

# MERIA

## **THE SICKLE AND THE MINARET: COMMUNIST SUCCESSOR PARTIES IN YEMEN AND AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE COLD WAR**

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*This paper examines the evolution of the only two former ruling Marxist-Leninist parties in the Islamic world--the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan/Watan Party (PDPA) in Afghanistan and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP)--following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It considers these parties' historic development and how they adjusted to the changed circumstances of the post-Cold War world. The YSP has fared much better than its Afghan counterpart. There are many reasons for this, but perhaps the most striking is the legacy of the past regime. The YSP was far better at institutionalizing its position in Yemeni society than was the PDPA in Afghan society.*

Although there has been a considerable amount of work that examines the development of the communist parties after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, most of these analyses have thus far concentrated on Europe, as opposed to what happened to the formerly dominant Marxist-Leninist parties in the developing world.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true for formerly dominant communist parties in the Islamic world.<sup>2</sup> The development of these latter parties provides interesting cases.<sup>3</sup> Unlike counterparts in post-communist Europe or Sub-Saharan Africa, communist parties in the Islamic Middle East are confronted with the rising tide of religious fundamentalism and hampered by the lack of a tradition of a strong secular left.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the context in which these parties evolved can be expected to be quite different from the experiences of communist parties in Europe and Africa.

In addition, as Halliday and Tanin argue, radical Marxist-Leninist regimes in Yemen (1962) and Afghanistan (1978) emerged in countries without a history of strong states. In each:

[an] attempt at revolution from above took place in societies that were fragmented by ethnic and tribal factors, and where, as a result, pressure from the state occasioned fissiparous but widespread resistance. In addition, the historical context was most unfavorable: the clash between ideological radicalization at the top and indigenous society below, exacerbated in each case by external intervention, over and over, was all the greater: of these cases... [one] ended in military defeat and the fragmentation of the society [Afghanistan], while the [other] avoided this fate only partly, as a

result of compromise from within that confirmed the prevalence decentralized, tribal and armed, society over the central state [Yemen].<sup>5</sup>

The article examines the evolution of the only two formerly dominant Marxist-Leninist parties in the Islamic world outside of the Soviet Union: the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan/Watan Party (PDPA) in Afghanistan and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). They each ruled a one-party, self-declared Marxist-Leninist state and lost power.

There is much to compare regarding these two parties, but there are also considerable differences. Each, to different degrees, depended upon Soviet support to maintain power (more so in Afghanistan than Yemen). Both, at least in terms of official ideology, emphasized ties to the working classes and toiling masses, and each were confronted with the rising tide of Islamism. However, after Soviet disengagement in the region in 1989-90, the successor parties in these two states experienced fundamentally different trajectories of development. In Afghanistan, the PDPA regime rapidly disintegrated and no viable successor emerged, whereas in Yemen the YSP survived and has seemingly made the transition to post-communist realities (albeit tenuously).

#### **LEGACIES OF THE PAST**

As several scholars have noted, communism has had a relatively long history in the Muslim world outside of the Soviet Union. Communist movements emerged in the colonial era (the 1920s and 1930s) largely in opposition to colonial control by the British and French after the collapse of the

Ottoman Empire, and they viewed the Soviet Union as their champion. Most of the leaders and supporters of the communist parties were drawn from the middle and lower middle strata of the intelligentsia. This social stratum grew increasingly large as the modernization process under colonial occupation transformed the primarily agrarian societies of the region. In addition, the introduction of modern extractive industrial sectors during the 1920s and 1930s led to the creation of a new working class, concentrated in the oil sector, ports, and railways. Since the struggle of the working classes was directed against foreign capital, the class struggle essentially became a nationalist struggle as well. In addition, the communist parties in the region attracted those marginalized by Islamic societies and prevented from upward mobility, in particular minority groups and the poor.<sup>6</sup>

In two cases, Yemen and Afghanistan, communist party organizations in predominantly Muslim countries emerged to become governing parties. In Yemen, the communist movement grew out of the radical wing of the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Yemen (Aden), which had challenged British rule. The British dominated the south and eastern part of Yemen after capturing the port of Aden in 1839. Until 1937, Yemen was ruled as part of British India. In that year, Aden was made a crown colony, with the remaining land designated as the east Aden and west Aden protectorates. In 1965, the British set up a semi-autonomous Federation of South Arabia which joined together most of the tribal states within the protectorates with the Aden colony. This was done to help stave off the triumph of the National Liberation Front, a leftist anti-colonial organization.

In 1965, two rival nationalist groups--the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) and the NLF--launched an uprising against British colonial rule, compelling British rule to end. In 1967, in the face of mounting violence, British troops began withdrawing and the federation they set up collapsed. Later that year the NLF eliminated its FLOSY rivals and declared South Arabia, including Aden, independent on November 30, 1967, subsequently naming the new state the People's Republic of South Yemen.

In June 1969, a radical wing of the Marxist NLF gained power, and on December 1, 1970, changed the country's name to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The principal leaders of this wing were Abd al-Fattah Ismail, the YSP's chief ideologist (himself from Hugariyyah Province in North Yemen), Salim Rubayyi Ali al-Antar, and Ali Nasir Muhammad. In the PDRY, all political parties were amalgamated into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), which became the only legal party. The regime subsequently established close ties with the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and radical Palestinians

In Afghanistan, the PDPA (*Hizb i Dimokratik i Khalq Afghanistan*) was established in January 1965 by a group of intellectuals including Mir Akbar Khyber, Babrak Karmal, and Nur Muhammad Taraki, who saw the party as a means to promote the secular modernization of Afghanistan. The party soon split into two factions, the Parcham (flag) and Khalq (Masses) factions, named after two newspapers headed by Karmal and Taraki respectively. Unlike the YSP, which had grown out of a national liberation struggle, the PDPA was largely made up of intellectuals who sought to

modernize Afghanistan. In 1973, with the support of the Parcham faction, King Zahir Shah's cousin, Muhammad Daud, staged a coup and installed himself as president. Although several key Parchami figures took part in the Daud government, the Khalqists were largely excluded. Nonetheless, in 1977, the two factions merged under pressure from the Soviets.

The April 19, 1978 funeral for Mir Akbar Khyber, a prominent Parchami faction ideologue and cofounder of the PDPA who had been murdered, served as a rallying point for the Afghan communists. An estimated 10,000 to 30,000 persons gathered to hear speeches by Taraki and Karmal denouncing the Daud government. Subsequently, Daud ordered the arrest of PDPA leaders but proceeded only very slowly. It took over a week to arrest Taraki; his chief lieutenant, Hafizullah Amin, was merely placed under house arrest. Amin, who had extensive ties to the officer corps, was able to engineer a coup from his home while he was under armed guard, using his family as messengers.

On April 27, 1978, a coup d'etat was launched by military units loyal to the PDPA. After fierce fighting, loyalist forces were defeated and Daud and most of his family were shot in the presidential palace the following day. With the completion of the so-called Saur revolution, the PDPA declared the founding of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and Taraki was announced as the chairman of the revolutionary council, with his longtime rival, Karmal, as vice-chair. Hafizullah Amin became foreign minister.<sup>7</sup>

#### **THE PREVIOUS PARTY REGIME AND PENETRATION OF SOCIETY**

After the establishment of the PDRY in 1970, the regime made restructuring social relations in the South a top priority.<sup>8</sup> The leadership of the NLF came largely from

what Volker Stanzel called a provincial lower middle class. Many were teachers and lower-level bureaucrats in the colonial regime.<sup>9</sup> Although great emphasis was placed on the "toiling masses," or workers and peasants to be led by revolutionary intellectuals, there was little in the way of a proletariat. Indeed, most of those who had constituted the proletariat in the only major city in the South Yemen, Aden, had largely come from the North. Although there was something of a peasantry in Hadramawt and in cotton producing regions like Lahj and Abyan, the vast majority of rural residents were tribal small landowners who were not at all positively disposed to the new revolutionary regime in Aden.

The new PDRY regime moved fairly quickly to socialize the economy. Many enterprises (particularly foreign ones) were nationalized beginning as early as 1969, and there was a widespread redistribution of land (nearly half of the arable land was redistributed to 27,000 poor families between 1970 and 1973). However, the socialization of the economy in Yemen inflicted significant costs.<sup>10</sup> The economic reforms introduced in the 1970s caused significant social disruptions in the countryside and declining food production in the 1980s, making the regime increasingly dependent on imported foodstuffs.<sup>11</sup>

Further, there was outright resistance to the socialization of agrarian society. According to Dresch, nearly a quarter of the population of the south fled the country as a result of the reforms of the early 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the measures introduced by the NLF (and, after 1978, the YSP) had transformed the social structure by displacing old power holders: petty sultans, privileged clans, and clerics. Through a series of spontaneous violent uprisings, power was seized by the lowest, least powerful strata-

peasants, fisherman and laborers. Land reform and marketing cooperatives brought a significant redistribution of wealth.<sup>13</sup>

Another important element of the PDRY regime's early measures at transforming Yemen was the party's approach to the role of Islam in a socialist state. Before independence, Islam represented the primary legitimizing ideology of the social order and the state. The PDRY regime adopted a relatively cautious, accommodating approach to Islam, particularly by stressing the commonalities that socialism and Islam shared (especially the commitment to egalitarianism and social justice). In the PDRY constitution of 1970, Islam was recognized as the religion of the country and was guaranteed protection insofar as it was consonant with the constitution. Instruction in Islam was required as part of the public education curriculum.<sup>14</sup>

The PDRY promoted Islam for its revolutionary potential. Indeed, according to Abd al-Fattah Ismail, the party's chief ideologist and successor to Salim Rubayyi as president of the PDRY:

Islam was exposed to extreme distortion and falsification....In the Abbasid and Ummayid eras, the aristocratic forces were able to divert Islam to goals and concepts other than that for which it had come. They did that to serve their interests and to serve the thrones, the kingdoms, and the hereditary caliphate which had nothing at all to do with Islam. Islam, which came essentially as a revolution, was transformed by feudal and aristocratic forces [robbing] Islam of its revolutionary essence and diverting it to serve other goals.<sup>15</sup>

A third element of the new state's strategy involved the penetration of society via the establishment of a mass party organization. The YSP (founded after the execution of Salim Rubayyi in 1978) established cells in both geographic and functional constituencies (such as factories, cooperatives, and in the military). Party membership was cited at about 26,000 in 1977 and about 3.5 percent of the population in 1983.<sup>16</sup> Of these members the largest proportion was "office workers" (36 percent of the party membership). Only 26 percent of the membership was listed as workers and only 14.6 percent as peasants.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these efforts, the regime had little real effect on society in the PDRY. In part, this was because of the often violent factional warfare within the NLF and YSP that made the regime increasingly dependent on the military. Furthermore, by the 1980s, the effort at socializing Yemen had abated, and the regime basically survived largely because it accepted the prevailing decentralized, tribal, and armed society.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, although never fully transformational, the regime was able to secure the loyalty of many tribal elements via this strategy, largely by granting significant power to local party bosses (who often were also local tribal leaders) in provinces like Hadramawt.

In Afghanistan, like Yemen, the communist regime also attempted a revolution from above. As was the case elsewhere in such revolutions, in both Yemen and Afghanistan the radicals were the products of an education system based in the capital. Many were military men or urban professionals, inspired by the notion that it was necessary to transform the country in

order to catch up with the rest of the world as quickly as possible.<sup>19</sup>

The PDPA's following was largely limited to an educated minority in the urban areas. Generally, this group's perceptions and values clashed with those of the vast majority of conservative, rural Afghans. The party was further weakened by bitter, and sometimes violent, internal rivalries. Two years after its founding in January 1965, the PDPA split into two factions that in terms of membership and ideology operated essentially as separate parties: the radical Khalq faction, led by Taraki, and the more moderate Parcham faction, headed by Karmal. The Khalqist wing of the party was made up primarily of Pashtuns from non-elite classes. Parcham's adherents included other ethnic groups and tended to come from the Westernized upper classes.<sup>20</sup>

When the PDPA took over in April 1978, it had relatively few active members, despite considerable Soviet assistance. Different estimates have been provided, but at most its membership was about 18,000, and probably not more than 10,000.<sup>21</sup> Whatever the case, PDPA membership accounted for less than one percent of the total Afghan population. Moreover, it was estimated that, at most, the PDPA had the active support of only about three to five percent of the total population.<sup>22</sup>

Upon coming to power after the violent Saur Revolution in 1978, the regime at first tread carefully, balancing the different factions in the PDPA. The initial cabinet appeared to be carefully constructed to alternate ranking positions between Khalqists and Parchamis: Taraki was selected as prime minister, Karmal was made senior deputy prime minister, and the Khalqist Hafizullah Amin was named foreign minister. The regime issued a series of decrees in April and May of 1978 in which the equality of all

ethnolinguistic groups was declared. As in Yemen, the regime sought to underline the revolutionary potential of Islam, at least at first. Taraki argued, "We want to clean Islam in Afghanistan of the ballast and the dirt of bad traditions, superstition and erroneous belief. Thereafter we will have a progressive modern and pure Islam."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the first three decrees issued by the PDPA regime opened with the phrase, "In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate," although the remaining five decrees omitted this phrase.<sup>24</sup>

However, the initial, seemingly moderate, approach to Islam taken by the PDPA was quickly abandoned as the Khalqists sought to consolidate their hold on power. Shortly after the Saur coup, the Khalqist wing of the PDPA, which had the loyalty of most of the officer corps, initiated a purge of Parchamis. Following an alleged Parchami plot in the summer of 1978, Taraki purged many of the top leaders of the Parchami wing, sending many into official exile as ambassadors, including Babrak Karmal (dispatched to Czechoslovakia) and Anahita Ratebzad (to Yugoslavia). Others, like Sultan Ali Kistmand and Nur Ahmad Nur, were arrested and tortured. Abdul Qadir was removed from his position as defense minister in August 1978. Parchamis in the schools, civil service, and military were dismissed and in many cases arrested and tortured. On July 19, Taraki boasted that "there was no such thing as a Parcham party in Afghanistan, and there is no such thing now."<sup>25</sup>

Others were repressed as well. Four other groups were declared enemies of the regime at the end of 1978: Islamists, Maoists, Sittam i-Milli (a group that had Maoist leanings and endorsed Tajik and Uzbek separatism), and the Afghan social democratic organization Mellat. After the

beginning of widespread resistance to the regime in mid-1978, Islamists in particular were singled out. Taraki himself declared war against the "bearded men," i.e. the clergy, and instructed Khalqis in a televised speech that "those who plot against us in darkness must be eliminated in darkness."<sup>26</sup>

After the elimination of the opposition and removal of any restraints posed by the Parchamis, the Khalqists rapidly instituted a series of measures designed to socialize the country rapidly. Decrees issued from July 12 to November 28, 1978 outlined comprehensive measures designed to rapidly transform the countryside. One abolished usury and mortgages made before 1973, and forgave debts of landless peasants. This measure alienated many of the rural elites and disrupted the system of reciprocal rights and obligations around which rural life was organized.<sup>27</sup>

Another decree promoted the equality of the sexes, fixed a maximum amount for the bride's dowry, established the minimum age for marriage as 18 for men and 16 for women, and abolished forced marriages. Another decree focused on land reform and sought to distribute arable land to the poorest section of the rural population. As in Yemen, the object of the decree was to foster the development of a new class of small landholders who could be organized into cooperatives and act as a support base for the regime. Land reform began in January 1979, but was met by widespread resistance that flared into open insurrection. Although the regime sought to attack systems of rural inequality and poverty, its symbolic politics were perceived by many as an attack on Islam itself. Even Afghans not actively involved in the resistance tended to regard the regime with contempt, a view which was

worsened by the regime's collaboration with an atheist power, the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup>

### **INTERNAL PARTY FACTIONALISM**

Another feature of both the YSP and the PDPA was an extreme factionalism. In Yemen, the dispute initially involved a debate over the new state's relationship with the Soviet Union. The first president of the PDRY, Salim Rubiyyi Ali, was deeply suspicious of the Soviet model and very critical of the growth of the centralized planning apparatus that had accelerated in Yemen under the first five-year plan that began in 1974. He focused much of his criticism at the pro-Soviet wing of the NLF, led by the party's ideologist, Abd al-Fattah Ismail. In June 1978, Ali tried to stage a coup to oust his opponents, but this attempt failed. As a result, Ali and two of his associates were arrested and executed. He was succeeded by a five-person transitional council led by President Ali Nasir Muhammad. In October 1978, the NLF was transformed into the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) which thereupon declared its monopoly of political power. In December, Abd al-Fattah Ismail was made president and Ali Nasir Muhammad became prime minister.

Although both Ali Nasir and al-Fattah were positively disposed toward the Soviet Union, they differed in terms of both domestic and foreign policy. Abd al-Fattah Ismail, considered a theoretician and a hardliner, favored a replication of the Soviet model in Yemen. He was also a northerner (as were many of the radical leftists in the NLF) from Hugariyyah in North Yemen, who like so many other northerners had migrated south to work in the British Petroleum Refinery in Aden. Later he taught at

government schools and rose to prominence in the NLF when he assassinated a pro-Ba'thist union leader in 1966. In foreign policy he favored a hard line regarding the North and Yemen's oil-rich neighbors.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, Ali Nasir Muhammad was from Dathinah in the south, and favored a much more gradual approach to socialism. He advocated promoting a mixed economy and limiting nationalization to major industries. Furthermore, he favored rapprochement with North Yemen and normalization of relations with the Saudis and Oman.<sup>30</sup>

Abd al-Fattah Ismail was forced from office in 1980 and went ostensibly to Moscow to "study." As president, he was succeeded by Ali Nasir, who also retained his position as prime minister and as general secretary of the YSP. Under Ali Nasir, controls over the economy, particularly in construction, were loosened and private commerce promoted. Foreign companies (including British) were invited to help in oil exploration. Relations were normalized with the country's neighbor and with the loosening of state controls, the remaining allies of Abd al-Fattah charged Ali Nasir with consumerism, corruption, and betrayal of the revolution.

In 1984, the powerful defense minister Ali Antar began to criticize Ali Nasir for his personal excesses.<sup>31</sup> In February 1985 Ali Nasir was forced to cede his position as prime minister. In 1985, al-Fattah was allowed to return to the country where he was restored as one of the secretaries of the YSP. After the October 1985 congress, there was increasing pressure in the party for Ali Nasir to give up his position as general secretary, as well as for the elevation of al-Fattah as secretary for ideology (the number-two post in the party). In January 1986, this political conflict turned into an armed conflict when Ali Nasir's supporters murdered several

members of the Politburo, including al-Fattah and Ali Antar. Several thousand party members and militia were killed in a two-week civil war. The military supported the Northern faction. Ali Nasir and thousands of his supporters were forced to flee to North Yemen or Ethiopia. A new political leadership under Ali Salim al-Bid, a supporter of Abd al-Fattah, was reconstituted. But despite its ties to the northern faction, he generally continued the policies of Ali Nasir.

Factionalism, although rampant in the YSP, was even more pronounced and institutionalized in the PDPA. The split centered around the two leading figures, Nur Muhammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal. On the ideological level, Karmal and Taraki differed in their perceptions of Afghanistan's revolutionary potential. Taraki believed that revolution could be achieved in the classical Leninist fashion by building a tightly disciplined working-class party. Karmal believed that Afghanistan was far too undeveloped for a Leninist strategy and that a national democratic front of patriotic and anti-imperialist forces had to be fostered in order to bring the country a step closer to socialist revolution. What exacerbated the split was Karmal's effort in 1967 to persuade the PDPA Central Committee to censure Taraki's excessive radicalism. The vote, however, was close and Taraki in turn tried to neutralize Karmal by appointing new members to the committee who were his own supporters. Karmal offered his resignation, which was accepted, and Karmal left the party with a substantial number of the PDPA Central Committee. Subsequently, the two groups operated as separate political parties, each with its own secretary-general, central committee, and membership.<sup>32</sup>

The leaders of the party were not only divided by ideology but along ethnic and class lines as well. Ideology was only one



factor--and probably not the most important-- in the Khalq-Parcham split. Taraki and Karmal were men from very different backgrounds. Taraki was from a poor village family in Ghazni Province. His father was a livestock dealer and small-time smuggler who traveled frequently with the family to British India. He attended a provincial elementary school and middle school in Qandahar and first attracted international attention when he began to write short stories in 1940s on the living condition of Afghan peasants, which were applauded by Soviet literary critics at the time.<sup>33</sup>

Taraki's chief lieutenant Hafizullah Amin, like Taraki, was from the rural lower middle class. His father was a civil servant. Amin was born in 1921, in Paghman, a town near Kabul. After studying mathematics and physics at Kabul University, he became a high school teacher and later the principal of a high school. In 1957, through a scholarship, he went to study at the Teacher's College at Columbia University in New York. In the early 1960s he returned to the United States to pursue his doctorate degree at Columbia and was about to begin work on his dissertation when he was called home to deal with a family issue. Upon his return he joined the PDPA, concentrated on politics, and recruited to the party his Pashtun students in the government-run boarding high schools where he served as a teacher and principal for many years. A rural Pashtun himself, Amin succeeded in influencing Pashtun students, many of whom became military officers after graduating from the military academy in Kabul.<sup>34</sup>

Together Taraki and Amin appealed to a rural, lower-middle class constituency of Pashtuns, people like themselves who had personal experience of poverty and the

oppressiveness of the old order. The Khalqists also had, thanks to Amin, strong support in the officer corps. Their first language was Pashtu, rather than Dari, the dialect of Farsi spoken by Afghan city dwellers and government officials. Like a majority of members in the Khalqist party, Taraki belonged to the Pashtun Ghilzai tribe that had been excluded from power by their old rivals, the Pashtun Durrani. Their Marxism was often seen as a vehicle for tribal resentments.<sup>35</sup>

The social and ethnic origins of the Parchamis were quite different. For instance Karmal, although born into a wealthy Tajikized Pashtun family of Kashmiri origin in a village near Kabul, lived in hardship following the death of his mother. Karmal was neither a Durrani nor a Ghilzai, but a member of another Pashtun tribe, the Kakars. He was a son of General Muhammad Hussain Khan, who served as governor of Paktia Province, and had close ties with the royal family. As a law school student of Kabul University, he gained a reputation as an orator and activist in the university's student union in 1951. Unlike the Khalqists, Karmal (as well as most in the Parcham) came from an urban elite background and lacked a strong sense of tribal identity or allegiance.<sup>36</sup>

The Parcham constituency was urban-based, middle class or upper-middle class, and tended to speak Dari rather than Pashtu. They were generally better educated and more Westernized in their habits and lifestyles than the Khalqists. Although both PDPA groups were concerned with changing gender roles and giving women a more active role in politics, women such as Anahita Ratebzad--Karmal's lover and one of the four PDPA members elected to the parliament in 1965--were more prominent in Parcham.

Parcham's ethnic composition was also more diverse than Khalq's. Although the majority were Dari-speaking Pashtuns from the Kabul region, Hazaras, Tajiks, and other minority groups were also heavily represented (including Parcham leaders like Sultan Ali Kishmand, the future prime minister, a Hazara).<sup>37</sup>

Armed rebellion against the PDPA regime began as early as September 1978 in Nuristan province, followed by Paktia, Ghazni, and Badrakshan provinces in 1979. In February 1979, the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Adolph Dubs, was kidnapped by insurgents and killed in the botched rescue attempt in a Kabul hotel. An uprising in Herat in March 1979 led to the death of hundreds of Soviet advisors and their families and was only put down with great difficulty. Taraki, increasingly unable to respond to challenges to the regime, was murdered in September 1979 by agents loyal to his lieutenant Hafizullah Amin. Amin, who was viewed as more of a radical nationalist than a socialist, tried to normalize relations with the Islamist insurgents. Indeed he tried to broaden the basis of the regime by appealing to the insurgents, but also brutally purged Taraki's supporters from the state and party. Indeed, during Amin's months in power, September-December 1979, party membership plunged because of his brutal purges of both Parchamis and pro-Taraki Khalqists. In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded to save the PDPA regime, Amin was executed and Babrak Karmal was returned to power, accompanied by Soviet troops.<sup>38</sup>

Karmal fashioned a new coalition of Parchamis and anti-Amin Khalqists. By 1984, eight of the thirteen members and alternate members of the Politburo were Parchamis: Karmal, Sultan Ali Kishmand, Najibullah, Nur Ahmad Nur, Muhammad Rafi, Anahita Ratebzad, Abdul Qadir, and Mahmud

Baryalai (Karmal's brother). Muhammad Aslam Watanjar, Salih Muhammad Zeary, Muhammad Ismail Danesh, and Ghulam Dastagir Panjsheri, were Khalqists (the affiliation of an alternate member, Abdul Zahoor Razmjo, is unclear). Moreover, he tried to broaden the basis of the regime by pursuing a rapprochement with the insurgents. The old Afghan tricolor, with the Islamic color of green, was restored, and the red flag of the Khalqists was abandoned as the national flag. Beginning in April 1980, the traditional invocation, "In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate," was again used to preface all official documents, a practice abandoned by Taraki. In 1982, the regime rewrote the party's constitution removing any reference to Marxism-Leninism (a move bitterly opposed by Khalqists). However, the PDPA's post-invasion united front strategy was regarded by observers as largely ineffectual.<sup>39</sup> In 1986, under pressure by the Soviet Union, Karmal was removed in favor of the former head of the Afghan Security organization KHAD, Dr. Najibullah.

To recap, the legacies of the past regime in terms of relative dependence on the Soviet Union, the degree of intraparty factionalism, and the extent to which the party/state was able to penetrate society are summarized in Table 1 below.

As indicated in Table 1 (see end), when comparing the YSP and PDPA, the former was less dependent on Soviet support. Yemen had relatively few Soviet military advisors (but more Cuban ones) when compared to the massive military support by the Soviets to the Afghan regime after 1979. Furthermore, the Afghan economy was far more dependent on the Soviet Union (to a large extent simply because of geographic

proximity) and far more integrated with that of the Soviet Union, not only dependent on it for fuel and foodstuffs, but also included in such Soviet-sponsored transnational organizations as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).<sup>40</sup>

Dependence on the Soviet Union also made it far more difficult for the PDPA to establish an identity as an indigenous revolutionary movement. To be sure, there were certainly pro-Soviet leaders in the YSP who had very close relations with the Soviet Union (such as Abd al-Fattah Ismail), but most of the leaders of the YSP had developed their reputations as fighters during the war against British imperialism in the old days of the NLF. As one observer noted, the PDPA leaders were either "impractical tea shop radicals, like Taraki, or urbanites with little understanding or sympathy for village life, like Karmal."<sup>41</sup> Whereas the YSP had at least struck fairly deep roots in at least some of the rural areas (such as in Hadramawt), the PDPA remained tied to a very small cross-section of intellectuals, urban professionals, and officers.

Factionalism was also more extreme in the PDPA than in the YSP. To be sure, in the YSP there were distinct differences between the party's Northern and Southern branches. However, many of these had been at least somewhat mitigated by the common resistance to the British during the NLF days. Although later on the rivalries broke out into violence in 1979 with the execution of Salim Rubiyya Ali, and open civil war in 1986; to some extent these events, paradoxically, helped overcome the factionalism that plagued the party. To a large extent, these internal violent upheavals purged the party of rival factions, so that by the time of unification most all of the remaining

members of the YSP were in one way or another associated with Abd al-Fattah Ismail's political and ideological legacy.

On the other hand, in the PDPA, factionalism had much deeper roots: the Khalqist and Parchami factions were themselves not only divided by ideology, but also by ethno-linguistic group and class. Furthermore, after 1967, with the establishment of entirely different Khalqist and Parchami party organizations under Taraki and Karmal respectively, this served to institutionalize this factional cleavage, creating a virtually insurmountable chasm. Despite Soviet efforts, the two factions continued to maintain their separate organizational identities, albeit under the facade of unity imposed by the Soviets in 1977.

Finally, the degree of societal penetration varied considerably as well. Beyond the legitimacy gained by liberation struggle, and the linkages that the YSP had established with rural populations in the south via tribal ties, the party had tread lightly regarding the role of Islam. This was in stark contrast to the virtual assault on Islam that the Khalqists had undertaken between 1978 and 1979. Additionally, the YSP had been far more successful in building a party organization that extended into the population, at least compared to the PDPA. In the 1980s, about 3.5 percent of the population in the south were members of the YSP, whereas less than one percent of the adult Afghan population were members of the PDPA.

Thus, relatively speaking, the YSP appears to have been far more "institutionalized" as a party than was the PDPA prior to the great changes of 1991. This was to have important consequences in

explaining what happened to the two successor parties following their respective losses of power in the 1990s.

### **THE YSP AND PDPA SINCE 1986**

As the Soviet Union set upon a new course in its relations with the West after 1985, this had a profound effect on the Marxist-Leninist regimes in Yemen and Afghanistan. In Yemen, the accession of Ali Salim al-Bid as general secretary of the YSP, coupled with the changes in Moscow, accelerated progress toward the reunification of North and South Yemen. In 1981, negotiations had produced an "interim constitution" of a unified Yemen, but both sides had rejected the draft. In September 1989, however, a summit meeting was held in Sanaa, and by November 1989 (the same month that the Berlin Wall came down) the president of North Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and Ali Salim al-Bid of the South, announced in Aden that the unity agreement dating back to 1981 would be implemented by 1990. Formal unification occurred on May 22, 1990.

Power was divided evenly between the leaders of the North and South. Saleh, president of North Yemen, was named the first president of the unified Yemen, while Ali Salim al-Bid was appointed vice-president. Al-Attas, president of South Yemen and chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Presidium, became prime minister. Under the agreement, cabinet and vice-ministerial posts were equally shared between representatives of the former North and South. Every government ministry adopted an equally balanced appointment system in which, for example, if the minister was from North Yemen, the vice-minister was from South Yemen. In the military, the defense minister was from South Yemen and the chief of general staff from North Yemen.

In May 1991, the proposed constitution was approved in a referendum. Yemen's first general election was held in April 1993, with candidates vying for 301 seats in the parliament. Members were to serve four-year terms. The ruling General People's Conference (GPC), led by President Saleh, secured the largest number of seats with 123. The YSP won only 56 seats, and fell from being the country's second-largest party to the number-three position. The Islamist Yemeni Reform Group (Islah) replaced the YSP as the second-largest party, securing 62 seats. The YSP decided to renounce socialist principles at its central committee meeting, but the decision met with criticism from many left-leaning party members. In its 1993 electoral program, the Yemeni Socialist Party declared its main objective to be the promotion of national unity and democracy, and to realize social justice. It viewed tribalism as a problem (unlike the GPC, which extolled the "extended family"), declaring in the campaign of 1993 that it sought to "find a solution to the problem of tribal power and the resulting anarchy." As to Islam, unlike the GPC or Islah, which prominently featured Islam as the core of life, the YSP merely sought the creation of an Islamic university in Yemen.<sup>42</sup>

Intra-party squabbles between the left wing of the party, led by al-Bid, and more moderate conciliatory elements, led by Jarallah Omar, prevented the YSP from holding a party convention. Further political difficulties between the YSP and Islah, as well as the GPC, led to a series of shootings and assassinations of YSP officials. The political crisis culminated in August 1994 when Vice President al-Bid refused to carry out his duties and retreated to Aden. Many mediation initiatives were undertaken during the crisis, but skirmishes persisted between

former North Yemen and South Yemen army units, and a civil war began in May 1994. Prime Minister al-Attas and other YSP leaders joined forces with Vice-President al-Bid, who was in Aden. The vice president declared the independence of a new Democratic Republic of Yemen in South Yemen.

Most YSP members, however, refused to join al-Bid and chose to stay in Sanaa. In South Yemen, leaders in Abyan, Hadramawt, and other provinces also refused to join the al-Bid group. In the end, President Saleh's troops overwhelmed those of al-Bid on the battlefield. In July 1994, al-Bid left the country, seeking political asylum in Oman. His departure marked the end of the two-month civil war, with the camp in favor of maintaining the coalition claiming victory. After the end of the war, the YSP was forced to leave the coalition government and had its assets seized, including its party headquarters building. Among YSP leading members, most of the YSP parliamentarians (53 of 56) were allowed to continue political activity and remain in parliament because they chose to remain in Sanaa during the political crisis.

Since 1994, the YSP has been split by both ideological and continued regional cleavages. After his departure to Oman, al-Bid was replaced by Ali Saleh Obad (Muqbil), a member of the old guard who had elected to stay in Sanaa during the 1994 civil war. Obad, along with other conservatives from Shabwah, Hadramawt, and Abyan (generally associated with al-Bid) advocated a policy of boycotting elections, rejecting talks with the government, and opposing a change in the party's ideology. Ali Saleh Obad helped organize the 1997 YSP demonstrations in Mukallah and also advocated the YSP's boycott of the

parliamentary elections of 1997.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, the reformers within the leadership group include the late Jarallah Omar and Dr. Saif Sayel, both from the North. This group advocates actively, including young people and women in the leadership group, easing out the old guard, promoting a peaceful discourse with the government in order to regain the YSP's lost status and properties, modernizing the party's ideology, and joining the Socialist International.<sup>44</sup>

Jarallah Omar was a particularly important figure in the evolution of the YSP since 1994. He was a Northerner born in the village of Kuhal in the province of Ibb in 1942, and studied Islamic jurisprudence in Dharmar as a young man. During the North Yemeni civil war of 1962-1968, Omar was imprisoned for his leftist politics. While in prison, he was introduced to Marxism. He left prison in 1968 and took refuge in South Yemen. From the south, he led the commando forces of the National Defense Forces in the North, a conglomerate of five separate groups dedicated to overthrowing the military government in Sanaa, but was forced to flee to the South by the late 1970s. He was elevated to the Politburo in the YSP in the 1980s and was associated with Abd al-Fattah Ismail's faction, siding with al-Bid in the 1986 civil war. He broke with al-Bid in the 1994 war, opposing the secession effort. Nonetheless, he was forced to flee the country in 1994, only to return a year later. Widely respected within the party, as well as throughout the opposition, he was a key figure in brokering the 2002 alliance between the YSP and Islah.<sup>45</sup> Omar was assassinated in 2002, while speaking at a meeting of Islah (officially by a member of the Islah party Ali al-Jarallah, although Islah strongly denied

this).<sup>46</sup>

In addition to ideological differences, regional and tribal cleavages remain in the YSP. In particular, Hezam al-Yemeni has identified at least three distinct regional groups, divisions that corresponded to conservative and reformist elements within the party. One is the Northern Intellectual group or those (like Abd al-Fattah Ismail) who came from the north to work in the British Petroleum (BP) refineries of the south during the British occupation. Most of these members, like Jarallah Omar, were also leading figures in the NLF. The second group is the southern (or Hadramawt) intellectual group, associated with Al-Bid and Obad. The Southern Military Tribal Group contains traditional and strongly tribal elements from the former Southern governorates of Lahej, Al-Dhala'a, and Yafa'a. Members of this group occupied key positions in the Southern military and are still strong in YSP. This group often holds the balance of power between the Northern reformists and the Southern conservatives.

Since the YSP's Fourth Party Congress (held in November 1998 and August 2000), the reformist wing appears to be gaining the upper hand in the intraparty struggle. A new political party program was adopted where the YSP fully embraced a social democratic identity and proclaimed itself "a social democratic party that struggles for building a modern democratic state, whose powers rest upon the fundamentals of the Constitution, and in which the role of the institutions is reinforced, a democratic local Government is founded, the law prevails, citizens are equal in rights and duties, human rights are maintained, and civil society institutions prosper."<sup>47</sup>

A major leadership shift occurred in favor of the reformers at the Second Round of the General Conference in August 2000,

when Jarallah Omar and Saif Sayel were elevated to positions as deputy general secretaries, second only to Obad. Although, as a nod to the conservatives, exiled leaders Ali Salim al-Bid and Haider Abu Bakr al-Attas were elected to the Central Committee, other conservatives were forced out.<sup>48</sup>

The YSP has staged, since 1994, something of a political comeback. Currently the party claims that it has 300,000 members, out of whom 20-25 percent are females, and 60-65 percent are under the age of 30. As the ruling party of the former PDRY (South Yemen), the YSP still attracts the majority of its members from the South. In the 1993 elections following unification, the YSP did fairly well, winning 56 of the 301 seats, mostly in the south (see Table 2). In 1997, the conservatives, who dominated the leadership of the YSP at that time, chose to boycott the parliamentary election, largely to protest the repression of the party following the 1994 uprising, and the sentencing in absentia of leaders like al-Bid to death. This proved to be a major strategic blunder in that the YSP had no representation, and without access to resources (much of the party's property had been confiscated by the state after the abortive rebellion in 1994), many YSP members (especially those previously loyal to Ali Nassir Muhammad) opted to join the GPC.

Weakened both by government harassment and by losses in terms of membership, in 1998 the YSP sought to reverse course. Following the reformist gains within the party, which was in turn followed the move spearheaded by Jarallah Omar to form common cause with other opposition parties (like Islah), the YSP began to recover some lost political ground. In the 2001 local elections, the party won several seats in the provincial and district councils (see Table 2 at end) and won 227,223 (or 3.84 percent of

the vote) and eight seats (of 301) in the April 2003 parliamentary elections (see Table 2). However, it remains to be seen what effect Omar's death will have on the future transformation of the YSP. In May 2003, Yemeni President Saleh issued a pardon for the 1994 rebellion leaders al-Bid, al-Attas, and 14 other YSP leaders, inviting them to return to Yemen from exile in the United Arab Emirates. Their return as members in the Central Committee might deepen the YSP's internal struggles.

As in the case of the YSP, factionalism remained a major problem in the PDPA during the Karmal years and continued after his replacement by Dr. Najibullah Muhammad, a Parchami who in 1986 headed the State Information Service (Khadamate Ettelaate Dowlati--KHAD), the secret police organization. Najibullah, who like Taraki and Amin was a Ghilzai Pashtun, was nonetheless associated with the Parchamis from early in his career. He later established a reputation as an efficient and brutal head of KHAD. A medical doctor by training, Najibullah had little in the way of factional support; many Parchamis continued to support Karmal, even though he had "retired" to Moscow in 1987. Initially Karmal supporters resisted Najibullah's appointment, forcing Najibullah to straddle his politics between whatever Parchami support he could maintain and alliances he could win from the Khalqists, and, later, non-party politicians. Although Najibullah was somewhat successful in negotiating with Pashtun tribal leaders, getting some to disengage from the resistance, by and large Najibullah was a creature of the Soviets. His selection by the Soviets was clearly related to his success in running KHAD, the secret police, more effectively than the rest of the PDPA regime.

His appointment, thus, was not principally the result of intra-party politics, as had been the case in the past, but rather the direct result of Soviet pressure.

Nonetheless, Najibullah was more effective than his predecessors at establishing some connections between the state and elements in society. In September 1986, he set up the National Compromise Commission to contact the regime's opponents. In November, Karmal was replaced as now-ceremonial president by a non-party member, Haji Muhammad Samkanai, signaling the PDPA's willingness to open government to non-Marxists, and unveiled a program of "National Reconciliation." It offered a six-month cease-fire and discussions leading to a possible coalition government. In addition, Najibullah proposed that resistance forces be allowed to retain areas under their control. In particular, the Najibullah government pursued the tactic of appeasing disillusioned Mujahidin commanders who would then agree to cooperate as government militia. In fact, some of the best government troops were led by former Mujahidin commanders, like Abdul Rashid Dostum (currently an infamous warlord in post-Taliban Afghanistan).

Najibullah assured party members (particularly the Khalqists) that there would be no compromise over "the accomplishments" of the Saur Revolution. Najibullah's strategy of "National Reconciliation" succeeded in appealing to many intellectuals and urban residents, and raised a militia force that could be used to defend the regime. But above all, it was a means of gaining time to prepare for civil war after the Soviet departure. In addition, Najibullah declared at the party congress in July 1990 that the PDPA would renounce

Marxism-Leninism and changed its name to Hizb e-Watan (or the Homeland Party).

The signing of the Geneva accords between Afghanistan and Pakistan (without the participation of the Mujahidin in the negotiations) in 1988, in which both countries agreed not to interfere in the affairs of the other, paved the way for the Soviet military withdrawal, which was completed on February 15, 1989. The expectation by most observers, both Soviet and Western, was that the PDPA/Watan regime in Kabul would fall quickly. However, this was quickly dispelled by the government military victory over the Mujahidin in the Battle of Jalalabad. The Mujahidin were traumatized by this failure and demonstrated their weaknesses in terms of strategy and tactics--weaknesses they were never fully able to overcome over the next three years.

On the other hand, the victory at Jalalabad dramatically revived the morale of the PDPA/Watan regime. Subsequently, an emboldened Najibullah pulled down the facade of shared government and removed non-party ministers from the cabinet. Further strengthening his position was the flood of military and economic supplies provided by the Soviet Union after Jalalabad. By 1990, Soviet support to the Najibullah regime reached a value of \$3 billion dollars per year.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, however, ended all of that. On January 1, 1992, Russia along with the United States ceased all aid to the protagonists in the Afghan civil war. Cut adrift both materially and politically, Najibullah's government began to fall apart as old rivalries emerged in the party. These rifts occasionally involved collaboration between Mujahidin and factions within the party. In March 1990, the Mujahidin leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar cooperated in a coup attempt by the Khalqi Defense minister Shahnawaz Tanai. The coup

failed and Tanai fled to Pakistan.

Najibullah's strategy had been to buy off many Mujahidin groups with supplies, arms, and money to become government militias. However, by 1992 the funds dried up and the allegiances crumbled. This was followed by, in the spring of 1992, mass defections by many militia and army officers (including Abdul Rashid Dostum), leading to a catastrophic loss of morale in the army. On March 18, Najibullah announced his willingness to resign in order to make way for a neutral interim government. He attempted to fly out of Kabul on April 17, but was stopped by Dostum's troops who controlled Kabul Airport under the command of Babrak Karmal's brother, Mahmud Baryalai (Baryalai led a group of Parchamis that had defected to the Mujahidin). Najibullah took sanctuary at the UN mission in Kabul, where he remained until 1996, when the Taliban executed him. The Mujahidin commanders, Ahmad Shah Massoud and Dostum, entered Kabul in April, ending the PDPA/Watan regime.

What has happened to the remnants of the PDPA after the regime's collapse in 1992 and the execution of Najibullah in 1996? Many former PDPA members and leaders joined Mujahidin factions. Khalqists, particularly those in the military, worked for various warlord armies, especially for ethnic Pashtun warlords in the south. Shahnawaz Tanai, the former defense minister and Khalqist who had attempted a coup against Najibullah in 1990, first joined Hekmatyar and later became affiliated with the Taliban. While in Pakistan in mid-1994, Tanai formed a new party with himself as the leader. The party, called the Movement for Peace in Afghanistan, reportedly provided the Taliban movement with trained former Khalqist officers, particularly tank commanders and crews, pilots and artillerymen.<sup>49</sup>



Other Khalqists have developed fairly close relations with the current regime, like Babrak Shinwari, former head of the youth affairs section of the PDPA under Taraki and Amin, who migrated to Peshawar in Pakistan in the winter of 1992 and kept a very low profile. He later helped found the Afghanistan-Pakistan People Friendship Society and was elected member of the Loya Jirga by a council of elders from Nazyan Shinwari area of Nangahar province after the defeat of the Taliban and the ascendance of Hamid Karzai in 2002.<sup>50</sup> Another former Khalqist general who has enjoyed the protection of powerful politicians in the current Afghan government is the former PDPA governor of Kandahar, Nur al-Haq Olumi, who enjoys the patronage of the current Minister of Defense, Muhammad Qasim Fahim.<sup>51</sup> Olumi founded a political organization, the United National Party of Afghanistan (UNPA).<sup>52</sup>

Others, particularly Parchamis, went into exile in Europe (especially to the United Kingdom and the Netherlands). Several Parchamis fled abroad, including the former prime minister under Babrak Karmal and Najibullah, Sultan Ali Kishmand, who settled in London, and Suleiman Laiq, the former minister of culture and poet who wrote the words to the Afghan National Anthem, who settled in Germany. Another leading member is Babrak Karmal's brother, Mahmoud Baryalai, former deputy prime minister, who returned to Afghanistan in 2002. According to one report, his return to Afghanistan was facilitated by the Russians, who had promoted an alliance between the Northern Alliance and former PDPA members (both Parchamis and Khalqists) in opposition to the Taliban.<sup>53</sup>

However, generally, whereas the

former Khalqists either joined or allied themselves with the Taliban or other Mujahidin warlords, the Parchamis have largely organized outside of Afghanistan in exile, mainly in Europe and the United States. The largest of these organizations is the Democratic Watan Party of Afghanistan, which operates out of Germany and is the direct successor party to the PDPA/Watan Party. The party sent delegates to various European leftist congresses since 1995 and to a special unity conference of Afghan and Pakistani leftists held in Pakistan in March 1999. The party is currently headed by a former, relatively minor, Parcham official, Muhammad Issa.

In October 2002, a party conference was held in Frankfurt, Germany. The party rejects Marxism Leninism, but continues to call for national reconciliation and the establishment of a secular government in Afghanistan. Islam is recognized as an important force in Afghanistan, but the program insists that "we will not allow anybody to misuse Islam or other religions for their own ends." The party's program urges that religion be kept out of politics and government.<sup>54</sup> Another Parcham group, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (Hezb-e Demokratik-e Khalq- Afghanistan), headed by Suleiman Laiq, split from the DWPA and has been supported by older former regime figures such as Kishmand.

Despite all of these activities, the Afghan communists remain extremely divided, not only along the old Khalqist-Parchami line of cleavage, but also along generational lines. For instance, there remains tension in the emigre community between older former Parchamis like Laiq and Kishmand and younger leaders like Issa. Nonetheless, none of the communist

successor organizations, either Khalqist or Parchami, had the opportunity to organize openly for the legislative elections in 2004. A ban on communist activities was adopted in February 2002 by the Karzai government.<sup>55</sup> The ban was challenged by the UNPA, but on August 25, 2003, the Supreme Court in Afghanistan ruled against UNPA's petition to register for the legislative elections. Not only was the application rejected, but the court issued its intent to prosecute former communists like Olumi.<sup>56</sup> Thus it remains extremely difficult for the successors to the PDPA to find room to operate in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

## CONCLUSION

In comparing the experiences of the Yemeni Socialist Party and the PDPA, it is clear that the former has fared much better after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are many reasons for this, but perhaps the most striking is that the YSP was far better at institutionalizing its position in Yemeni society than was the PDPA in Afghan society. Although continuous intervention in Afghan politics by the Soviet Union certainly weakened the position of the PDPA and hampered its ability to establish its identity independent of Moscow, the choices made by the PDPA did not help. The Khalqist confrontation with Islamic religious figures, the inability of the PDPA as a whole to extend its social roots beyond its narrow intellectual base and military support, together with incessant and institutionalized factionalism (manifested in exile as well), meant that when Soviet support was withdrawn, the regime was no longer viable. Despite evidence that there remains some degree of sympathy, and even nostalgia, by many in Afghanistan regarding the days of the PDPA regime,<sup>57</sup> and despite the fact that the U.S. is now more positively disposed to

cooperate with former communists as secular hedges against radical Islamism,<sup>58</sup> the PDPA has remained largely ineffectual and seemingly unable to take advantage of changed circumstances after September 11, 2001.

What are the futures of the YSP and the PDPA/Watan party? As for the YSP, the party has many strengths on which it can capitalize. First, it is Yemen's only party of the left and its secular ideology still has appeal among certain intellectuals and women. Second, the party remains the national party of the south of Yemen and continues to have strong support in that area. Third, the party has done much to renew itself after 1998, and its transformation has made it a more liberal and democratic party.

On the other hand, the party continues to face a severe financial crisis, leadership turmoil (particularly since the murder of Jarallah Omar), a potentially destabilizing rift between the hard-line old guard and liberal democratic reformers, and continued hostility from the GPC government. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the YSP will disappear from the political scene any time very soon, and will likely continue as the most electorally successful communist successor party in the Islamic world, playing an important role in Yemen's fragile experiment in electoral democracy.

The future of the PDPA/Watan party and its successors is far cloudier. The movement has fragmented and there is little progress toward unity (despite some half-hearted efforts in the late 1990s). Many of the former PDPA leaders (particularly Khalqists) have thrown in their lot with warlords and are unlikely to abandon their new patrons to promote social democracy in post-Taliban Afghanistan. In addition, the "natural" constituencies of the party (especially the Parchami wing) intellectuals and

professionals, emigrated after the collapse of the regime in 1992, and the new government in Kabul is not eager to have them return. There also remain legal hurdles for ex-communists in Afghanistan, making it hard to organize a political descendent of the PDPA.

Nonetheless, given that the Karzai regime needs experienced administrators and trained professionals to rebuild the country,

and that U.S. policy now supports political forces in the region that promote secularism, there has emerged a structural opening for successors to the PDPA. Whether they are able to take advantage of that opening and serve a constructive role in the building of Afghan democracy (as have former communists in Eastern Europe) remains to be seen.

**Table 1: Dimensions of Previous Party/Regime Legacy**

| Party | Dependence on Soviet Union:   | Factionalism  | Societal Penetration  |
|-------|---|---|---|
| YSP   | <p>Relatively lower than PDPA.</p> <p>1) Estimated Number of Soviet or Cuban Troops/ Population in 1990 (estimated largest number of troops in 1980's)= .0002 (2000).</p> <p>2) Trade with Soviet Union virtually negligible.</p>   | <p>Based on regional and tribal affiliations, but Relatively lower than PDPA.</p>   | <p>Relatively higher than PDPA, promoted by legacy of revolutionary/liberation struggle and relatively benign approach to Islam, YSP membership was 3.5% of population.</p> |
| PDPA  | <p>Relatively higher than YSP</p> <p>1) Estimated Number of Soviet or Cuban Troops/ Population in 1990 (estimated largest number of troops in 1980's)=.005 (125000).</p> <p>2) Trade and economic connections with Soviet Union substantial: Afghanistan held observers status in Council of Mutual</p> | <p>Higher than YSP, based on regional, ethno/linguistic, tribal, and class cleavages. Relatively more institutionalized (Khalqists versus Parchamis).</p> | <p>Relatively low, hampered by dependence on Soviet Union and aggressive approach to Islam, party membership was less than 1% of population.</p>                            |

John Ishiyama

| Table 1: Dimensions of Previous Party/Regime Legacy |                             |  |  |
|---|-----------------------------|--|--|
|   | Economic Assistance (CMEA). |  |  |

Sources: **Yearbook of International Communist Affairs**, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1991; A.S. Banks,(ed) **Political Handbook of the World**, Binghamton: CSA Publications, 1985-1992.

| Table 2: Seats YSP Won in General Parliamentary Elections 1993-2003 by North and South |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
|  | Seats won in 1993 parliamentary elections | Seats won in 1997 parliamentary elections | Seats won in 2003 parliamentary elections |
| North  | 15  | 0   | 1   |
| South  | 41  | 0   | 7   |

Source: Matsumoto, Hiroshi. 2003. "Yemen between Democratization and Prolonged Power" The Japan Institute of International Affairs (working paper) at [http://www.jiia.or.jp/pdf/working\\_paper/h14\\_matsumoto-e.pdf](http://www.jiia.or.jp/pdf/working_paper/h14_matsumoto-e.pdf) (accessed April 4, 2004.)

| Table 3: Results of 2001 Local Council Elections |                | Seats won in 1993 parliamentary elections |
|--|----------------|---|
| Province Level (426 seats)                       |                | 16  |
| Local Council (6734)                             | District Level | 218                                       |

Source Matsumoto, Hiroshi. 2003. "Yemen between Democratization and Prolonged Power" The Japan Institute of International Affairs (working paper) at [http://www.jiia.or.jp/pdf/working\\_paper/h14\\_matsumoto-e.pdf](http://www.jiia.or.jp/pdf/working_paper/h14_matsumoto-e.pdf) accessed April 4, 2004.

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#### NOTES

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- <sup>12</sup> Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen*, p. 121.
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- <sup>27</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan: A Country Study*.
- <sup>28</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, p. 211.
- <sup>29</sup> Dresch, *History of Modern Yemen*, p. 74; Halliday, *Revolution and Foreign Policy*.
- <sup>30</sup> Dresch, *History of Modern Yemen*, pp. 149-150.
- <sup>31</sup> Halliday, *Revolution and Foreign Policy*; Dresch, *History of Modern Yemen*, p. 169.
- <sup>32</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan: A Country Study*.
- <sup>33</sup> David Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 32-38.
- <sup>34</sup> Edwards, *Before Taliban*, pp. 46-48.
- <sup>35</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan: A Country Study*.
- <sup>36</sup> Edwards, *Before Taliban*, pp. 46-47.
- <sup>37</sup> Edwards, *Before Taliban*, pp. 57-86; Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan: A Country Study*.
- <sup>38</sup> Edwards, *Before Taliban*, pp. 57-86.
- <sup>39</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, p. 259.
- <sup>40</sup> Afghanistan, unlike Yemen, had observer status in the CMEA.
- <sup>41</sup> Nyrop and Seekins, *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, p. 233.
- <sup>42</sup> Jillian Schwedler, "Yemen's Unlikely 'Emerging Democracy,'" *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2002), pp. 48-55; Jillian Schwedler, "Framing Political Islam and Democratization: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen," paper presented at APSA annual meeting San Francisco, CA,

2001, p. 36.

<sup>43</sup> Hezam Al Yemini, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Political Parties in Yemen* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2003), p. 66.

<sup>44</sup> Hezam Al Yemini, *The Dynamics of Democratization*, p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> Sharon Carapico, Lisa Wedeen and Anna Wuerth, "The Death and Life of Jarallah Omar," *Middle East Report* (December 31, 2002)

<http://www.merip.org/mero/mero123102.html>

<sup>46</sup> BBC December 28, 2002

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/2611071.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2611071.stm) accessed March 28, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Hezam Al Yemini, *The Dynamics of Democratization*, p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> "Mokbil's Leadership of YSP, Renewed," *Yemen Times*, Vol. 10, No. 36 (September 2000), p.1.

<sup>49</sup> "Tanai Group Split into Two Factions," *The Frontier Post* (April 28, 2002), p.1.

<sup>50</sup> I. Shinwari, "Ex-Khalq leader off to Kabul for Jirga," *Dawn* (June 7, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Fahim is widely considered pro-Russian and is said to have ties with the Tajik Communist party. He was instrumental in rehabilitating many ex PDPA, particularly Khalqists.

<sup>52</sup> "Resurgence of Communists in Afghanistan," *The Daily Mail* (Islamabad) (October 8, 2003), p.1.

<sup>53</sup> G.R. Roashan, "Return of the Commies," Omaha: Institute for Afghan Studies. <[http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/Contributions/Commentaries/DRRoashan/11\\_30\\_02.htm](http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/Contributions/Commentaries/DRRoashan/11_30_02.htm)> accessed March 21, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> *Democratic Watan Party Program*, 2002. <http://www.watanpartyofafghanistan.com/pages/784408/index.htm>, accessed December 2003.

<sup>55</sup> A possible exception is the Khalqist successor organization the UNPA.

<sup>56</sup> "Afghanistan: Supreme Court Rules Against Communists," *RFE/RL Reports* (August 25, 2003) p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> See "Shoddy Maneuvers to Form Government," *The Guardian* (October 31, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> As evidenced by the inclusion of representatives of the Iraqi Communist Party in the U.S.-sponsored Provisional Governing Council, and efforts to secure the support of the YSP to as a means to keep tabs on terrorists in Yemen.