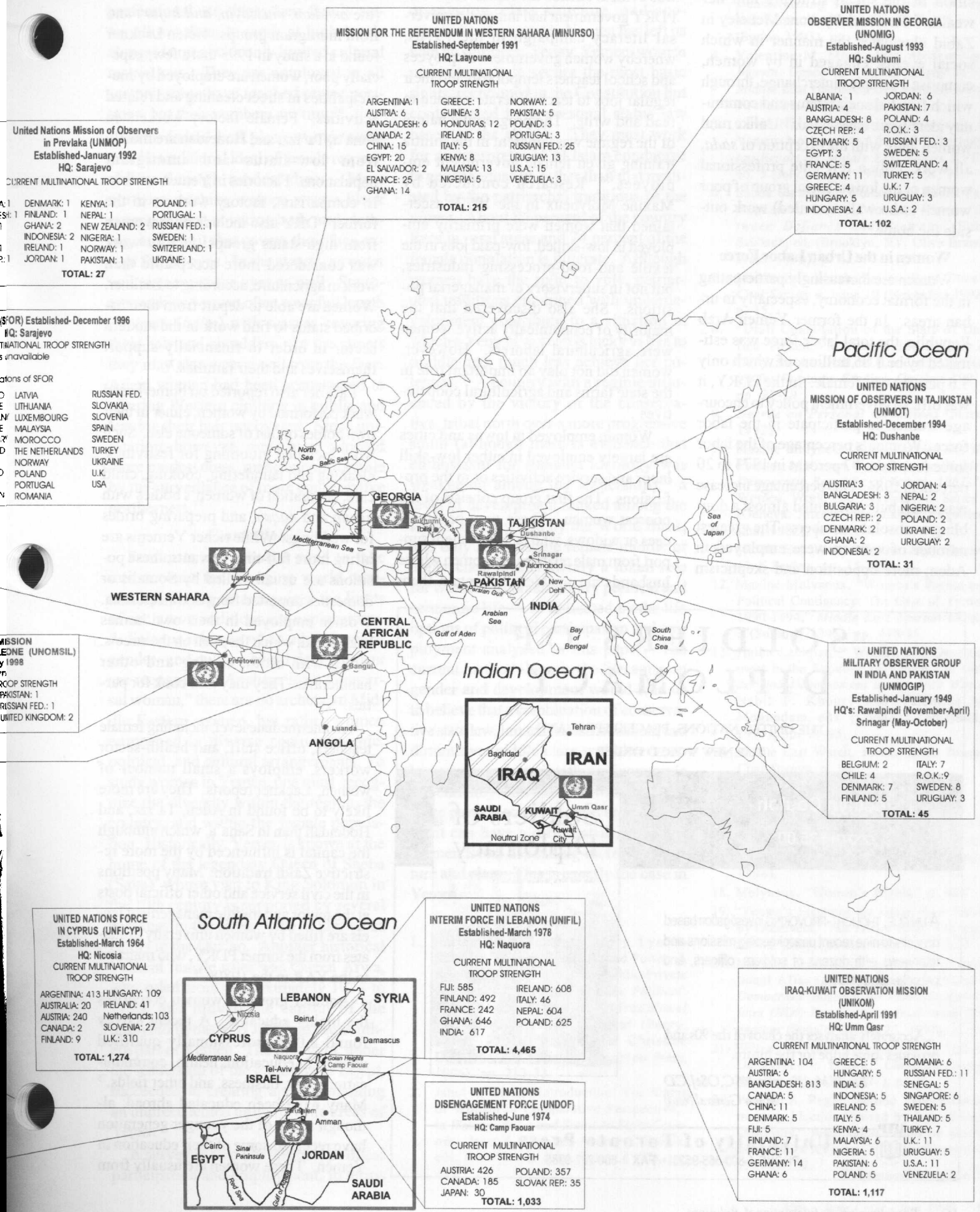


Le centre canadien international
Lester B. Pearson pour la
formation en maintien de la paix

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING AND RELATED OPERATIONS

by PIR from UN Documents

ional civilian police contingents in the totals.



UNITED NATIONS MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA (MINURSO)
Established-September 1991
HQ: Laayoune
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

ARGENTINA: 1	GREECE: 1	NORWAY: 2
AUSTRIA: 6	GUINEA: 3	PAKISTAN: 5
BANGLADESH: 6	HONDURAS: 12	POLAND: 3
CANADA: 2	IRELAND: 8	PORTUGAL: 3
CHINA: 15	ITALY: 5	RUSSIAN FED.: 25
EGYPT: 20	KENYA: 8	URUGUAY: 13
EL SALVADOR: 2	MALAYSIA: 13	U.S.A.: 15
FRANCE: 25	NIGERIA: 5	VENEZUELA: 3
GHANA: 14		

TOTAL: 215

UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA (UNOMIG)
Established-August 1993
HQ: Sukhumi
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

ALBANIA: 1	JORDAN: 6
AUSTRIA: 4	PAKISTAN: 7
BANGLADESH: 8	POLAND: 4
CZECH REP.: 4	R.O.K.: 3
DENMARK: 5	RUSSIAN FED.: 3
EGYPT: 3	SWEDEN: 5
FRANCE: 5	SWITZERLAND: 4
GERMANY: 11	TURKEY: 5
GREECE: 4	U.K.: 7
HUNGARY: 5	URUGUAY: 3
INDONESIA: 4	U.S.A.: 2

TOTAL: 102

United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP)
Established-January 1992
HQ: Sarajevo
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

DENMARK: 1	KENYA: 1	POLAND: 1
FINLAND: 1	NEPAL: 1	PORTUGAL: 1
GHANA: 2	NEW ZEALAND: 2	RUSSIAN FED.: 1
INDONESIA: 2	NIGERIA: 1	SWEDEN: 1
IRELAND: 1	NORWAY: 1	SWITZERLAND: 1
JORDAN: 1	PAKISTAN: 1	UKRAINE: 1

TOTAL: 27

MISSION OF OBSERVERS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (SFOR) Established-December 1996
HQ: Sarajevo
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH
Troop strengths unavailable

Contributors of SFOR

DENMARK	RUSSIAN FED.
FINLAND	SLOVAKIA
FRANCE	SLOVENIA
GERMANY	SPAIN
HUNGARY	SWEDEN
INDONESIA	TURKEY
ITALY	UKRAINE
JAPAN	U.K.
KOREA	USA
NETHERLANDS	
NORWAY	
POLAND	
PORTUGAL	
ROMANIA	

UNITED NATIONS MISSION OF OBSERVERS IN TAJIKISTAN (UNMOT)
Established-December 1994
HQ: Dushanbe
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

AUSTRIA: 3	JORDAN: 4
BANGLADESH: 3	NEPAL: 2
BULGARIA: 3	NIGERIA: 2
CZECH REP.: 2	POLAND: 2
DENMARK: 2	UKRAINE: 2
GHANA: 2	URUGUAY: 2
INDONESIA: 2	

TOTAL: 31

MISSION OF OBSERVERS IN SIERRA LEONE (UNOMSIL)
Established-September 1998
HQ: Freetown
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

PAKISTAN: 1
RUSSIAN FED.: 1
UNITED KINGDOM: 2

UNITED NATIONS MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN (UNMOGIP)
Established-January 1949
HQ's: Rawalpindi (November-April) Srinagar (May-October)
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

BELGIUM: 2	ITALY: 7
CHILE: 4	R.O.K.: 9
DENMARK: 7	SWEDEN: 8
FINLAND: 5	URUGUAY: 3

TOTAL: 45

UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN IRAQ (UNIFIL)
Established-March 1978
HQ: Naqura
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

FIJI: 585	IRELAND: 608
FINLAND: 492	ITALY: 46
FRANCE: 242	NEPAL: 604
GHANA: 646	POLAND: 625
INDIA: 617	

TOTAL: 4,465

UNITED NATIONS FORCE IN CYPRUS (UNFICYP)
Established-March 1964
HQ: Nicosia
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

ARGENTINA: 413	HUNGARY: 109
AUSTRALIA: 20	IRELAND: 41
AUSTRIA: 240	Netherlands: 103
CANADA: 2	SLOVENIA: 27
FINLAND: 9	U.K.: 310

TOTAL: 1,274

UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (UNIFIL)
Established-March 1978
HQ: Naqura
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

FIJI: 585	IRELAND: 608
FINLAND: 492	ITALY: 46
FRANCE: 242	NEPAL: 604
GHANA: 646	POLAND: 625
INDIA: 617	

TOTAL: 4,465

UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT FORCE (UNDOF)
Established-June 1974
HQ: Camp Faour
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

AUSTRIA: 426	POLAND: 357
CANADA: 185	SLOVAK REP.: 35
JAPAN: 30	

TOTAL: 1,033

UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION (UNIKOM)
Established-April 1991
HQ: Umm Qasr
CURRENT MULTINATIONAL TROOP STRENGTH

ARGENTINA: 104	GREECE: 5	ROMANIA: 6
AUSTRIA: 6	HUNGARY: 5	RUSSIAN FED.: 11
BANGLADESH: 813	INDIA: 5	SENEGAL: 5
CANADA: 5	INDONESIA: 5	SINGAPORE: 6
CHINA: 11	IRELAND: 5	SWEDEN: 5
DENMARK: 5	ITALY: 5	THAILAND: 5
FIJI: 5	KENYA: 4	TURKEY: 7
FINLAND: 7	MALAYSIA: 6	U.K.: 11
FRANCE: 11	NIGERIA: 5	URUGUAY: 5
GERMANY: 14	PAKISTAN: 6	U.S.A.: 11
GHANA: 6	POLAND: 5	VENEZUELA: 2

TOTAL: 1,117

Continued from page 14

sition in the social structure and her wealth.⁶⁷ Research by Anne Meneley in Zabid elucidates the manner in which social events, engaged in by women, comprise a complex interchange, through which familial social status and community identity are constituted.⁶⁸ Unlike rural women who, with the exception of *sada*, all work, only a few elite professional women or the lowest social group of poor women (who walk unveiled) work outside the home.⁶⁹

Women in the Urban Labor Force

Women are increasingly participating in the formal economy, especially in urban areas. In the former Yemen Arab Republic, the total labor force was estimated to be 1.85 million, of which only 5.6 percent was female. In the PDRY, it was official government policy to encourage women to participate in the labor force. Women's percentage of the labor force rose from 17 percent in 1973 to 20 percent in 1984. This percentage increase was small but represented almost a doubling in absolute numbers. The greatest number of women were employed in Aden; more opposition and skepticism

to women's employment in this sector was evident outside the capital city. The PDRY government had initiated a universal literacy campaign in the 1970s, whereby women government employees and school teachers temporarily left their regular jobs to teach illiterate women to read and write. The progressive nature of the regime was apparent in the militia training given female government employees.⁷⁰ Research conducted by Maxine Molyneux in the 1970s ascertained that women were primarily employed in low-skilled, low-paid jobs in the textile and food-processing industries, but not in supervisory or managerial positions. She also discovered that the majority of economically active women were agricultural laborers. However, women did not play an important role in the state farms and agricultural cooperatives.⁷¹

Women employed in towns and cities are largely employed in either low-skill labor and service activities or in the professions. The first group consists of the poorest women. These may be divorcees or widows, who lack sufficient support from male relatives, or women whose husbands are unable to maintain them

and their children. Often these working women come from the lowest social strata (the *akhdam*, *muzzayyin*, and *hujur*) and from immigrant groups. Helen Lackner found in a study in 1995 that a few, especially poor, women are employed by municipalities in street cleaning and related activities. Female factory workers in Sana'a, Ta'izz, and Hodeidah are mostly from low-status and immigrant populations. Factories in Yemen are few. In comparison, factory workers in the former PDRY also include poor women from high-status groups; factory work was considered more acceptable than work in agriculture, according to Lackner. Women are able to depart from their ascribed status to find work in the modern sector in order to financially support themselves and their families.⁷²

Lackner also reported on home-based work performed by women, either in their own homes or that of someone else. Such work included grooming for festivities, cleaning and laundering, cooking, child care, decoration of women's bodies with *henna* and *naqsh*, and preparing brides for weddings. While richer Yemenis are hiring more full-time servants, these positions are usually filled by Somalis or domestics imported from Southeast Asia. Women employed in their own homes bake bread, which they sell on the streets, along with cloth, sewing and other handicrafts. They may also cook for parties.⁷³

An intermediate level, including female teachers, office staff, and health-sector workers, employs a small number of women, Lackner reports. They are more likely to be found in Aden, Ta'izz, and Hodeidah than in Sana'a, which although the capital is influenced by the more restrictive Zaidi tradition. Many positions in the civil service and other official posts at the junior and middle management levels are filled by women university graduates from the former PDRY, who migrated to the YAR in the 1980s.⁷⁴

Another group of women comprises the highly educated. A recent survey found 2,000 professionally qualified women in education, health, communications, law, business, and other fields.⁷⁵ Many have been educated abroad, although many of the younger generation have received some of their education in Yemen. These women are usually from

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the higher social strata. They pursue professional activities; their family status allows them to work at high levels alongside men with only limited cultural restrictions. They are employed in all sectors; some have reached senior positions, but their numbers are tiny.⁷⁶

In the formal work place, women maintain the traditional ideal of female respectability through modest dress. Most northern working women wear a black outer garment, covering body and clothing, and a veil that covers their face except for the eyes. In the streets, an outer veil may cover the eyes as well. Southern working women often wear full length raincoats (*balto*) with scarves covering their hair and shoulders. In the streets they may also wear a veil over the face. Adeni women had been accustomed to wearing Western clothing in public and leaving their hair uncovered. Since unification, however, most have adopted more modest dress, made uncomfortable by the surveillance of more conservative northerners.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Feminists and scholars need to take into account the changing world community. Doing so recognizes the limits of one's own traditions and explanations. A dialogue is begun when other forms of gender- and culture-based development are recognized. As there is no "universal woman," there are no archetypal Middle Eastern women, but rather women enmeshed in diverse socioeconomic, political, and cultural arrangements. To study women in Yemen, one must recognize the diversity within the region, the country, and within the female population. Historically, Yemen is known as the home of the legendary Queen of Sheba (Saba) whose visit to King Solomon in the 10th century is supported by several passages in the Bible. She is known as Bilqis in the Qur'an. Another historical Yemeni female ruler was Queen Arwa, who ruled from approximately 1074 to 1138, and moved the capital of the Sulayhid dynasty to Jiblah in the southern part of Yemen. The Sulayhid, under the leadership of the Fatimids of Egypt, succeeded in creating and maintaining an unprecedented unity of wide areas of Yemen.

A survey of two life options, political participation and employment, in terms

of the independent variables of regime orientation, class structure, and economic development in Yemen has left us with no surprises. Today, Yemeni women must struggle to secure the most basic rights, mentioned in the Constitution but contradicted by a personal status law based on the *shari'a*. They must work for an interpretation of Islam conducive to gender equality, rather than that mediated by the patriarchal traditions of the *ulama*. About 86 percent of the country lives in rural areas and 74 percent of the female population is illiterate. Although women have the right to vote, patriarchal traditions combined with underdevelopment contribute to a situation in which a Yemeni woman is lucky to live to middle age, much less achieve her potential.⁷⁸ A country with a regime influenced by the victory of the conservative, tribal north over a more progressive south (although there is evidence that enthusiasm for socialist ideology was weakening among the leadership),⁷⁹ a level of development ranked among the lowest in the world by the World Bank, and only a minuscule female middle or upper class means merely a token role for women in contemporary political and economic life — as indicated by the life options of political participation and employment analyzed in this paper. The current methodology in the literature on gender and development would lead us to believe that a combination of conservative state law, limited industrialization, and diminutive middle class would serve to keep women in a situation of economic dependency and limited formal labor force participation. Moreover, development can have a differential impact on women lives, depending on region, culture and class. This is exactly the case in Yemen.

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