

# YEMEN: ON THE BRINK

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## Exploiting Grievances

Al-Qaeda in the  
Arabian Peninsula

Alistair Harris

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

WASHINGTON DC ■ MOSCOW ■ BEIJING ■ BEIRUT ■ BRUSSELS

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# YEMEN

- International Boundaries
- ⋯ Governorate Boundaries
- Former North/South Boundary (approx.)
- ★ Country Capital
- Governorate Capital



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## Summary

People of Islam, the fields of jihad are calling every Muslim who fears with ardor for the dignity and the holy principles of Muslims to join its ranks in Afghanistan, Chechnya, the Islamic State of Iraq, the Islamic Maghreb, Somalia and the Arabian Peninsula and other lands. People of faith, the fields of jihad welcome scholars, doctors, engineers, youth, and skilled Muslims with expertise.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), an offshoot of Osama Bin Laden's terrorist network and a group that has been operating in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, presents a growing regional and international security challenge. Analysis of AQAP confirms that it has been adept at aligning the grievances of Yemeni communities with its own narrative of what is wrong and who is responsible. But AQAP's limited membership shows this has not translated into widespread recruitment because of dissonance between the organization's recommended course of action—violent jihad—and traditional Yemeni methods of seeking redress.<sup>2</sup> Failure to address such grievances, however, runs the risk of increasing receptivity to alternative frameworks that include the use of violence.

Complementary to targeted intelligence and Yemeni-led law enforcement activities, an effective strategy to combat AQAP must seek to understand which parts of the group's narrative are resonating and why and how state institutions can address the grievances—real or perceived—articulated by AQAP. At the same time, policy makers must exploit contradictions in the extremist narrative, particularly regarding the (in)efficacy and illegitimacy of violent jihad. Increased governmental visibility and service delivery at the local level are therefore recommended as components of a development assistance approach to counterterrorism. Such an approach is premised on commitment by and partnership with the Yemeni government and an acknowledgment of the limitations of military operations to deal with the threat comprehensively.

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## Introduction

There is a consensus that Yemeni, regional, and international security is threatened by AQAP. In a recent (February 2010) edition of AQAP's bimonthly e-magazine *Sada al-Malahim* [The Echo of Epic Battles], an author using the

nom de plume Hamil al-Misk (The Musk Bearer) emphasized that the organization had now moved from a defensive to an offensive mode of operation:

We bring to our nation the good news that the mujahideen passed the stage of defense and repulsion of the aggression to the stage where they can take initiatives and attack.<sup>3</sup>

Following the attempted assassination of Saudi Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs Prince Muhammad bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz in August 2009<sup>4</sup> and the failed attempt by 23-year-old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to detonate an explosive device on a flight to Detroit on Christmas Day last year,<sup>5</sup> the U.S. response was swift and predictable. CENTCOM Commander Gen. David Petraeus immediately visited Yemen and announced the American intention to double security aid to the country.<sup>6</sup> In the face of increasingly alarmist claims about the nature of the threat posed by AQAP, U.S.-assisted missile and air strikes have attempted to decapitate AQAP in a series of targeted strikes.<sup>7</sup> Such a strategy had proved effective in 2002, when an American drone killed the head of al-Qaeda in Yemen at the time, Abu Ali al-Harithi.

Dealing with symptoms is no substitute for dealing with causes, however. In the rush to offer prescriptive advice, key questions remain unanswered. What do we actually know about AQAP? How has the organization evolved in terms of membership, structure, tactics, and goals? What is it trying to achieve, and crucially, why? What lessons can we learn for countering processes of radicalization? Prevention and the promotion of community resilience, as much as protective and offensive measures, need to form part of the counterterrorism tool kit.

## The Evolution of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

In a statement released on February 8, 2010, AQAP's deputy leader Saeed al-Shihri gave a clear indication of the nature of the relationship of the organization to what is termed "al-Qaeda core," the nucleus of al-Qaeda operating in the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Shihri addressed his comments to "our sheikhs and amirs in the general command in Khorasan [Afghanistan]" and in doing so described those self-identified as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula as "your mujahideen children in the Peninsula of Mohammad."<sup>8</sup> The raised profile of the current incarnation of the organization should not detract from an awareness of al-Qaeda's enduring presence in Yemen.

## Timeline

<b>December 29, 1992</b>	Al-Qaeda targets the Gold Mohur hotel in the port of Aden, where U.S. military personnel are staying en route to Somalia. One Australian tourist is killed.
<b>January 3, 2000</b>	Al-Qaeda attempts a suicide attack on the USS <i>The Sullivans</i> in the port of Aden, but the attack craft sinks due to overloading.
<b>October 12, 2000</b>	The USS <i>Cole</i> is the object of an al-Qaeda maritime suicide attack in Aden. Seventeen U.S. naval personnel are killed and 39 are injured.
<b>October 6, 2002</b>	The French tanker <i>The Limburg</i> is the object of a maritime suicide attack in the Gulf of Aden. One Belgian crew member is killed and twelve others are injured.
<b>November 3, 2002</b>	The al-Qaeda leader in Yemen, Abu Ali al-Harithi, is killed by a U.S. Predator drone strike.
<b>November 25, 2003</b>	The Yemeni government arrests al-Harithi's replacement, Muhammad Hamdi al-Ahdal.
<b>2003–2006</b>	Al-Qaeda focuses on its confrontation with Saudi Arabia and is highly active inside the Kingdom. Yemenis are channeled toward participation in confrontations with coalition forces in Iraq.
<b>February 3, 2006</b>	A key moment in the emergence of a new al-Qaeda organization in Yemen as 23 prisoners escape from prison in Sanaa. This group makes up the nucleus of the organization known today as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. <sup>9</sup> As the group consolidates itself under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden's former secretary, Nasir Abdel Karim al-Wuhayshi (a.k.a. Abu Basir), his deputy Said Ali al-Shihri, and military commander Qasim al-Raimi, its attacks increase in sophistication and lethality. In addition, the success of the Saudi counterterrorism program up to 2006 ensured that the al-Qaeda threat was displaced to Yemen. <sup>10</sup> Initially targeting the extractive industries sector, al-Qaeda in Yemen, as the organization was then known, proceeded to utilize suicide bombings to target tourists and Western interests.
<b>September 15, 2006</b>	Failed simultaneous suicide bombings on oil and gas facilities in Hadramaut and Marib.
<b>March 29, 2007</b>	Assassination of Ali Mahmoud Qasaylah, chief criminal investigator in Marib.
<b>June 21, 2007</b>	Nasir al-Wuhayshi (Abu Basir) declared leader of AQAP by deputy Qasim al-Raymi (Abu Hureira al-Sanaani).
<b>July 3, 2007</b>	Seven Spanish tourists and their two Yemeni guides are killed in a suicide car bombing in Marib.
<b>January 18, 2008</b>	Two Belgian tourists and two Yemenis are killed in an attack in Hadramaut.
<b>March 18, 2008</b>	Grenade attack on U.S. Embassy.



Timeline continued	
<b>April 6, 2008</b>	Attacks are made on two military checkpoints in Hadramaut and a foreigners' housing compound in Sanaa.
<b>April 30, 2008</b>	The Italian Embassy is attacked with mortars.
<b>September 17, 2008</b>	Al-Qaeda attacks the U.S. Embassy. At least 17 people killed.
<b>January 2009</b>	Saudi and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda are merged into a regional franchise—al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula—which pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda. Targeting of key security personnel increased. An increasingly sophisticated use of the media and communications technology is apparent in the group's magazine, <i>Sada al-Malahim</i> , first distributed in 2008 and now in its twelfth edition. A focus on outreach is matched by a commitment to innovation, best evidenced by the use of a foreign student traveling from a European city to attempt to down a Detroit-bound plane with concealed explosives on Christmas Day in 2009.
<b>March 15, 2009</b>	A suicide bomber kills four South Korean tourists and their Yemeni guide. Three days later, a convoy of the victims' relatives and South Korean investigators are targeted in another suicide attack, but only the bomber is killed.
<b>March 18, 2009</b>	A suicide attack is attempted against a convoy of vehicles on the road to Sanaa International Airport.
<b>August 28, 2009</b>	An assassination is attempted against Saudi Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs Prince Muhammad bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz.
<b>December 25, 2009</b>	Nigerian student Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab tries to detonate explosives in a plane over Detroit. AQAP claims responsibility for the attack.

Particularly since this near miss on December 25, 2009, it has been tempting to analyze AQAP as a new, little-known threat. In reality, much information is available about the organization. Because AQAP is the product of the fusion of al-Qaeda's Saudi and Yemeni branches, much can be learned from the successes and failures of both al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and the counterterrorist response. Equally illuminating is the study of the media output of al-Qaeda's franchise in Saudi Arabia, from the tactical and military publication *Mu'askar al-Battar* (al-Battar Training Camp) to its sister political publication *Sawt al-Jihad* (Voice of Jihad) and specific treatises, such as the seminal "A Practical Course for Guerilla Warfare," by former al-Qaeda leader in Saudi Arabia, Abdel Aziz Issa Abdul-Mohsin al-Muqrin. As we seek to draw conclusions about the organizational nature and threat posed by AQAP, taking time to analyze the tactical, operational, strategic, and ideational precursors for the group pays dividends. As Norman Cigar argues, "Access to al-Qaeda's doctrinal literature

can provide valuable insights into the latter organization's planning, training, and operational thinking—insights that can help policy makers shape a more realistic profile of its leaders and of its strategy, which can be key in developing effective counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policies.”<sup>11</sup>

## ***Sada al-Malahim* and Frameworks of Collective Action**

Considered alongside its attack record, a detailed analysis of AQAP's media output provides telling insights into the group. Such output shows how al-Qaeda tries to make different ideas, beliefs, myths, and traditions work to radicalize and mobilize the population. Al-Qaeda's publications provide a diagnosis of the problems faced by Yemenis, detailing grievances and apportioning blame. It also provides a prognosis for the future, proposing remedies and redress. In other words, AQAP provides both diagnostic and prognostic frameworks to mobilize followers and potential recruits into collective action.<sup>12</sup> AQAP's success as an organization depends entirely on the extent to which its frames resonate with the Yemeni population. In the face of debilitating law enforcement activity, AQAP faces the problem of constantly regenerating by recruiting new members; if it fails, it will pass into obscurity. Whether AQAP will endure and present an increasing security threat therefore depends on the extent to which its message resonates with local communities.

Even a cursory examination of *Sada al-Malahim* indicates that AQAP's diagnostic framework is designed to have a broad appeal and is likely to resonate successfully in Yemen. This has led seasoned analyst Gregory Johnsen to state in a recent Senate hearing that “al-Qaeda is the most representative organization in Yemen. It transcends class, tribe, and regional identity in a way that no other organization or political party does.”<sup>13</sup> As evidence of this broad appeal, Murad Batal al-Shishani, based on a rudimentary analysis of known members of the organization, claims that Yemenis make up 56 percent of the AQAP's total membership, Saudis 37 percent, and foreigners 7 percent. According to al-Shishani, the Yemeni members are equally distributed between northern and southern tribes.<sup>14</sup> A shared grievance narrative has led to claims by Yemeni analysts that while al-Qaeda may number in the hundreds, there are tens of thousands of Yemenis who share their grievances.<sup>15</sup>

But a shared grievance does not imply agreement on means of redress, and it is this dissonance that holds the key to counterterrorism policy making in Yemen. Before considering the promotion of narrative dissonance as a counterterrorism tool, note that an analysis of *Sada al-Malahim* shows how AQAP has become increasingly successful in aligning its societal diagnosis with Yemeni grievances.

## Identifying Grievances—AQAP’s Diagnostic Framework

AQAP proffers a coherent grievance narrative that is consistent with the core tenets of al-Qaeda’s ideology but infused with themes that resonate locally, increasing its salience, credibility, and audience acceptance. This hybridity has blurred the local and global, resulting in what has been termed “glocalization.”<sup>16</sup> The distinction between the “far enemy,” the United States and its allies, has been blurred with the “near enemy,” the alleged apostate Muslim regimes. As Thomas Hegghammer comments:

Al-Qaeda in Yemen is almost fully hybridized. Since 2006 it has launched numerous operations against both regime targets and western targets ... al-Qaeda in Yemen now has one of the most ambiguous enemy hierarchies in contemporary jihadism.<sup>17</sup>

According to AQAP, Muslims are suffering at the hands of a Crusader-Zionist alliance that props up illegitimate and corrupt local regimes that have failed to provide for their citizens. AQAP’s diagnostic framework skillfully weaves local grievances into this wider narrative of persecution, marginalization, and threat. Appealing to tribal honor and deeply-felt religious sentiment, AQAP calls on

... the proud tribes of Yemen—people of support and victory—and the people of the Arabian Peninsula, to face the crusader campaign and their [collaborators] on the peninsula of Muhammad, prayer and peace upon him, [by] attacking their military bases, intelligence embassies, and their fleets that exist on the water and land of the Arabian Peninsula; until we stop the continuous massacres in the Muslim countries.<sup>18</sup>

This meta-narrative of suffering, which frequently focuses on issues of direct relevance to all Yemenis, such as events in Gaza and the Palestinian territories, is combined with grievances at the local level relating to inadequate service provision and inequities in natural resource allocation.

The people of Yemen are suffering from the decline of their living standards, the rise of prices, and the discriminatory practices with which the government deals with them in employment, the distribution of wealth and its looting, the misappropriation of lands, and the absence of someone to defend their rights.<sup>19</sup>

AQAP has therefore attempted with considerable success to identify and instrumentalize pre-existing grievances. The organization’s opportunistic support for the secessionist movement among tribes in southern Yemen must be seen in this light.

This military movement mobilizing in Marib, Jawf, Shabwah, Abyan, Sana’a, and Hadramaut and which had been obscured in the media, is a step to strike the tribes with malicious excuses and shatter their pride, disarm them and control their lands, kill their sons, and make it easier for the bastard agents and the crusaders to humiliate them...<sup>20</sup>

AQAP has presented the Houthi insurgency in northern Yemen in a way that capitalizes on widespread fear of the rise of Shi'i Islam and Iranian influence. Like the government, which claims the Houthis seek to impose Shi'i religious law and accuses Iran of directing and financing the insurgency, AQAP portrays the insurgency in increasingly sectarian terms, which serve to undermine any claims of complicity between itself and the Houthis.

If the Houthis were to win the war against the government, they would then have to deal with the Sunnis on numerous occasions that history will recall. We ask God to allow the defeat of the [Shi'a] rejectionists by the army and vice versa so that the Sunnis prevail.<sup>21</sup>

## Addressing Grievances—AQAP's Prognostic Frame

O youth of faith, toughen up and carry your weapons in the face of those who want to stand between you and the crusaders, those who want to sell you cheaply to their American masters and sacrifice you on the altar of Christians. Rise like one man to defend the dignities of your brothers in Afghanistan and Iraq who are fighting the Cross before us...<sup>22</sup>

Having tapped into a common grievance narrative, particularly targeted at a young, male demographic, AQAP offers a prognosis infused by the core al-Qaeda tenet of *al-wala' wal-bara'*—support for Muslims and enmity for non-Muslims. In the face of perceived injustice and proliferating existential threats, the prescription is violent jihad against the West and apostate Muslim regimes. The focus remains on ridding the Arabian Peninsula of all non-Muslims, the establishment of a local emirate, and the liberation of Palestine en route to the establishment of a global caliphate.<sup>23</sup>

## Assessing the Threat—Capability and Intent

As stated repeatedly by the government of Yemen, there has been a marked tendency to exaggerate the threat posed by AQAP. A recent U.S. Senate report stated that “there are significant al-Qaeda populations in Yemen and Somalia.”<sup>24</sup> However, estimates of the size of the group in Yemen vary from 300 to 500 to as many as several thousand.<sup>25</sup> The lower figure may represent active cadres within the organization, while the larger figure presumably includes supportive elements. This is a manageable, intelligence-led law enforcement task, with clear roles for external actors in the provision of intelligence, logistical support, and capacity-building. To what extent does AQAP's diagnostic and prognostic frame of reference resonate? For Sarah Phillips

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is presenting its credentials in the regime's stead, but is offering little more than a lightning rod for entrenched grievances, of which there are many.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, despite some tribal intermarriage designed to forge links between AQAP and tribal structures as well as consolidation in the governorates of Amran, Shabwa, Abyan, Hadramaut and Marib, it is far from clear that AQAP will be able to exploit tribal discontent and rally tribes to the violent jihadi cause.

Phillips correctly finds that AQAP has succeeded in aligning its message with pre-existing grievances in Yemen. The organization's appeal to defensive mobilization in the face of actual and perceived threats is tailored to young men and Yemen's tribes. This process of mobilization, radicalization, and recruitment is frequently taking place in locations where individuals are temporarily distanced from supportive family and social networks, such as institutions of religious instruction. As with radicalization elsewhere, this is an inherently social process.<sup>27</sup> Estimates of the size of AQAP confirm its limited success at recruitment.

Despite its size, the organization has shown considerable capacity for organizational learning; for example, it has concentrated on the assassination of unpopular security force targets rather than large suicide bombings, realizing these are apt to alienate local communities. An educational focus is also evidenced by a section in *Sada al-Malahim* called the School of Yusuf (*Madrasat Yusuf*), dedicated to such topics as how to resist interrogation. The magazine includes articles penned by the proselytization (*da'wa*), religious (*shari'a*), and its military committees, indicators of AQAP's organizational structure.

## Yemen as a Safe Haven and Destination for Foreign Fighters

Despite the limited membership of AQAP, it is necessary to separate the threat of radicalization in Yemen from the country's attraction as both a safe haven for other al-Qaeda elements and the threat posed by non-Yemenis gravitating to Yemen and then returning to their countries of origin to perpetrate attacks. For al-Qaeda, Yemen holds particular attractions as both a safe haven and a site of Islamic resurgence.

The mountainous and immune landscape of Yemen has made this country a natural and secure fortress not only for the people of the Arabian Peninsula but for all the people of the Middle East. It is the stronghold that could provide shelter to the people and mujahideen of Yemen, and this has been a constant all through Yemen's military history.<sup>28</sup>

There have been increasing reports that al-Qaeda elements from the Pakistan/Afghanistan border area have started to move to Yemen. Al-Qaeda strategist Abu Musab al-Suri has highlighted the factors that make Yemen an attractive potential destination. The country comprises 75 percent of the population of the Arabian Peninsula and the "tribal coherent structure, the strength, the braveness, the love for fighting that the men of Yemen have—all this is an

obvious historic fact since ancient times.”<sup>29</sup> In addition, al-Suri claims there are 70 million small arms in the country<sup>30</sup> and notes its open borders, the proximity of the strategic Bab al-Mandab waterway, and

... the feelings of injustice and exploitation which are considered to be the main hidden motivator that must receive the right Islamic guidance in order to become an important strategic factor in motivating people towards jihad.<sup>31</sup>

While figures remain hard to verify, there are credible reports that Yemen is now a preferred destination for non-Yemeni converts or foreign fighters. Somalia is mentioned with increasing frequency in AQAP’s media output, which along with offers of assistance from the armed Somali Islamist group al-Shabaab raises the specter of operational cooperation between the two groups. While cooperation may be just an aspiration at this stage, the presence of hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees in Yemen, established routes for smuggling people and weapons between Yemen and Somalia, and a shared strategic target in the Bab al-Mandab Strait separating the two counties make joint operational activity between the two groups highly likely. Geographical proximity augments the fact that both groups began to initiate attacks outside their immediate area of operations (AQAP in the United States, al-Shabaab in Australia and Denmark) in 2009.

## **Conclusion: The Limitations of Hard Power and a Developmental Approach to Counterterrorism**

Military and law enforcement responses to the threat posed by AQAP clearly have a role to play. Such responses must be proportionate, exclusively Yemeni-led, and minimize the risk of civilian casualties, which would only serve to alienate communities that are the vital ground in governmental efforts to close down AQAP’s operating space. The large number of civilian casualties following the al-Ma’ajalah airstrikes in Abyan simply reinforced the extremist narrative that the West is using its apostate government proxy to kill innocent Muslims. While there are concrete security measures that can and must be taken to address the AQAP threat, these cannot be considered in isolation. Given the considerable resonance between AQAP’s diagnostic frame of reference and Yemeni grievances, there is a real risk this resonance will produce an increased receptivity or willingness to consider alternatives to traditional Yemeni ways of seeking redress, including violence. A comprehensive counterterrorism approach therefore goes beyond the application of hard power. Addressing the phenomenon of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, Norman Cigar offers an analysis that applies equally to Yemen:

The challenge of the socioeconomic grievances and opening up the system to greater participation, which might appeal to the pool of potential QAP [al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula] sympathizers, remains to be dealt with, and that alone can ensure victory in the longer term over the QAP.

Yemenis are focused on improving governmental responsiveness, accountability, service provision (particularly in relation to employment), and development. These are the keys to inoculating communities against al-Qaeda's violent prescriptions. The limited base of empirical evidence indicates that among many young people, support for armed groups—be they Houthi rebels in the North or AQAP—may be based more on economic considerations than deeply held ideological commitments. A developmental approach to countering the threat of terrorism in Yemen must focus on effective local participation, responsiveness, credibility and, crucially, service delivery. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is currently a localized threat with increasingly globalized ambitions. Addressing such a threat entails not simply kinetic counterterrorist initiatives but also a greater understanding of and attempt to address the points of resonance between the organization and local Yemeni communities, as well as the promotion of dissonance in relation to the means of seeking redress for actual and perceived grievances.

## Recommendations

- a. **Avoid an over-dependence on hard power and adopt a radicalization-sensitive approach.** While targeted operations are necessary, they should be Yemeni-led, strenuously avoid civilian casualties that extremist narratives exploit, and should form part of a comprehensive partnership approach that prioritizes soft power and developmental initiatives so as to boost community resilience to violent radicalization. This would require the Yemeni government and its international partners to work with communities to identify and address needs. While mechanisms such as the governmental Social Fund for Development are available to aid this process, a responsive development assistance approach to counterterrorism can only succeed if accompanied by a genuine commitment by the government to address identified grievances. This will undercut AQAP's appeal to defensive mobilization in the face of what they identify as injustice, rampant corruption, and societal inequality.
- b. **Map the push factors that are supporting the process of radicalization.** To understand the factors that push individuals into violent extremism, a systematic grievance mapping exercise should be undertaken with the Yemeni government. This would contain a geographical element, because support for AQAP is clustered in certain governorates (*muhafazat*). The objective of such an exercise would be, first, to reduce the salience of themes resonating between AQAP and Yemeni communities and, second, to exploit areas of dissonance, such as AQAP's rejection of dialogue, a central feature of traditional Yemeni means of dispute resolution.

- c. Understand what AQAP is saying and how its message resonates with Yemeni communities.** Pull factors and the role of social networks and organizational dynamics are as important as push factors in understanding the process of radicalization. Such pull factors can also be elucidated from discussions with former members of AQAP as well as vulnerable individuals attracted by the organization's message, particularly young people.<sup>32</sup>
- d. Analyze how AQAP disseminates its message.** This is of particular interest, given the low Internet penetration and high illiteracy rates in Yemen. Communication and network analysis should be utilized to address this lacuna. Core message themes should be disaggregated to highlight the varying levels of audience receptivity across demographics.
- e. Support counter-radicalization or de-radicalization initiatives based on dialogue.** The confrontation with al-Qaeda, both in Yemen and more broadly, is, in part, an ideological one, even if socialization and mobilization into terrorism often precede the religious framing of the conflict. Incidents of recidivism are an inevitable part of such programs, as they are among conventional prison populations, and should not be used to justify terminating such initiatives. What is required is a comprehensive analysis of the evolution and implementation of such programs around the world so as to inform creative new thinking.
- f. Include the role of women in both the problem analysis and the exploration of solutions.** Despite the understandable focus on the vulnerable young male population, it would be a mistake to focus interventions or development efforts on men only. AQAP's e-magazine *Sada al-Malahim* (The Echo of Epic Battles) places considerable emphasis on the role of women in jihad, and evidence from Saudi Arabia confirms that women are involved in the dissemination of al-Qaeda's message.<sup>33</sup>
- g. Ensure that efforts to enhance the capability and capacity of the Yemeni security forces are matched by a corresponding focus on their accountability and adherence to human rights norms.** There is a significant risk that support of the Yemeni security forces may exacerbate existing grievances that fuel radicalization. In a 2008 U.S. Agency for International Development study on Yemeni youth, several individuals identified the security forces and the prison system as a factor in driving an individual towards violence. One individual stated, "Prisons and juvenile centers are supposed to rehabilitate the youth. What happens is the opposite. They get abused and they come out of jail even more aggressive and more violent."<sup>34</sup>
- h. Adopt a regional approach.** As the displacement of the al-Qaeda threat from Saudi Arabia to Yemen in 2009 highlights, a regional approach is required to effectively combat AQAP. Despite legitimate Western security



fears, it should be remembered that the group poses the greatest threat to regional stability for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and they should be encouraged to take the lead, even if the motivation for some is purely enlightened self-interest.

## Notes

- 1 Editorial (untitled, anonymous author) in *Sada al-Malahim*, vol. 4, p. 3, <http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/7-13-08-ekhlaas-issue-4-of-sada-al-malahim.pdf>.
- 2 Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- 3 Hamil al-Misk, "Arba' Sanawat 'Ala al Najat wal Thabat" [Four Years after Survival and Steadfastness], *Sada al-Malahim*, vol. 12 (February 2010), p. 35.
- 4 "Prince Muhammad bin Nayef Slightly Injured in Terrorist Attack," Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C., August 28, 2009, [http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest\\_news/news08280901.aspx](http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest_news/news08280901.aspx).
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- 7 "U.S. Military Teams, Intelligence Deeply Involved in Aiding Yemen on Strikes," *Washington Post*, January 26, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/26/AR2010012604239.html>.
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