An attempt by Yemeni Socialist Party leaders Ali Salim al-Bid and Abd al-Rahman al-Jifri to secede from the North failed to gain widespread support.14 Northern military forces backed by irregular fighters, notably jihadi veterans of the Afghan–Soviet war,15 put down the secessionists, but not before Scud missiles were fired by the southern military at the unified country’s capital, Sana’a.16 

Political and military power was further consolidated by northerners, and particularly by tribal leaders, from the mid-1990s onwards, through the entrenchment of a patronage-based political system built around the executive.17 Both the rule of law and, indeed, the social contract itself are weak in Yemen, and the government and its institutions exert only partial territorial control.18 Notwithstanding these idiosyncrasies, Yemen remains the only democratic state in the Gulf region, with an elected president, an elected 301-seat parliament headed by a prime minister, an appointed 111-member Shura Council, and elected local councils.

Structural risks of armed violence
Power disparities and marginalization
The shift from traditional tribal leadership (sheikhs) to a patronage-based republican political system led to the co-opting of many sheikhs, who were drawn away from their homelands and became dramatically wealthier...