CHAPTER VI

THE DECISION TO RECOGNISE THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF SOUTH YEMEN

(30 NOVEMBER, 1967)
Among vital foreign policy issues, the reunification of the southern and northern parts of the country has been at the top of Yemen's agenda ever since the south became independent in November 1967. A constant element in Yemen's foreign policy throughout the Mutawakkilat Imanate and into the period of the YAR, reunification represented a common aspiration for the Yemeni people. The reunification of the country in May 1990 nullified the division between the northern and southern parts of Yemen and affirmed the reality of a united Yemen. As early as October 1962, the YAR had announced that the people of South Yemen must be allowed to decide on the issue of merging with the north and followed this by calls for decolonisation of these territories and self-determination for the people. The YAR recognised the South Yemeni people as partners working for the country's unity in rejection of the Imam's dynastic claims to sovereignty.

Yet, on 30 November, 1967, the YAR government decided to recognise the newly independent PRSY. The decision meant recognition for the first time by the northern government of the existence of two separate entities in Yemen. Although this gesture had serious implications as far as Yemen's eventual unity was concerned, its immediate effect was to contribute to the legitimization of the PRSY, which was admitted to the Arab League on 12 December, 1967 and to the UN two days later. Furthermore, it enhanced the security of the YAR and consolidated the position of the Republicans who were in the throes of the Royalist siege of Sana'a during the winter of 1967/1968.

The following investigation will look at how the decision to recognise the PRSY was arrived at in November 1967. The YAR leadership was so preoccupied at that time with the crucial battle with the Royalists that it was only able to give attention to the question of the
independence of the People's Republic of South Yemen when it became a really pressing issue (just a few weeks before it was actually declared).

The Operational Environment

Consequently, the two major environmental elements which impinged on the decisional setting at the end of 1967 were the Royalist siege of Sana'a and the national aspiration for the reunification of north and south. The commencement of independence negotiations between the National Front and the British Government in mid-November 1967 constituted the stimulus for the decision.

The Royalist siege of Sana'a which lasted seventy days (27 November, 1967 to 8 February, 1968) was the most influential environmental factor. The Royalist offensive had in fact started with the capture of the northern town of Sadah on 17 September but it was not until 24 November when the Royalists cut the road connecting Sana'a with the city of Ta'iz that, with the capital under siege, matters became really serious. In the early stages of the siege, many inside and outside Yemen believed the Republic would not survive now that the Egyptian forces had withdrawn. This impression was reinforced by the numerical superiority of the attacking Royalist forces over the defending Republican army. Although the Royalist offensive came as no surprise, the Republican government was still unprepared for it. During the month of November, the post-November 5 leadership had made serious attempts to defuse the tension by initiating contacts with the pro-Royalist tribes aimed at achieving national reconciliation within the Republican framework. These endeavours were opposed by Saudi
Arabia which insisted that any reconciliation should come through the Arab Tripartite Commission and be contained within the framework of the Khartoum Agreement. Tension between Sana'a and Riyadh was running high but while the controversy absorbed much of the Republican's energies, Saudi Arabia had been active in ensuring the flow of supplies to the Royalists for their biggest offensive to date against the YAR.

The new leadership in Sana'a was busy trying to obtain political and military support to replace the UAR aid which had been terminated as a result of the Khartoum Agreement. During the period 26 November to 10 December, Premier Muhsin al-Ayni visited almost all the Arab countries in Africa seeking their support to convince Saudi Arabia to change its hostile attitude towards the moderate régime in Sana'a. Dr. Muhammad al-Attar, the Minister of the Economy, visited Syria and Iraq at the same time in an attempt to obtain military and economic aid. The result of these contacts was disappointing. Most of the countries hesitated to provide help, probably due to the post-June 1967 regional politics or perhaps because of other pressures. At that time even Syria, Iraq and Algeria were reluctant to send assistance. President Nasir, who was torn between his support of the Republican cause and his commitment towards the Khartoum accord, subsequently sent vital supplies of ammunition to the YAR, concealed in fruit cases. Initially, even the Soviets hesitated to continue the flow of military supplies, being naturally suspicious of the new régime which manifested a conservative character both in orientation and in the individual personalities of its leadership.

An inevitable sense of isolation compounded the problems of the YAR leadership and led them to feel more vulnerable to the Royalist
assault. Their anxiety over the survival of the Republic coloured their perception of the situation in the south and dominated the debate on the issue of recognition of an independent South Yemen.

Yemeni Unity

Along with the survival of the Republic, the liberation of the South Yemeni territories was, as already noted, the main objective of YAR foreign policy. The revolutionary government considered these territories, which became British Protectorates following the latter's occupation of Aden in 1839, an integral part of "natural" Yemen. In its first statement on 27 September, 1962, the new régime identified the liberation of these territories as a primary objective of the Revolution. This policy assumed a greater urgency once the British government had adopted a hostile posture towards the Republican régime and put its weight behind the Imam's government-in-exile. Following the closure of the British Embassy in Ta'iz in February 1963, the YAR government began openly to encourage the nationalist forces in the South already working against the British occupation. The first military operation was launched on 14 October, 1963 by the National Liberation Front (NLF). In the following years the armed struggle was intensified as both the NLF and FLOSY (the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen) gained in strength and experience. 7

In the summer of 1967, the liberation struggle in South Yemen had almost achieved its objectives. Until then, the British government, which in February 1966 had announced its plans to withdraw from South Yemen by 1968, was working to ensure that its client, the South Arabian Federation, would be in control by the time the British forces
left. These plans were frustrated by the nationalist forces who intensified their military operations in the countryside and gradually increased their hold on the territories. As a result, in June 1967 the British government began to pull some of its troops out of the hinterland and concentrate them instead in Aden. When military operations were later intensified in Aden itself, the British government decided to withdraw them from the country altogether. Most of the British forces, which had numbered 12,000 in early September, were withdrawn during that month; by early November there were only 3,000 troops left. At the same time, the South Arabian Federation was crumbling in the wake of the spreading influence of nationalist forces, particularly those of the NLF. In the first week of September the National Liberation Front was in control of twelve of the sixteen up-country federal states. On 5 September, the British High Commissioner in Aden admitted that the structure of the South Arabian Federation had broken down and that he was ready to negotiate with the nationalists. 8

The YAR government viewed these developments with satisfaction. The capture of the hinterland and the seizure of the Emirate of Bayhan by the NLF in mid-September had not only quickened the British withdrawal but had also eventually denied the Royalists the opportunity of using the territories adjacent to the borders as a support base. 9

However, the successes against the British and the South Arabian Federation were marked by the power struggle taking place between the two competing nationalist organisations, namely the National Liberation Front and the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen. In the competition for takeover from the collapsing federal government the NLF, by virtue of the support it had built up in the countryside,
was able during the summer of 1967 to overthrow the rulers of the up-
country emirates, while FLOSY maintained influence mainly in and
around Aden. Political differences between the two groups had
developed into a series of confrontations in January and June which
were a source of deep concern for both the UAR and the YAR. Both
countries had co-ordinated their policies towards South Yemen in such
a way that the Sana'a government had been sponsoring the liberation
movement there in a more comprehensive manner, leaving Cairo to
effectively direct and supply the armed struggle against the British
forces. Although there was an apparent unease among the YAR leaders
over Egypt's lack of enthusiasm for Yemen's reunification, al-Sallal
had no problem in accepting President Nasir's increasing interest in
influencing the situation in South Yemen. In early September, when the
fighting between the two groups resumed on the outskirts of Aden,
President Nasir managed to bring the leaders of the NLF and FLOSY to
Cairo for negotiations under the auspices of the Arab League, with the
aim of resolving differences and forming a coalition government that
would assume authority after the British withdrawal. Because the
resulting agreement was rejected by the radical left in the NLF,
another round of negotiations was held in late October, again under
the auspices of the Arab League. A new agreement was announced on 1
November but this was ignored when the forces of the two groups became
engaged in what proved to be the final battle in a small town outside
Aden. On 7 November the situation was settled after the South Arabian
Army intervened in favour of the NLF. This military victory was
followed on 11 November by a telegram from the NLF leadership to the
British government in which the latter was asked to enter into
independence talks with the organisation as sole representative of the
South Yemeni people.
The NLF's attempt to exclude FLOSY from the independence talks did not go down well in Sana'a which had shifted its political support to FLOSY following the NLF's rejection of the November 1966 merger agreement. The new leadership in Sana'a did not intervene in the power struggle between the two rival groups as it was fully occupied with its own mounting problems. However, relations between the YAR leaders and the NLF fell short of what was expected from two sides supposedly seeking unification. The NLF, much like FLOSY, called for the unification of the two parts of Yemen. But while FLOSY was unreservedly calling for an immediate merger with the north once the British withdrew, the NLF was giving every indication that it wanted to establish a state of its own. Reunification of Yemen, the NLF insisted, was possible only on "a sound and popular basis". As the prospects for independence became brighter, the NLF leadership made it clear it was aiming at establishing an independent state in the south and negotiate reunification with the north at a later stage.13 During the negotiations the NLF rejected a proposal put forward by FLOSY for the establishment of a merely provisional executive body in South Yemen after the British withdrawal to handle the immediate unity negotiations with the North Yemen Republic.14

Before leaving for independence talks some weeks later, Kahtan al-Sha'abi, the NLF leader, stated that his organisation was committed to the ultimate unity of Yemen, but it could only be brought about in the long term after due preparations and when stability in the north had been achieved.15 The implications of the independence of South Yemen and the achievement of reunification figured prominently in the debate among the decision-making élite on the issue of recognition.
By mid-November 1967 developments in the South had reached a point where the YAR decision-makers had to consider a formal response. After the NLF had established supremacy, in the first week of November, attention focused on the independence negotiations. Britain, which wanted to hand power to an effective government, was now willing to negotiate independence with the NLF. On 13 November, the British government agreed to the NLF proposals. Talks between a British delegation and an NLF team were held in Geneva from 21 to 29 November. At the end of these talks a memorandum was signed stating that Britain would relinquish its sovereignty over Aden and that South Yemen would become independent as of 30 November, 1967.16

Although the NLF had on occasions acknowledged YAR interests in the issue, there is no indication that Sana'a was consulted by the NLF leadership during the run-up to independence. Giving priority to the British withdrawal and fully preoccupied with its internal problems, the post-November leadership in Sana'a made no public response to the developments in the South. A year later, in early 1969 when relations between the two Yemeni Republics had greatly deteriorated, the YAR leadership complained that the NLF-British talks had confronted them with a situation which was contrary to YAR foreign-policy objectives in two respects. First, the idea of independence for the South was inconsistent with their long-cherished plan for the immediate reunification of North and South Yemen following the British withdrawal. Secondly, the exclusion of FLOSY from independence talks was unacceptable to the YAR leadership who considered the former fully entitled to be party to the political future of South Yemen having been a partner in the liberation struggle.17
Perceptions of the Decision-Makers

The decision was taken by the moderate government, whose structure was not yet fully stabilised. The approach of independence for South Yemen coincided with the overthrow of President al-Sallal on 5 November. Although a Republican council and a new cabinet were announced on the same day the coup was carried out, membership of the former was completed only on 22 November. On that date General al-Amri replaced Muhammad Nu'man, who had resigned a few days earlier from membership of the Council as a protest against the government's uncompromising attitude towards the national reconciliation proposed by the Khartoum Agreement.18

Officially, the ultimate decision-making unit, comprised of Premier al-Ayni, Foreign Minister Dr. Hasan Makki, the Occupied-South Affairs Minister Abdul Uthman and the three members of the presidential council, namely Kadi al-Iryani, Shaykh Muhammad Ali Uthman and Lieutenant-General Hassan al-Amri. In practice, however, al-Iryani, Chairman of the Republican Council, became the principal decision-maker as had been the case with his predecessor President al-Sallal, though for different reasons. Because of their frequent trips abroad to gather support for the new régime, both al-Ayni and Makki were absent for most of the policy-making. Lieutenant-General al-Amri was fully occupied in organising the defence of Sana'a as he was also the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in addition to being a member of the Republican Council. Muhammad Ali Uthman no doubt had his views but always left the decision-making to al-Iryani who was perhaps the one figure acceptable to all the main political forces within the post-November coalition.
The individual roles played by the members of the decision-making elite in shaping inter-Yemeni relations were influenced by their view on Yemen's unity. Almost all of them were outside the government during the last and crucial stage of the developments in the South. However, it was widely believed that they resented the UAR's direct involvement in the liberation movement in the south. They were also reportedly opposed to Cairo's encouragement of the independent armed struggle movement there, fearing it might result in the establishment of a separate state.19

Muhsin al-Ayni was probably the YAR leader who had made the most consistent efforts in this area of north-south relations, especially during his brief tenure as foreign minister in the first Republic cabinet and again during Nu'man's 1965 cabinet. Al-Ayni's belief in Yemeni unity was partly rooted in the formative period of his intellectual development. He was one of the famous group of forty students sent by Imam Yahya to Lebanon in 1947 for their education. There he was influenced by the growing Arab nationalist agitation for the three "pillars" of Arab resurgence or Ba'athism, namely freedom, socialism, and Arab unity. The latter entailed integration of small entities to form larger entities as a first step towards comprehensive Arab unity. His belief in the unity of Yemen was strengthened by his brief political experience when he took refuge in Aden between 1958 and 1960. There he joined the nationalist struggle from within the TUC in which he represented the Ba'ath branch in both parts of Yemen.20 His intellectual orientation as a Ba'athist, his belief in Yemen's natural unity, and the relationship he formed with some prominent members of the TUC, who later became the leaders of FOSYY undoubtedly influenced his opposition to the establishment of an independent state in South Yemen exclusively controlled by the NLF.
When it became clear in early November 1967 that the NLF was going to negotiate with the British government for independence, the YAR leaders including al-Ayni tried to shift attention to the issue of Yemen's reunification. During the visit to Cairo of a YAR delegation headed by Premier al-Ayni on 10-12 October, the NLF leaders who were preparing for independence talks in Geneva, met the North Yemeni officials on their own initiative. At that meeting al-Ayni and his economic minister, Dr. al-Attar, urged the NLF leaders, who included al-Sha'abi, Adil Khalifah and Abd al-Fattah Ismail, to seize upon the pending withdrawal of the British and work for the immediate reunification of the two parts of the country. According to al-Ayni prevailing conditions in Yemen were ideally conducive to such a step. He argued that:

"the two impediments, the Imamate and colonialism, are about to vanish. What then could obstruct unification? Sure there are problems; in the north they are manifested by the remnants of the Hamid al-Din family, in addition to pending issues with Saudi Arabia. In the South, there are the remnants of the Sultans and the stooges of the colonialist administration. A united Yemeni people should be able to face up to these problems.

Soon the Egyptians will leave and the Yemenis in the North will shoulder complete responsibility. In the South, the British will leave too and the Yemenis will shoulder the responsibility. In such a situation, the state, the institutions, the economy and foreign relations will be started anew. Why not start a new society together?"
This independence eve is the opportune hour to achieve unity. If we allow this chance to slip out of our hands, and two governments, separate institutions, and divergent foreign relations to be established, it will be very difficult to achieve unity afterwards. Separation will be perpetuated, and there will be interests, internal as well as external, that will prevent unity or hamper it at the least."

Kadi al-Iryani viewed the situation from a more pragmatic perspective. Like the other Republican leaders, he cherished the goal of restoring Yemen's unity and shared with Muhammad Ali Uthman and al-Amri, the other two members of the Republican Council, resentment at the NLF's seemingly separatist tendencies. But during the debate which took place within the political circles in Sana'a in the second half of November, al-Iryani came out strongly in support of those who advocated recognition of an independent state in the South. He based his argument on the need to secure a reliable support base in South Yemen at a time when the Royalists were tightening their siege of Sana'a and supporters of the Yemeni Republic, including the Arab revolutionary régimes, were uncertain about the future of the YAR. In the event of the Royalists breaking into Sana'a, al-Iryani advised the Republicans to move to Ta'iz, the second capital of the YAR; there they would be able to reorganise themselves, benefiting from the would be independent state of South Yemen which would serve as a support base for the North."

In thinking along these lines, al-Iryani was clearly falling back on past experience. In the early 1950s al-Iryani had attributed the failure of the 1948 revolt mainly to the unreceptive attitude of the northern tribes who had helped Imam Yahya to put down the revolution.
He advised that for any similar revolt to succeed, it should establish itself in the southern part of the country where the people were more receptive to change. From its southern base, the revolutionary government would be able to fight a protracted war against its enemies in Sana'a. Such a strategy would deplete the energy of the Royalists in Sana'a while at the same time giving the northern population time to get used to the idea of a more progressive régime.\textsuperscript{23}

The YAR's Reaction To The NLF-British Independence Talks

As previously mentioned, the new government assumed power on 5 November, 1967, only three weeks before it had to take a final decision on the situation in the south. At that stage the new leadership was completely overwhelmed by the pressing need to mobilise support for its policy of reconciliation while strengthening the Republican defences in face of the attacking Royalists forces.

Most of the crucial pre-independence developments in South Yemen had taken place during the summer of 1967 while al-Iryani and his moderate colleagues were still detained in Cairo and could not respond to these events. However, by the time the last round of negotiations had taken place between the NLF and FLOSY in the last week of October 1967, al-Iryani and his colleagues were already preparing to return to Yemen with every indication that they were going to play an important role in the political future of the country. At that juncture and on their own initiative, members of the NLF delegation met with al-Iryani and asked him to help persuade the YAR to support the aspirations of the South so that, according to their argument, Britain would have no excuse to delay independence. When urged by al-Iryani to work for an
immediate merger with the northern Republic instead, the NLF leaders said they preferred this issue to be decided later by the new state so that there could be no doubt as to the choice of the South Yemenis in the matter.\textsuperscript{24} Al-Iryani was not pleased to hear that but, like other Northern Yemeni leaders, was preoccupied with the situation back in the north and did not want to make any specific suggestions that might look like an attempt to impose certain views on the South Yemenis. Before leaving for Sana'a, he expressed the simple hope that the ongoing negotiations between the two rival South Yemeni groups would succeed and that they would bear in mind the unity of Yemen in all their endeavours. He added that developments had given him the impression that an independent South Yemen could in the near future prove a valuable "support base" for the revolution in Yemen as a whole.\textsuperscript{25}

The impending independence of the South had become a pressing issue for Sana'a only a few days before the event had taken place. Due to their preoccupation with the increasing political and military pressures, the new leaders in Sana'a could not give their full attention to that issue. Even when it became quite clear, after the NLF and the British government agreed in mid-November to begin independence talks in Geneva, the YAR leadership did not respond quickly. The issue was never considered by the cabinet or the Republican Council in their meetings. Instead, members of the decision-making élite exchanged views on the subject in informal settings. There was a feeling that the developments in the South were beyond Sana'a's control and everyone in the leadership was aware that the NLF was determined to establish its own independent government there. This fact was brought home to al-Iryani and al-Ayni by the NLF leaders themselves during their talks with the latter in Cairo in late
October and mid-November respectively. Nevertheless, in the second half of the month, al-Iryani undertook wide consultations with members of the governing élite and leaders of public opinion with the intention of ascertaining their views on what the proper response to the imminent establishment of an independent NLF government in South Yemen should be. All agreed that, because of the YAR preoccupation in defending itself against the Royalist offensive, there was very little Sana'a could do to change the situation. However, with regard to the issue of recognition of an independent government, there was considerable difference of opinion. Proponents of recognition, mostly intellectuals, believed that failure to recognise the South would be interpreted by the British as an indication of the YAR's intention to annex the South and would make them delay their withdrawal. The prospect of the British staying in Aden, or a possible arrangement between London and Riyadh, was fraught with very serious implications. After all, they argued, it was Sana'a which had called for self-determination for South Yemen. The opponents of recognition, on the other hand, were convinced that to confirm the legitimacy of the NLF government would be to give up forever the North's long-standing claim of sovereignty over the southern territories. Among those who held this view were the tribal shaykhs, the more conservative elements, some Ba'athists and the supporters of FLOSY inside the government.26
How The Choice Was Made

The Royalist siege of Sana'a not only had a bearing on the decision that was finally agreed but also on the method by which that decision was eventually made. During the last week of November 1967 when the siege began to affect life in the capital, the government machinery was virtually paralysed. The Royalist forces were already shelling Sana'a from the north, west and south. Buildings, housing and state agencies were especially targeted and later President al-Iryani's house was shelled. Due mainly to these extraordinary circumstances, the cabinet could neither meet in regular sessions nor use its headquarters. In most cases the ministers concerned were assembled at the invitation of the Premier or his deputy in the house of a member of the cabinet. Al-Iryani made a point of consulting the individuals concerned whenever possible. Anyone who had an interest in the issue had to convey their point of view to al-Iryani either directly by seeking a meeting or indirectly through a member of the government. Al-Iryani managed somehow to consult almost all members of the governing elite, which included the other two members of the Republican Council, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Minister for the Affairs of the Occupied South, in addition to Shaykh Abdallah ibn al-Ahmar and some other tribal shaykhs and senior army officers.27

It was also as a result of the Sana'a siege that when the issue of recognition became most pressing, both Premier al-Ayni and Foreign Minister Dr. Makki were abroad searching for economic and military aid and political support. Muhsin al-Ayni began by visiting Cairo on 26 November, and at the time the decision was being considered he was paying a visit to Tunisia. The Foreign Minister Dr. Makki was on an
official visit to the USSR. Under the circumstances, Kadi al-Iryani had practically taken command of the government in their absence.

In his consultations al-Iryani could not discern a universally acceptable course of action. He concluded that the YAR had one of three options:

a. use force to prevent the NLF from establishing an independent state;

b. confine itself to making its point by denying recognition to the would-be state;

c. grant recognition to that state once it was proclaimed.

The first option seemed unrealistic to al-Iryani because, under the circumstances, the YAR did not have the military capability. In addition, al-Iryani felt that even if annexation by force were possible, it would damage the prospects of a lasting unity between the two parts of Yemen. The second alternative was similarly ruled out because in his view such a negative stance was totally inappropriate with regard to such a vital issue. More importantly, the NLF would have viewed non-recognition as a serious challenge to its legitimacy and this could have lead to hostilities.

With so little time and so few options al-Iryani settled for the third alternative, the one which would, apart from anything else, meet immediate security needs and preserve prospects for future reunification of the two parts of Yemen. Recognition of the southern Republic would after all only be an acknowledgement of a de facto
situation, but al-Iryani knew that it would earn Sana'a the gratitude of the NLF and oblige it to provide vital help if the battle for Sana'a did not go the Republican's way. Moreover, the NLF would find it difficult later on to withdraw from its commitment to the eventual reunification of Yemen. 28

In line with his declared policy on decision-making, al-Iryani let the other members of the decisional unit know of his preferences but refrained from pressing his point of view. Until about the 27th of November, there was no clear-cut position within the decision-making élite. While General al-Amri was unenthusiastic, Muhammad Ali Uthman, the other member of the Republican Council, was against recognition. 29 At that time the military was fully preoccupied with the defence of Sana'a and less interested in political issues. It was known that the MAN had overwhelming support within the army at that time and would, if needed, come out in support of recognition. In any event, al-Iryani consulted the senior officers but was told the army trusted him and would leave the matter to his own discretion. 30

During the last week of November as the independence talks in Geneva between the NLF and the British delegation were being finalised, it became imperative for al-Iryani to reach a decision. At last he placed his political weight decisively behind recognition, arguing that failure to do so on the part of the YAR would provide an excuse to those states which were basically unreceptive to the NLF to delay recognition themselves—a situation faced by Kuwait after it obtained independence in 1961. Furthermore, al-Iryani stressed the importance of the time factor, arguing that since independence of the south was inevitable, it would be wise to be the first to recognise the new state, especially as some countries had already indicated their
readiness to acknowledge the new Republic as soon as it became independent. It appears that this argument was not accepted unanimously, but there were no strong objections either. Members of the governing élite who had objected to recognition opted for silence for the sake of solidarity in the face of the Royalist onslaught. Thus the YAR became the first country to recognise the PRSY. Formal recognition was preceded by a telegram sent by Chairman al-Iryani to Kahtan al-Sha'abi, the president of the newly independent People's Republic of South Yemen, in the early morning of 30 November, 1967 in which he congratulated the people of the South on achieving independence and wished the government there the best of luck.

**Implementation**

The unilateral nature of al-Iryani's role reflected the peculiar characteristics of the decision-making process in Yemen during that stage of the war. The Chairman of the Republican Council not only dominated the policy-making process but because of the disruptive conditions of the war was also able to effect the implementation himself. While the consultations were being finalised on 28 September, al-Iryani personally ordered both the Information Ministry and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs not to release any statements on the subject of the YAR's attitude to the political future of the South. They should, instead, confine themselves to welcoming the imminent withdrawal of British forces and the independence of South Yemen. Subsequently, on 29 November, 1967, on the eve of the PRSY's independence, in its commentary Radio Sana'a hailed "the victory of the 14th October revolution which was staged by the people of the South.... Independence was also a splendid victory for the 26th
September revolution which had shown the revolutionary path to the people of the South." In the same news bulletin, it was announced that the Civil Service Authority, on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Republican Council, had declared Thursday 30 November an official holiday on the occasion of the independence of the South.34

It was not out of keeping with the way foreign policy is conducted in third-world countries that al-Iryani sent the congratulatory telegram to the president of the newly independent South Yemen without the knowledge of his fellow members of the governing élite. Both the Republican Council and the Cabinet were informed later in the day when the two councils held a joint emergency meeting to consider the events. At the meeting presided over by al-Iryani, it was decided to abolish the Ministry for Occupied South Yemen Affairs and replace it with the Ministry for Yemeni Unity Affairs which was to "strengthen fraternal understanding between brothers in the North and South."35

On the same day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acting on personal instructions from al-Iryani, issued the following statement:

"The Government of the Yemen Arab Republic, in line with its policy which is based on respect for the wishes of the people of the South and their right to self-determination, has decided to recognise their new régime. It considers independence and the withdrawal of the forces of occupation a step that will enable the Yemeni people in the North and in the South to achieve unity. It also considers that this decision will open the door to discussions with the new régime, on all common issues in accordance with the interests of all Yemeni people."36
In the final analysis, the decision was a strategic one in the sense that it was an irrevocable act pertaining to a high-policy goal. The decision was conclusive and described as representing the then immutable position of the YAR towards the situation in South Yemen. On the motivational level, however, the decision was taken in response to what the YAR decision-makers considered an urgent, but far from permanent, state of affairs.

The decision had immediate implications for both the internal and external environment. The military capability and political position of the Yemeni Republic was strengthened by the good relations between the NLF government in Aden and the Sana'a government, brought about by the latter's recognition of the PRSY. In the military context this was demonstrated by the fact that during late 1967 and the first half of 1968 PRSY troops and YAR forces were able to launch joint operations against enemy forces (i.e. the ex-rulers of the south and the Royalists) across the eastern borders. In addition, during the second week of November 1967, the NLF in Aden sent the YAR army a limited but much needed shipment of ammunition. Politically, the creation of another Yemeni state strengthened the position of the YAR at a time when, following the withdrawal of UAR forces, it had been left to face the military and political pressures of the anti-Republican forces largely on its own. During the crucial period of the siege of Sana'a, the leaders of South Yemen affirmed their solidarity with their brothers in the North and in early February 1968 Kahtan al-Sha'bi even threatened to intervene directly in support of the YAR. Although actions by the NLF fell short of fulfilling the YAR's hopes of actual unification, they encouraged belief in a viable
and very necessary inter-Yemeni alliance. However, on 1 August 1968, only days before the bloody events which marked the beginning of the rift between the two Yemeni Republics, al-Iryani was still calling for immediate unity which, in his view, was made more vital by the fact that the two Yemeni Republics were facing the same enemy.\textsuperscript{40}

By recognising the PRSY, the North Yemeni leaders had been forced to abandon the principle of the indivisibility of Yemen - a basic foreign policy principle consistently upheld since the North became independent in 1918. Dr. Abd al-Karim al-Iryani described the decision as "the most important event in the nation's history, surpassing in its significance even the British occupation of Aden and/or the latter's agreement with Turkey in 1914 on the delineation of the borders which were to separate the [Yemeni] south from the north."\textsuperscript{41} The division of Yemen into two states had acquired international legitimacy by the admission of the PRSY firstly to the membership of the Arab League on 12 December, 1967 and then to the United Nations on 14 December, 1967 - with no opposition or reservations on the part of the YAR.\textsuperscript{42} Both Yemeni Republics continued to insist that the existence of two governments in Yemen was only temporary and for this reason no diplomatic relations between the YAR and the PRSY were established. Instead co-ordination committees were established in Aden and Sana'a. However, apart from these manifestations of unity, the two Republics pursued their own interests. According to YAR observers, the NLF leaders made it quite clear days after independence that any dealing between the two Yemeni Republics had to be conducted on that basis. In fact, members of the official delegation who arrived in Aden on 7 December to convey the YAR leadership's congratulations on independence were surprised by the formal way they were received by the NLF government and the formal

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manner in which talks between the two sides were organised. They were allegedly also stunned when, contrary to the spirit of the visit and the prevailing cordial atmosphere, the PRSY Interior Minister Muhammad Ali Haytham, expressed his government's displeasure at the alleged presence of anti-NLF groups in the YAR. These were taken by the YAR leaders as an early indication of unfriendly intentions on the part of the NLF government. A year later, in February 1969, when the differences between the two Yemeni governments had come out into the open, the YAR leaders began to admit that their decision to recognise the PRSY had been based on a misconception. They maintained that the decision had been made on the understanding that the NLF government would take steps towards reunification almost immediately. No steps had been taken; in fact the PRSY had begun to consolidate separation. As Kadi al-Iryani explained in his speech delivered in the same month:

"when independence came [to the south], we in the North pondered whether to recognise a second state on the soil of the same country or alternatively to delay such a step. As you know, our delay would have led to the delay of the British withdrawal from our country. In addition we believed our brothers who, in their charters, were affirming that the first thing they would do [upon independence] was to announce unity of the natural Yemen. For this and the need to deny the British any opportunity to delay their withdrawal, we recognised the new Government [in Aden]."
1. Following the first clashes between the two Yemeni republics across common borders in September-October, 1972, an agreement was signed in Tripoli (Libya) in March, 1973 which laid down the basic principles for eventual reunification. The "Tripoli Charter" was not immediately implemented, but recurrent hostilities, especially the 1979 cross-borders fighting, enhanced the conviction that only with reunification would intra-Yemeni problems be solved. On 22 May, 1990, the two Yemeni republics were eventually reunited and became "The Republic of Yemen".

2. Dr. Makki, the then YAR Foreign Minister mentioned that during the initial stage of the siege all states including the UAR and the USSR believed the fall of the capital to the Royalists was inevitable. Such an impression led some members of the Egyptian embassy in Sana'a to circulate notes to other embassies stating that with its troops already withdrawn, the UAR was not responsible for their safety and are thus advised to leave the city. See Makki's account in Hisar Sana'a: Shahadat lil Tarikh (The Sana'a Siege: Testimonies for History) compiled by the Yemeni Centre for Studies and Researches (Sana'a) Dar al-Fikr lil Tiba'ah wal-Tawzi'i wal-Nashr, Damascus, 1989, pp.227-228.

3. From an interview with Hassan Makki on the Sana'a siege. In Hisar Sana'a: Shahadat lil Tarikh, op. cit., p.231.

4. op. cit., p.227; Colonel Hussin al-Daf'i, the then Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces mentioned that ammunition sent by Nasir numbered 5 million shells, op. cit., p.291.
5. From the statement by Ali Lutf al-Thawr, op. cit., pp.63-64.

6. As mentioned in the first policy statement, the Revolution's first objective was 'eradication of the absolute individual rule (in the north) and elimination of foreign influence (in the south).’ See the YAR first policy statement in Nusus Yamaniyyah, compiled by Ali al-Ulufi, op. cit., p.23.


10. Yemeni sources agreed that the Egyptians took the prime responsibility of arming and training the guerilla movements in the south and established a liaison office for that purpose in the city of Ta'iz, close to the borders with the south. They added that the Egyptians conducted their operations in this respect mostly independently of the Yemeni authorities (see Muhammad al-Aswadi, op. cit., p.106-107). Two YAR foreign ministers, al-Ayni and M. Yakub, told the writer that they had on occasions to draw
the attention of the UAR government to the necessity of using the name "occupied South Yemen" instead of the term "occupied South Arabia" used constantly by Cairo.


12. Ibid., p.302.

13. Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, *Tatawwur al-Awda* ..., op. cit., p.96. Ali Salim al-Bid, the first Defence Minister of the PRSY and current Deputy-Chairman of the Presidential Council of the Republic of Yemen, told the writer that reunification of Yemen was indeed not at that stage among the political priorities of the NLF.


15. *Akhir Sa'at*, 22 November, 1967; some believe part of the then apparent lack of enthusiasm from within the NLF leadership for immediate unification with the north was due to the assumption of power in Sana'a by the conservative Republicans on 5 November, 1967. A unification under these circumstances would, this argument went, retard the progressive developments in South Yemen.


17. See the YAR statement on the differences with the PRSY in *Al-Thawrah*, 14 February, 1969.


20. Helen Lackner, op. cit., p.32; see also Files of al-Ahram's Centre for Strategic Studies.


22. Personal interviews.


24. Kadi al-Iryani, in his replies to a questionnaire sent by the YCSR on Yemen's unity (unpublished 1988), blamed lack of co-ordination between al-Sallal's government and the NLF in the few months which preceded the independence of the PRSY for the situation faced by the post-November government in this respect.


26. Personal interviews.

28. From Kadi al-Iryani's unpublished replies to the YCSR's enquiries, op. cit.

29. From al-Ayni's replies to the writer's inquiries.


31. Personal interviews. No information was available regarding the states to which al-Iryani was referring, but al-Ahram the Egyptian newspaper reported on 27 November, 1967 that the UAR would recognise the South Yemeni state once independence was announced.

32. SWB, ME/2638/A/3.

33. Personal interviews.

34. SWB, ME/2636/A/1-3 supplemented by personal interviews.

35. ibid.

36. From files of the YAR Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

38. Contrary to Western reports of the arrival to the YAR of a few hundred NLF fighters to fight on the side of the republican army against the Royalist forces during the Sana'a siege, North Yemeni officials affirm that only followers from the FLOSY army, Djaysh al-Tahrir, took part in the fighting. (See Makki's interview with the Egyptian magazine *al-Musawwar*, 15 December, 1967). However, the PRSY Government, according to Shaykh Sinan Abu Luhum, sent 25,000 rifle bullets. (See *The Weekly*, 26 September, 1990, 19 April, 1990).


42. SWB, ME/2646/A/2; *Al-Hayat*, 15 December, 1967, supplemented by personal interviews.
