

South Yemen's Independence Struggle

**South
Yemen's
Independence
Struggle**

**GENERATIONS
OF RESISTANCE**

ANNE-LINDA AMIRA AUGUSTIN

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Abbreviations

Ashid	Association of the Yemeni Democratic Youth
AQAP	al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
FLOSY	Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GPC	General People's Congress
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Islah Party	Yemeni Congregation for Reform
JMP	Joint Meeting Parties
MADAR	Center for General Opinion Studies and Sociological Research
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
NF	National Front
NLF	National Liberation Front
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
Rabita	League of the Sons of South Arabia
SMA	South Arabia Media Agency
STC	Southern Transitional Council
UN	United Nations
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic
YSP	Yemeni Socialist Party

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1.1. Governorate of Aden and City Districts



Dar Sa'd

Shaykh Uthman

al-Mansura

Khur Maksar

al-Mu'alla

al-Tawahi

al-Qalu'a

Crater

Gulf of Aden

Gulf of Aden



1.2. Republic of Yemen, indicating the former border between the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic, as well as South Yemeni governorates and their capitals

Introduction

In 2007, I spent several months in Aden, South Yemen, completing a semester at the University of Aden within the scope of my Middle Eastern Studies at Leipzig University in Germany.¹ In that same year, the Southern Movement (al-Hirak al-Janubi, hereafter, the Movement) was born in protest against the marginalization of South Yemenis since the unification of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY; also known as South Yemen; Jumhuriyat al-Yaman al-Dimuqratiya al-Sha'biya) with the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR; also known as North Yemen; al-Jumhuriya al-'Arabiya al-Yamaniya) in 1990; that marginalization increased after the war in 1994.²

At the time of Yemeni unification in 1990, power in the state was equally shared between South and North Yemeni politicians and bureaucrats in ministries. However, the results of the 1993 elections shattered the power-sharing agreement, marginalized the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP; al-Hizb al-Ishtiraki al-Yamani) of the PDRY,³ and strengthened the General People's Congress (GPC; al-Mu'tamar al-Sha'bi al-'Amm) and the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah Party; al-Tajammu' al-Yamani li-l-Islah) and, with them, the tribal and Islamist elites of North Yemen. Due to fundamental disagreements in the new coalition government that the three parties formed, tensions soared and war broke out, beginning with clashes on April 27, 1994. On May 21, 1994, the PDRY faction proclaimed the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Yemen within the territory of the former PDRY; however, it lost the war on July 7, 1994, and the Republic of Yemen remained one entity.

When it began, the Southern Movement was a loose merger of South Yemenis, many of them former army personnel and state employees of the PDRY who had been forced from their jobs after the war in 1994. For those affected, the elimination of their jobs was tantamount to punishment

for the war. In 2007, these people began to express their discontent publicly, demanding social rights and pensions or to be reinstated in their jobs. However, the Yemeni government would not address their grievances. State security forces used brutal measures against protesters (see Human Rights Watch 2009), which had the effect of strengthening the heretofore weakly organized social movement. More and more people joined the demonstrations, and the grievances evolved into concrete political demands, foremost among which was the demand for state independence of the territory that once formed the PDRY.

By 2007, when I was studying in Aden, everybody there seemed to be talking about the emergence of the Southern Movement; ever since, I have wanted to learn more about it. I often wondered about the very active involvement of young South Yemenis in the Southern Movement and these young people's accounts of how great life was in the PDRY. I was born in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to an East German mother and a South Yemeni father, so my own background is situated in two states that both disappeared from the world map through unification processes with their neighbors in 1990. I was a young child when the two Germanys reunified, so I have few memories of life in the GDR before then. I was astonished when young South Yemenis born after 1990 told me "*we* had" these and those accomplishments in the PDRY, and "*our* state" provided "*us*" with this and that achievement. They strongly identified with a state that had disappeared before they were born. I began questioning why so many young people born after 1990 had joined the Southern Movement, why they demanded the reestablishment of a state they had never experienced, and where their conception of the PDRY had originated. My own background, which was deeply affected by the topic itself, provided me with some preliminary answers.

In many East German families, nostalgic notions of the defunct socialist state were shared with and disseminated to younger generations. My generation—those who experienced the difficulties of the early unification years during their childhoods—grew up with this "Ostalgia."⁴ This nostalgia taught me that the GDR was a place where people led satisfying lives, cultivated permanent and steady friendships with neighbors and colleagues at work, had lovely parties with their collective work teams from factories, went on fun excursions, and lived a life in solidarity with each other. Some people still seem to miss these things today. Furthermore, jobs then were safe. Job security was scarce in eastern Germany in the

1990s and was certainly a very important trigger for nostalgic notions of the GDR era.

I often heard similar accounts in South Yemen. During my stays in the village in Abyan, I would accompany my grandmother while she tended her goats and sheep every morning, and she would tell me about the past under British colonial rule and about life in the PDRY. Other relatives, friends, and neighbors likewise filled my imagination with pictures of a splendid time before 1990. However, nostalgia for the socialist past could not adequately explain why a mass protest movement with demands for state reestablishment emerged in South Yemen, when similar ambitions had not emerged in today's eastern Germany. This raised another important question, closely related to the first one, on youth participation: Why had the Southern Movement grown so tremendously during the past decade, developing from a primarily social movement demanding socioeconomic rights into a mass protest movement claiming independence for a state that had long ago disappeared from the world map? I found an answer to my questions by exploring in depth, over a decade, the Southern Movement itself and the principal characteristics of the independence struggle in South Yemen.⁵

Ethnography of an Independence Struggle

This book has its source in an ethnography I conducted of the independence struggle in South Yemen, in which the theme of the independence struggle, rather than a specific locale, situated my research. My focus is the people and the processes that evoked, consolidated, and strengthened the independence struggle. Aden, the former capital of the PDRY and the major urban center of South Yemen—as well as a magnet for people from all the governorates of South Yemen and where most of the Southern Movement's mass demonstrations are held—was the principal locale for my fieldwork and my point of departure from which to discover the independence struggle. Southern Movement activists are constantly traveling a circuit, moving between demonstrations and gatherings or attending funerals of activists in different governorates. Whenever the security situation and the support of locals allowed me to visit locations outside Aden, I did so, among them al-Habilayn in the Lahij governorate, a stronghold of the Southern Movement from its inception. I also regularly spent time in Abyan, where my relatives live.

Conducting research only in Aden and surrounding areas would not have yielded sufficient information to understand the independence struggle and

its translocal dimensions. Very active and large diaspora communities live in the Gulf states, the United States, and Europe (especially in Great Britain), and they have an enormous impact on the independence struggle by financially supporting activism in and outside South Yemen and by disseminating the claims for an independent state through the media and the internet. In 2012, I attended a conference in Lebanon, during which time I visited the pro-independence southern TV channel Aden Live, which broadcast from southern Beirut at that point. In Europe, I attended gatherings and festivities of Southern Movement activists. All these places where I met people from South Yemen are pieces in a mosaic that provide an overall picture of the independence struggle.

During my primary field research for my PhD dissertation in 2014 and 2015, I conducted a “focused ethnography” (Knoblauch 2005), a time- and data-intensive method consisting of multiple short-term field visits, which build on background knowledge of the field. Focused ethnographers make use of various recording devices (video cameras, digital cameras, and voice recorders) to collect a massive amount of data. I took around 1,300 photos and videos⁶ of gatherings, lectures, meetings, and protests, including three mass demonstrations.⁷ I conducted and recorded approximately forty hours of narrative and open structured interviews with individuals and focus group discussions of two, three, or even more than thirty people; in total, I recorded more than eighty people, ranging in age from nineteen to over seventy and originating from almost every governorate in South Yemen: Aden, Hadramawt, Lahij, Shabwa, Abyan, and al-Dali.⁸ Most of the people I met considered themselves activists in the Southern Movement or at least proponents of an independent state; they included civil society actors from local NGOs and other organizations (many of them women), students, forced retirees, university teachers, writers and intellectuals, schoolteachers, housewives, unemployed young people, journalists and media makers, current and former members of the YSP, street activists of the Southern Movement, unionists, and mothers and fathers of those called “martyrs,” those killed for their activism for an independent state. Even though activists were fearful of speaking too much about personal issues concerning themselves and their families due to security concerns, my personal and family ties to Movement activists gave me access inside the Movement and allowed me to study it in depth. I did not interview close relatives and friends, but of course, daily conversations with family, friends,

and neighbors and my casual observations of daily life also shaped my research results.

In addition, I bought many textbooks on history, civics, social studies, and geography, used for different grade levels. In these textbooks, I searched for content pertaining to contemporary Yemeni history, and I analyzed how recent events were narrated. During field trips, I regularly bought local daily newspapers, such as *Aden al-ghad*, *al-Ayyam*, and *Qadiya*. Most of the *Aden al-ghad* articles appeared online the same day or the day after print publication. I also followed the social media presence and website of Aden Live until 2015, when it stopped broadcasting because of the war, as well as social media from the South Yemeni community. I received books on the grievances of South Yemenis written by academics from Aden that, because of their explosive political content, were not available in local bookstores.⁹ The analysis of the collected material and data is presented in this book.

When I entered the field in 2014, I was unknown to most of the activists, and I needed intermediaries to help me gain access to the Southern Movement. I did not consider myself an insider, and I was not seen as such by Movement activists. Yet my personal links to South Yemen and connections to some Southern Movement activists had already made me an observer, researcher, and participant, with strong solidarity with the cause in South Yemen. In 2018, at the conclusion of my PhD work, the Southern Transitional Council (STC; al-Majlis al-Intiqali al-Janubi),¹⁰ which was established in May 2017 and comprised different political entities but primarily Southern Movement activists, offered me a job; my task was to establish its first European representative office, which is now based in Berlin. I accepted the offer and thus “crossed the line” and joined the struggle. One of the main reasons I decided to work with the STC relates to the limitations placed on academics in the German system, which proscribe (field) research in Yemen because of the security situation and would have forced me to shift my research focus to a different country or region. With the new circumstances that had arisen after the 2015 war and the solidarity I felt with the South Yemeni people, I was not ready to turn my back on this topic to focus on another case. The shocking effects of the Yemen war in 2015 rendered me a researcher-cum-activist, trying to attract attention to the suffering caused by the war. Academia often does not leave much space for such kinds of solidarity and activism, tending to quickly call into question the researcher’s neutrality and objectivity (see Augustin 2018a). Furthermore,

during my research, I observed that the grievances in South Yemen were not being properly addressed either by the ruling elites of Yemen or by the international community. The decision to leave academia and join the STC was made easier for me by the fact that my work primarily involves lobbying for the integration of pro-independence South Yemeni representatives into the UN-led peace process, from which these stakeholders have been excluded for the past six years.

Readers may get the impression of a leaderless movement that is united in its call for independence, because this study focuses on the grassroots members of the Movement and their accounts and views rather than on Movement leaders and their political visions.¹¹ However, in the following chapters, multiple internal debates fragment the ostensible unity, revealing the Movement's diversity at the grassroots level. Readers may also ask why I write in this book that "many South Yemenis" say, state, believe, and so on, though I only discuss those in favor of independence. While the first protests started with a few hundred demonstrators in 2006–7, mass demonstrations have grown in size in recent years to include thousands of participants. This observation was one indication for me that the Movement has increasing influence and support from the population. I also perceived the "southern cause" (*al-qadiya al-janubiya*)—the collective grievances of South Yemenis from the aftermath of the war in 1994—to be more prominent in daily communication during my fieldwork in the mid-2010s than was the case at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. However, meaningful and reliable statistics about how many people in South Yemen demand independence do not exist. Estimates diverge widely, with supporters of the Movement estimating that around 90 percent of South Yemenis support it and opponents of the Movement claiming that support is well below 50 percent. In this study, I avoid such estimates and focus on qualitative research among supporters of independence.

My personal interest and involvements not only helped me study the Southern Movement from a close perspective but also prevented me from doing research outside the community of independence supporters, because the southern cause is one of the most polarizing issues in Yemen. In this polarized and, very often, insecure research environment, I felt safer by focusing on only one faction, the Southern Movement and those in favor of it. With this study, I do not aim to compare South and North, or supporters and opponents, but to study the independence struggle, the Movement's self-image, its internal negotiations and struggles, how young people learned

from and about the past from their elders, and how those young people envision the future. Some readers might ask about the validity of this study given that it only addresses supporters of independence and does not address what opponents of the Movement say about its claims and aims. This study does not assert that these other voices do not exist; rather, it should be considered an ethnography of the independence struggle, including its inner processes and debates.

The Generation of Unity and Intergenerational Transmission

While conducting interviews in Aden and surrounding governorates in 2014 and 2015, I was struck by the ubiquity of one term: the “Generation of Unity” (*jil al-wahda*). The concept of “generation” has multiple dimensions and has been developed in various disciplines and contexts, spawning contrary understandings. The term mostly refers to (1) the generative generation, a genealogical category defined by generational lines of succession within the family; (2) the birth generation, a cohort that relates to persons born in the same year or close to the same year; (3) the historical generation, all groups of persons who live in a particular time at the same time and participate in the same historical events, regardless of their year of birth; and (4) the life age generations (of adults, youth, children, elderly people), which are distinctive age groups according to the life course (Zinnecker 2012, 26).

In a pragmatic study of generation as an idea, Foster (2013, 198) uses the concept of discourse to posit “‘generation’ as a vehicle for thought and action, a concept and a mental structure that provides people with, and limits them to, specific way(s) of understanding, speaking about, and acting in the world around them. . . . This means acknowledging that generation is often framed for a purpose and, even in everyday talk, always has meaningful effects.” In his speeches, former long-term president ‘Ali ‘Abdullah Salih¹² used the term to refer to young people born during and after the unification phase of the early 1990s. Embodied in the phrase was the hope that this generation would grow up as united Yemenis instead of South or North Yemenis. Thus, it is primarily a constructed designation carrying political objectives, used by the Salih regime to build a united country by making Yemeni unification the space for shaping the memory and identity of future generations. Yemeni unification is thus the principal historical marker for this generation.

In my interviews, activists born in the early 1990s used Generation of Unity as an ironic self-designation. Originally meant to evoke positive

connotations of Yemeni unity, the term is now forthrightly rejected by young South Yemeni activists because it implies the effacement of the pre-unification past (see Augustin 2018b, 95). Their use of the term has invoked a generational consciousness among a certain age group of South Yemenis—although the meaning differs from the original political objectives intended by former president Salih. When South Yemenis refer to themselves as the Generation of Unity, they are stating not only that they were born in the era of unification but also that they never personally experienced life in the PDRY, emphasizing that their lived experiences were made only in unified Yemen. Nevertheless, members of the Generation of Unity strongly identify with *their* state—the PDRY. Karl Mannheim’s (1952, 292) theoretical consideration that an age-defined group of individuals is shaped and affected by similar historical experiences and events comes to the fore in the usage of the term “Generation of Unity.”

Rosenthal (1997a) proposes that generations are formed in an interactional process with other generations. Social worldviews and habitual social interaction with the world are constituted not only within generations but also in the intergenerational dialogue. Furthermore, the biological generations of parents and grandparents—the primary agents of socialization—play an essential role in forming the next generation. The decisive factor here is that parents and grandparents are understood not as members of a certain generation because of their biological function but rather as a generation based on their shared background of experiences. Rosenthal assumes that the stances of previous generations are not simply adopted by the younger generation in the interactive processes between and within generations, but are mutually negotiated, thereby being interactively experienced by each. Thus, these stances continue to have an effect or transform themselves (2–3). Rosenthal presumes that the younger generations are not passive recipients but rather are active agents in contact with older generations. The interaction between the older generation and their descendants can also shape the elders’ perspectives on the past. In that way, interaction with the younger generation can be constitutive for the older generation (4).

This interaction enables *intergenerational transmission*, which is the passage, transfer, movement, or exchange of patterns of behavior and attitudes, values, and taboos, as well as resources; it is affected by linguistic, perceptive, and cognitive capabilities; education; communication and affective abilities; and, finally, economic resources and family property shared between one generation and another (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1991, 14). Yet

the family “remains the main channel for the transmission of language, names, land and housing, local social standing, and religion; and beyond that also of social values and aspirations, fears, world views, domestic skills, taken-for-granted ways of behaving, attitudes to the body, models of parenting and marriage—resulting in the condensation of experiences” (Bertaux and Thompson 1993, 1–2). However, processes of socialization take place through diverse and manifold instances of transmission. Outside the family, peer groups or societal institutions, such as schools, play an important role in transmission as well. Family transmission between generations is “thus an intrinsically complex process which also, because of the existence of other channels, lacks a monopoly of what may be handed down” (2–3).

Transmission is an individual and collective process at the same time and always occurs through a two-way relationship, because parents “may offer their own unrealized dreams to their children, but the children on their side must either turn them down or make them their own” (2). Rosenthal (1997a) assumes that intergenerational transmission is a dialogical or interactional generational process; this understanding renders out of date the conventional, more static conceptualization of transmission of attitudes and memories from one generation to the following one. The mutual interactional process occurring in the transmission generates new elements for all those involved in the process (5). In addition, transmissions can be more or less conscious and intended; some instances are completely unintentional and even run contrary to the desired objectives (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1991, 14–15). Processes of transmission also take place at a nonverbal level (Brunner 2011, 56) through, for example, gestures and facial expressions. They also occur through medially represented images and a variety of material manifestations of stories, which can produce an occasion to remember, on the one hand, and function as models of the past, on the other hand (Welzer 1998, 164).

As I explained earlier, the dissemination of nostalgic notions of the socialist past plays an important role in political mobilization in South Yemen, particularly of the generation born after unification who become active agents rather than passive recipients. Thus, the transmission of certain beliefs, perceptions, representations of the past, memories, and conceptions for the future influences interactions between those people who experienced life in the PDRY and the Generation of Unity who did not because of their age. In addition to its political meaning, the phrase “Generation of Unity” also indicates that Yemeni unification brought about perceived political,

economic, and social changes in different spheres of South Yemenis' lives. The perceptions of unification and the era of the PDRY are shaped today retrospectively by the experiences of the 1994 war and the subsequent large-scale marginalization of South Yemenis. The impact of the post-unification experiences raises the question of how an omnipresent phenomenon, such as intergenerational transmission, which emerges daily in every family, can be transformed into an everyday form of resistance adopted by supporters of an independent state.

Intergenerational Transmission as an Everyday Form of Resistance

Intergenerational transmission has been studied across disciplines, including psychoanalysis, psychology, sociology, history, and education. It assumes a significant role in debates on the reproduction of societal norms and values, social status and power relations, historical and family narratives including collective memory, and cultural practices (Chaieb and Schwarz 2014, 57). Many studies deal with intergenerational transmission in families of perpetrators and victims of World War II (see Rosenthal 1997b; Welzer, Montau, and Plaß 1997; Bar-On 1993; Inowlocki 1993) or related to social mobility and migration (see Delcroix 2009; Bertaux and Thomson 1997; Lahire 1995; Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1991). However, the role that intergenerational transmission plays in the continuation and strengthening of an independence struggle is still an underexplored topic.¹³ The transmission of memories and representations of the past, as well as of certain beliefs and perceptions, has had an enormous impact on political mobilization and on the claims for reestablishing the state in South Yemen. On that basis, intergenerational transmission can become an act of resistance.

The term “resistance” describes “a wide variety of actions and behaviors at all levels of human social life (individual, collective, and institutional) and in a number of different settings, including political systems, entertainment and literature, and the workplace” (Hollander and Einwohner 2004, 534). Thus, there is little consensus on the definition of the term. Some scholars detect “resistance” in hairstyles, whereas others look more narrowly at revolutionary actions, protest, or social movements. Physical resistance can comprise violence or subtle acts, such as dawdling in the workplace or wearing particular clothes. In certain contexts, both silence and the breaking of silence can be considered acts of resistance. It can be an individual or a collective act, widespread or locally limited (536). Different forms

of resistance move along distinct dimensions—for example, the family, community, or region—and create unforeseen networks and potential (Routledge 1997, 69). Thus, some forms of resistance require coordination; some do not. The targets of resistance also vary. Sometimes individuals are the target, whereas at other times groups, organizations, institutions, social structures, or states are. The goals of resistance also differ. Some resisters intend to achieve change; others want to curtail change. Resistant acts may also be based on identity issues (Hollander and Einwohner 2004, 536–37). Generally, “resistance” implies a sense of action; that is “some active behavior, whether verbal, cognitive, or physical” (538), and a sense of opposition.

The war in 1994 ended the short period of democratic opening and pluralism in Yemen that began with unification in 1990 (see Carapico 1998, 53–59, 140, 191–94). For South Yemenis, this war then initiated a time of political and economic marginalization and discrimination, as well as the suppression of dissent (see chapter 3, “The Marginalized Post-unity South”). Many South Yemenis have seen the time after the war as a time of “occupation” (*ibtital*) in which the South has been under the control of political and military elites from North Yemen (see Day 2012, 141). The South Yemeni scholar Dr. Abu Bakr al-Saqqaf was the first academic to adopt the term “internal colonialism”¹⁴ (*isti‘mar dakhili*) for South Yemen in an article in Aden’s *al-Ayyam* newspaper after the war in 1994. He was suspended for three months from his professorship in philosophy at Sanaa University after this article appeared. In December 1995, political security officers kidnapped and tortured him (Day 2012, 138, 143; Mermier 1997, 8).

The Salih regime benefited enormously from the economic exploitation of South Yemen and from South Yemeni land and resources; for that reason, unity became an unquestionable imperative. Any attempt to redress grievances in South Yemen was met with suppression by the Salih regime, with South Yemenis accused of sedition for spreading anti-unity secessionist ideas (see Day 2012, 143, 153, 186). Thus, the war of 1994 came to be “known as the war to preserve the union” (Carapico 1998, 54). The regime celebrated July 7 as its triumph over secessionism. In this context, the unity narrative became omnipresent in the political discourse of the ruling Yemeni elites; by stressing the idea that only unification brought advancement to the entire country, this narrative was used to overshadow political and economic challenges after unification, consolidate President Salih’s autocratic power after the war, and silence opposition (see chapter 3,

“Yemeni Nationalism and the Unity Narrative of the Republic of Yemen”). At the same time, the unity narrative omitted the suffering and victimization of South Yemenis.

After the war, dissent was largely expressed in passive terms, and mass opposition only rarely surfaced (Day 2012, 228). In 1995 and 1996, military and security forces applied lethal force at labor protests and strikes in Aden (151). One of the first revolts after the 1994 war occurred in al-Mukalla in 1996; some South Yemenis see this conflict as the point of origin of the Southern Movement. Security forces opened fire on protesters, and many were arrested. This 1996 revolt was provoked by the assault of two local women by a North Yemeni policeman in al-Mukalla; one of the women claimed that she had been raped (see Day 2012, 169–74; Carapico 1998, 197–98). Demonstrators also faced gunfire and arrest at a memorial protest on the fourth anniversary of the 1994 war organized by the YSP and other oppositional groups in al-Mukalla in 1998 (Day 2012, 179). In 1998, government attempts to separate Hadramawt into two regions were met with massive street rallies and sit-ins across the governorate, and activists collected tens of thousands of signatures on a petition sent to president Salih; the plans were finally prevented (183). From 1998 to 2000, there were continuous clashes between the army and residents of the governorate of al-Dali‘, which is to the north of Aden, because, to the displeasure of locals, the government created the al-Dali‘ governorate in 1998 from North and South Yemeni areas along the former border, for the purpose of erasing the old North-South borderline and reducing the chance for renewed attempts of secession (184). Only with the emergence of the Southern Movement in 2007 did mass opposition surface for the first time after the 1994 war on a persistent basis, and since then has constantly grown.

Based on Hollander and Einwohner’s (2004, 544) conceptualization of resistance as being marked by the actor’s intention as well as the target’s and the observer’s recognition of that intention, intergenerational transmission as an act of resistance can be defined as *overt resistance*, intended as such by actors and recognized by the target and observers. Here, we can count street protests and gatherings of the Southern Movement, because public gatherings often have an educational task (see chapter 4, “Public Gatherings and Demonstrations”) in which memories and representations of the past, largely neglected in standardized national textbooks (see chapter 3, “Yemeni Nationalism and the Unity Narrative of the Republic of Yemen”) are circulated among protesters of different ages. Intergenerational transmission

as a resistant act can also occur privately when public or overt resistance is perceived as too dangerous but oppressed people are conscious of their oppression and intend to resist it in some way. Thus, intergenerational transmission also occurs as *covert resistance*, intended as resistance by actors and recognized as such by observers but not by the target.

James Scott (1990, 4–5, xii) introduced the term “hidden transcript,” which is an offstage, private discourse of “speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript” to describe “a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant.”¹⁵ Thereby, Scott provided a new understanding of resistance to domination. A hidden transcript, developed not only by the oppressed but also by the powerful, is a backstage discourse comprising what cannot be expressed in the face of power; simultaneously, the individual acts according to a hegemonic public mode of conduct generated by the process of domination (xii). The hidden transcript can include oppressed people’s rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, jokes, and gestures “as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct” (xiii). Such forms of insubordination can be understood as “infrapolitics of the powerless” (xiii). The “public transcript” is “the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate” (2). According to Scott, the first open statement of the “hidden transcript” emerges with “a declaration that breaches the etiquette of power relations, that breaks an apparently calm surface of silence and consent[; it] carries the force of a symbolic declaration of war” (8).

The desire for independence has been present since the early 1990s in South Yemen; far from public attention, memories of the past were maintained during the period of unification from 1990, and particularly after the 1994 war, until 2007—inside families, neighborhoods, and circles of friends and colleagues. Claims to an independent state disappeared from the public after the lost war in 1994 but survived in private as a counternarrative that was intergenerationally transmitted, and, therefore, could be reactivated easily and quickly when the regime’s power crumbled at the beginning of the 2000s. When, in 2007, the Southern Movement came into being and began to openly address the marginalization of South Yemenis and to contest the unity narrative, the hidden transcript suddenly became public and breached the power relationship in the country. However, many South Yemenis, although in favor of independence and the Southern Movement, do not attend associated gatherings and demonstrations because of their

perceptions of insecurity and potential violence during public events. These people prefer engaging in acts of covert resistance, including intergenerationally disseminating their beliefs and memories at home or another private space. Yet the dissemination of the hidden transcript is not necessarily a form of covert resistance. Many South Yemenis transmit nostalgic notions of the past, memories, attitudes, and beliefs in their daily conversations but often unintentionally—for example, when they lament the difficulty of their present life and nostalgically remember their safe and secure life in the PDRY. As per Hollander and Einwohner (2004), their unintentional transmission could be a form of *unwitting resistance*, which is recognized as resistance by the target and by observers, or just *externally defined resistance*, which is only recognized as resistance by an observer. In this case, it is I—the researcher—who observes acts as resistant, while neither the target nor the actor intends it as so (545).

Being a member of the Generation of Unity myself, I often triggered the older generation's memories with my questions, which also helped me learn from them about the past. In South Yemen, teaching young people about the past means disseminating to them the notion that the past was better than the current state and that the future can only become prosperous if people will regain their independence. The generational dimension of the independence struggle is core to the resistance and its continued existence. Thus, intergenerational transmission becomes a “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1995, xvi), an everyday form of resistance of relatively powerless people, which requires little or no coordination or planning. Scott assumes that “such kinds of resistance are often the most significant and the most effective over the long run” (xvi), because they avoid outright confrontations with authorities. Most oppressed people “have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity” (xv), because such activities are perceived as too dangerous. Therefore, multiple quiet and anonymous acts of insubordination may maximize the political presence of the subordinate, which may lead to political consequences for the state (xvii). Intergenerational transmission as an everyday form of resistance, what I term *intergenerational resistance*, can proceed for many years before its effects appear publicly and turn into political mobilization. The delayed outcomes of intergenerational resistance explain why the Southern Movement did not emerge immediately after the war in 1994, but rather in 2007: that was the time when the Generation of Unity came of age and joined the resistance.

Chaieb and Schwarz (2014, 57) argue that intergenerational transmission is “a ubiquitous phenomenon” and thus is not a form of resistance or opposition per se. What, then, are the decisive features that alter this ubiquitous phenomenon, occurring daily in all families, into an everyday form of resistance used by independence campaigners?

Based on the empirical material I collected, I identified five distinctive features of South Yemenis’ intergenerational resistance. The first feature is related to *the sociopolitical environment* in which intergenerational resistance evolves. Large-scale marginalization and oppression under a very repressive and authoritarian regime formed the foundation of the Southern Movement in 2007. After the 1994 war, any opposition was crushed and any act of resistance was fraught with extreme risk. This environment served as the basis for the hidden transcript and its covert transmission. The second feature concerns *the actors*. They perceive injustices, violations against their civil and social rights, or oppression in various arenas in their personal and community lives, such as violent acts of repression or distortions to and silencing of their own past by official state institutions. Therefore, they are intentionally or unintentionally involved in intergenerational resistance. These actors living in repressive environments created hidden transcripts consisting of certain subversive contents—not only contested memories and tales but also symbols, gestures, modes of behavior, and attitudes—that they intergenerationally transmit. The third feature concerns this *transmitted content*, which is the counternarrative. In precarious environments, intergenerational transmission of nonmaterial content, such as narratives, memories, attitudes, and behaviors, is often the sole method by which actors are able to produce, reproduce, and negotiate contested and subversive content. The fourth distinctive feature of intergenerational resistance is *the space* in which it is performed. In recent years, the Southern Movement has not only created its own spaces where activists gather, discuss, and demonstrate but it is also where—first and foremost—intergenerational transmission occurs. Other spaces have been appropriated as well for the dissemination of memories and narratives, such as the school and the neighborhood. Finally, the fifth feature concerns the use of certain *media and symbols*, such as the PDRY flag, slogans, or music, to facilitate and speed up the process of transmission of contested contents beyond usual means of language and communication.

On a methodological-conceptual basis, the five features of intergenerational resistance correspond to the most examined fields in social movement

theory/research. Political opportunity, resource mobilization, and consciousness raising play a role in chapter 1. In chapters 2 and 4, collective action is implicated, whereas in chapter 3, framing processes and collective identity in distinction to others matter. In chapter 5, collective identity is also an issue. The Southern Movement relies on similar strategies, tactics, and a repertoire of contention to other social movements, as seen in chapters 2, 4, and 5. In addition to being a new social movement, struggling for its cause in a repressive context, the Southern Movement is first and foremost an independence movement, promoting a national cause and featuring particularities that become visible in the dominant intergenerational dimension inside the Movement and the dissemination of information about the past. Thus, approaches centering on resistance and intergenerational relations help us come closer to understanding why many young people identify with a state they have never experienced.

Although the protests of the Southern Movement took on a broader dimension with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011—attracting larger numbers of protesters who saw opening opportunities that encouraged them to engage in politics—huge differences exist between the South Yemeni protests and the Arab Spring protests in Egypt, North Yemen, and elsewhere. Bayat (2017, 11) argued that the Arab Spring protests were remarkably different from the radical revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s for three reasons: they (1) lacked a set of ideas and visions that could have informed the rebels ideationally, (2) were not marked by the political and economic radicalism that characterized the revolutions of the twentieth century, and (3) did not fundamentally break from the old order. Thus, these protests were neither revolutions of “rapid and radical transformation of the state pushed by popular movements from below” (17) nor simply expressions of reform that is often carried out as gradual and managed change from above within existing structures. For him, the Arab Spring protests were a mix of both, what he called “refolutions”: “revolutionary movements that emerged to compel the incumbent states to change themselves, to carry out meaningful reforms on behalf of the revolution.” Protesters “were unable to imagine forms of organization and governance that departed from those against which they were rebelling,” nor did they explore how state power functions and how it could be transformed (18).

The situation is vastly different among proponents of independence in South Yemen, because the case of South Yemen is a postsocialist state experience. The Generation of Unity shares a certain national imaginary

with their elders. In this imaginary, certain continuities of the independence struggle in the 1960s, as well as a critical reckoning with the PDRY past, exist in young people's visions and strategies. The PDRY functions as a template against which state successes and failures are measured by comparison with the Republic of Yemen. Thus, experiences of life in the PDRY and their transmission give very clear ideas about what is politically, economically, and socially desirable and what must be avoided in the future. Protesters gain very distinctive visions of what they struggle for and why efforts to challenge current state structures have to continue.