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Ansar Allah from Revolution to Ruling: A Political Sociological Study of Ansar Allah (Houthi) in Yemen (2000-2025)

انصار الله من الثورة إلى الدولة: دراسة سوسيولوجية سياسية لحركة أنصار الله (الحوثيين) في اليمن- (2025- 2000)

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Abstract:

This political sociological research examines the radical transformation of the Ansar Allah movement (Houthis) in Yemen from a religious-cultural protest group that emerged under the banner of the Quranic March to an established political authority exercising governance over vast areas of northern Yemen during the period 2000-2025. The research employs a compound analysis that combines ideological, social, military, and regional political dimensions to explain how this group was formed as an institutional authoritarian actor in the context of state collapse and the disintegration of traditional elites.

The research reviews the stages of the movement's development, beginning with its Zidi social roots, through the Six Wars (2004-2010) that established its jihadist identity, its participation in the 2011 revolution, then its control over Sana'a in 2014 and the establishment of a parallel governance structure through the Supreme Revolutionary Committee and the Supreme Political Council after 2015. The research also addresses the movement's new regional roles in the Red Sea and its support for resistance movements in Gaza, highlighting its transformation from a local actor to part of the regional resistance axis.

The research findings demonstrate that Ansar Allah has reshaped the state and society in areas under its control through imposing a religious-revolutionary discourse, media and cultural engineering, and a mobilizational economic model based on jihad and zakat. It has built its legitimacy on a mixture of revolution, victimhood, and resistance rather than democratic references.

The study presents a cognitive model that explains this transformation based on the interaction of ideology with social conditions, wars, and regional policies. It indicates that the continuity of this model depends on finding a balance between ideological orientation and the requirements of the modern state. The study recommends the importance of developing new research and analytical tools to understand revolutionary Islamic movements and the need for a societal approach that seeks to rebuild the social contract in post-conflict Yemen.

Keywords: Ansar Allah (Houthis), Quranic March, Political Authority, Revolution.

الملخص:

يتناول هذه البحث السوسيولوجية السياسية التحول الجذري لحركة أنصار الله (الحوثيين) في اليمن من جماعة احتجاجية دينية-ثقافية انطلقت تحت شعار المسيرة القرآنية إلى سلطة سياسية قائمة تمارس الحكم في أجزاء واسعة من شمال اليمن خلال الفترة 2000-2025، يعتمد البحث على تحليل مركب يجمع بين الأبعاد العقائدية والاجتماعية والعسكرية والسياسية الإقليمية لتفسير كيف تشكلت هذه الجماعة كفاعل سلطوي مؤسسي في سياق انهيار الدولة وتفكك النخب التقليدية.

استعرض البحث مراحل تطور الحركة بدءاً من جذورها الزيدية الاجتماعية مروراً بالحروب الست (2004-2010) التي أسست لهايتها الجهادية فمشاركتها في ثورة 2011 ثم السيطرة على صنعاء في 2014 وتأسيس بنية حكم موازية عبر اللجنة الثورية العليا والمجلس السياسي الأعلى بعد 2015، كما تناول البحث أدوار الحركة الإقليمية الجديدة في البحر الأحمر ودعمها لحركات المقاومة في غزة مما يبرز تحولها من فاعل محلي إلى جزء من محور المقاومة في المنطقة.

وتشير نتائج البحث أن أنصار الله قد أعادت تشكيل الدولة والمجتمع في مناطق سيطرتها عبر فرض خطاب ديني-ثوري وهندسة إعلامية وثقافية ونموذج اقتصادي تعبوي يعتمد على الجهاد والزكاة كما بنيت شرعيتها على مزيج من الثورة والمظلومية والمقاومة بدلاً من المرجعيات الديمocrطية.

تقدم الدراسة نموذجاً معرفياً يفسر هذا التحول بناءً على تفاعل الأيديولوجيا مع الظروف الاجتماعية والحروب والسياسات الإقليمية وتشير إلى أن استمرارية هذا النموذج مرهونة بإيجاد توازن بين التوجه العقائدي ومتطلبات الدولة الحديثة وتنوسي الدراسة بأهمية تطوير أدوات بحثية جديدة لفهم الحركات الإسلامية الثورية وال الحاجة إلى مقاربة مجتمعية تسعى لإعادة بناء العقد الاجتماعي في اليمن ما بعد النزاع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أنصار الله (الحوثيون)، المسيرة القرآنية، السلطة السياسية، الثورة.

Introduction:

Since the beginning of the third millennium, Yemen has witnessed profound social and political movements represented by the emergence of Ansar Allah (the Houthis) as a non-traditional political actor. This movement began as a religious-cultural current under the name "Al-Masirah Al-Qur'aniyyah" (The Quranic March) in Saada, but gradually transformed into an armed entity that waged successive wars against the Yemeni regime before seizing control of the capital Sana'a in 2014 and establishing parallel governing institutions. This transformation raises fundamental scientific questions about the mechanisms of ideological groups' transition to exercising power and how Ansar Allah managed to build its legitimacy and reshape the political and social field in Yemen amid internal challenges and external pressures.

This research comes as a contribution to studying the Ansar Allah (Houthis) movement from the perspective of political sociology, aiming to understand the Ansar Allah (Houthis) phenomenon as a social and intellectual transformation, not merely as an armed rebellion that led to the formation of an alternative authoritarian structure with an ideological project based on a Quranic interpretation of reality.

Statement Problem of the Study

The problem of this study lies in understanding the nature of the transformation that the Ansar Allah (Houthis) group underwent from a religious protest movement with a cultural character to an established political authority controlling state mechanisms in vast parts of Yemen.

The central problem is represented by the following question:

How did "Ansar Allah" transform from a cultural-religious project (Al-Masirah Al-Qur'aniyyah) to a ruling political authority between 2000-2025? And what are the social, intellectual, and political factors that facilitated this transformation?

Questions of the Study

1. What are the social and intellectual roots upon which the Ansar Allah movement was founded?
2. How did the movement interact with the political, tribal, and religious fields in Yemen?
3. What are the internal and external factors that contributed to its transformation from a group to an authority?
4. What is the nature of its political project, and is it moving toward building a "state" or merely consolidating "collective authority"?
5. How does Ansar Allah interact with the Yemeni societal structure (tribes, Islamic currents, sectarian components)?

Objectives of the Study

1. Analyze the social and political context of the emergence of the Ansar Allah movement.
2. Study the development of Al-Masirah Al-Qur'aniyyah as a mobilization and recruitment framework.
3. Understand the transformation from revolutionary discourse to the practice of political power.

4. Analyze the structure of the alternative state established by the Ansar Allah in Sana'a.
5. Demonstrate the impact of the regional war (aggression) on the movement's rise and the reinforcement of its discourse.
6. Examine the mechanisms of building political and social legitimacy within the movement.

Significance of the Study

This study fills an academic gap in analyzing non-traditional power groups from the perspective of political sociology and provides field assistance in understanding one of the longest conflicts in the contemporary Middle East. Intellectually, it offers an analytical perspective for integrating religious thought and political movement, and politically provides a foundation for understanding the components of actual power in Yemen and the difficulty of reaching a settlement with or without them.

Research Methodology

The research relies on the political sociological approach based on:

- ❖ Analysis of social structures associated with the movement's rise (tribe – religious identity – elites).
- ❖ Discourse analysis: includes analysis of the speeches of the martyr Sayyid Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi and the discourse of Sayyid Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi and Al-Masirah documents.
- ❖ Historical analytical method: to trace the stages of the movement's development chronologically.

Limitations of the Study

- ❖ **Temporal boundaries:** From the establishment of the movement in 2000 until 2025.
- ❖ **Thematic boundaries:** The research does not address the military aspect except in terms of its social and political impact, but focuses on understanding the transition from protest discourse to political power.
- ❖ **Spatial boundaries:** Focuses on Ansar Allah's areas of influence in northern Yemen.
- ❖ **Methodological boundaries:** The research does not adopt a supportive or opposing position but analyzes the phenomenon as an objective reality.

Basic Concepts

- ❖ **Al-Masirah Al-Qur'aniyyah (The Quranic March):** The cultural and intellectual project launched by Sayyid Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, based on a comprehensive Quranic reading of political reality.
- ❖ **Authority/Power:** The set of institutions and structures that exercise governance, administration, and control.
- ❖ **Legitimacy:** Social and political acceptance of the political actor's right to rule.
- ❖ **Armed Political Group:** An entity that uses military tools to achieve political objectives.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework and Previous Studies

Theoretical Framework

This research relies on the political sociology approach as a foundation for analyzing the emergence and development of the Ansar Allah (Houthis) movement and its transformation from a religious protest movement to an entity that possesses power. The analysis is based on multiple theories that form the conceptual background for understanding the Ansar Allah (Houthis) case, most notably:

Collective Behavior Theory

This theory highlights that social movements are no longer built solely on economic demands but also on cultural and symbolic identities. This theory is used to understand the adoption of Al-Masirah Al-Qur'aniyyah as a tool for producing an alternative political identity. Smelser pointed to six conditions for collective actions and social movements: the structural field such as general social conditions suitable for forming collective actions; structural pressure and tensions that lead to the emergence of conflicting interests in society; the spread of generalizing beliefs and ideologies that crystallize factors of general discontent and propose solutions; accelerating factors for incidents and events that require individuals to enter the field of action; homogeneous mobilized groups that possess communication networks and financial support; and social control work and the government's response to the movement either by achieving the required reforms or by exercising repression or otherwise. These six conditions appear in stages, and each stage is a condition for the occurrence of the subsequent stage (Giddens, 2005, p.674).

Relative Deprivation and Frustration Theory

This framework helps us understand how Ansar Allah (Houthis) produces its political legitimacy through domination over cultural space (schools, media, religious discourse), not just through traditional state tools. Individuals deal with each other as behavioral units "as the nature of collective general behavior cannot be inferred from individual behavioral assumptions, and the effects resulting from individuals' relationships within the group must be taken into consideration" (Oberschall, 1993, p.50).

Resource Mobilization Theory

This theory helps in analyzing how Ansar Allah (Houthis) benefited from tribal networks, regional support, and previous experiences in the six wars to build their organizational and military strength. Charles Tilly believes that "the concept of collective action is the movement of people with each other to achieve their common interests, and it arises from changing combinations of interests, organization, and mobilization. Opportunities begin from organization to mobilization then to collective action then to revolution" (Tilly, 1978, p.7).

Conceptual Framework

The following are the central concepts used in this research:

Ansar Allah (Houthis): A Yemeni religious-political group that began as a Zaydi cultural current then transformed into an armed actor and political authority. It called itself Ansar Allah while becoming known among its opponents and in the media as the Houthis during the six wars and thereafter.

Al-Masirah Al-Qur'aniyyah (The Quranic March): The cultural mobilization project launched by Sayyid Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, known as (Al-Malazim), based on a comprehensive interpretation of the Quran in political and social reality under the slogan "One eye on the Quran and one eye on events or reality."

Revolutionary Legitimacy: Legitimacy that derives its strength from sacrifice, victimhood, and resistance narratives, not from elections or political consensus.

Jihadist Identity: A conceptual system that considers struggle against regimes or foreign hegemony a permanent religious duty, embodied in the discourse of martyrdom and jihad.

Previous Studies

1. Husseini, Mukhtar Sheikh (2021). "Foundations of Hussein al-Houthi's Political Thought (Founder of the Yemeni Ansar Allah Movement)."

Summary: Addressed the political-religious discourse of Sayyid Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi through analyzing Al-Malazim and attempting to link it to the thought of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Agreement: The study confirms the political dimension inherent in the Quranic project.

Difference: The study does not address organizational transformation or the exercise of power.

Research Contributions: Our research integrates thought and practice in a long-term political sociological context.

2. Al-Daghshi, Ahmed Muhammad (2009). *The Houthis (The Houthi Phenomenon: A Comprehensive Methodological Study)*

Summary: A theoretical study on the thought of Ansar Allah Houthis in Saada and the emergence of the movement.

Agreement: Emphasis on the importance of the local religious dimension.

Difference: This study overlooks the social dimension and the Quranic development of Al-Masirah.

Research Contributions: We integrate social data with doctrinal and organizational structure.

3. Musa, Ibrahim Muhammad (2021). "The Houthi Phenomenon and Intellectual Transformation from Zaydism to Shiism."

Summary: A dialectical analysis attempting to prove Ansar Allah's transformation from Zaydism to proximity to Twelver Shiism.

Agreement: Demonstrating symbolic borrowing from Hezbollah's discourse.

Difference: Exaggerates the separation from Zaydism, which contradicts field reality.

Research Contributions: We emphasize Zaydi continuity with new framing without adopting Twelver ideas.

4. "The Houthi Movement and the Management of Instability in Wartime Yemen" (2025) Carbon, Andrea
Summary: Political analysis from a Western perspective focusing on Houthi tools of governance during war.

Agreement: Documenting the effectiveness of informal institutions.

Difference: Its interpretive approach is dominated by Western security perspective.

Research Contributions: We reintegrate security tools within comprehensive social-political analysis.

To sum up, this research stands out by combining sociological and political theories and invoking multiple levels of analysis (doctrinal, organizational, social, regional). Thus, it does not repeat what came in previous literature but expands the circle of analysis to understand the Ansar Allah movement as a model for transition from protest to exercising power while taking the Yemeni context into consideration.

The Doctrinal and Social Roots of the Ansar Allah Movement (2004-2000): An Analytical Sociological Study in the Context of Yemeni Religious and Tribal Sociology

Introduction

The Ansar Allah movement was formed within a complex social and religious environment where Zaidism as a jurisprudential and doctrinal school intersects with the deeply-rooted tribal and social structures in northern Yemen, specifically in Saada Governorate. At the turn of the millennium, the movement emerged as a cultural-religious current seeking to revive what it considers the historical persecution of Zaidis and to reframe it within a modern Quranic vision. This chapter aims to analyze the doctrinal and social roots of Ansar Allah (the Houthis) away from stereotypical judgments or external projections, drawing upon the Yemeni field and the group's own discourse through the methodology of political sociology that links doctrinal structures with social movements (Eissa, 2012, p. 54).

The Zaidist Environment in Saada as a Foundation for Establishment

Zaidism in northern Yemen, particularly in Saada Governorate, represents the traditional doctrinal framework within which the religious structure of the Ansar Allah movement (Houthis) was formed. Zaidism is not merely a jurisprudential school but also represented a political identity with a history of ruling Yemen for many centuries. The fall of the Zaidist Imamate in 1962, followed by the marginalization of Zaidis under the new republican system, contributed to fostering feelings of withdrawal and cultural-sectarian marginalization in Zaidist areas.

We emphasize that Saada was experiencing a decline in Zaidist presence in favor of a strong Salafi wave supported by Saudi Arabia, which the Zaidist youth current considered an existential threat to sectarian and social identity, later leading to the formation of the believing youth current that formed the initial nucleus of Ansar Allah (Houthis) (Al-Ajri, 2017, p. 37).

Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi and the Quranic March

Sayyid Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi represents the founding intellectual reference of the Ansar Allah movement and was one of the symbols of the modernist Zaidist current that attempted to blend Zaidist religious identity with socio-political concerns through his project called the "Quranic March." Sayyid

Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi relied on reinterpreting the Holy Quran with political and social interpretations responding to contemporary challenges through weekly lectures later known as "Malazim", which included concepts such as: global arrogance, loyalty and disavowal, faithful identity, martyrdom, and persecution.

Although these lectures carried a mobilizing character at times, they maintained Zaidist foundations, particularly in emphasizing rebellion against unjust rulers, social justice, and opposition to oppressors as central concepts in Zaidist thought. A study titled "Foundations of Hussein al-Houthi's Political Thought" confirms that his project was not a revolt against Zaidism but rather "an expansion of it in a liberating social direction based on Quranic text" (Husseini, 2021, p. 168).

The Social and Tribal Context

The Ansar Allah movement emerged within a specific tribal-social context characterized by the presence of Zaidist tribes that were part of the Yemeni social fabric but had declined against the rise of central state authority on one hand and the overwhelming Salafi-Wahhabi presence during the previous regime on the other. The tribe in Saada played a complex role: on one hand, it formed part of the social incubator for the movement, while on the other hand, some tribal branches clashed with the movement due to their previous political ties with the regime. Researcher Eissa clarifies in his study *Political Islamic Movements in Yemen* that Ansar Allah did not engage in conflict with the tribe as a social component but with tribal elites linked to external projects or central authority (Eissa, 2012, p. 125).

The mountainous nature of the region and characteristics of relative isolation also provided an incubating environment for the formation of mobilizing discourse linking tribal dignity with religious persecution—a sociological equation repeated in the experiences of other armed religious movements.

Social and Sectarian Zaidism

Despite media attempts to portray Ansar Allah as an extension of Twelver Shiism, the actual field reality, doctrinal content, and religious discourse of the movement confirm its commitment to Zaidist reference, particularly in concepts such as the just imam, rebellion against unjust authority, and recourse to the Holy Quran—purely Zaidist concepts that do not align with what some researchers claim about its transformation to Twelver Shiism, especially since it does not believe in the theory of waiting for the awaited Mahdi but in the obligation to rebel against oppressors and that the Mahdi will be born at the end of times, contrary to Twelver Shiism which believes he was born and named Muhammad ibn al-Hassan in 255 AH and is the hidden awaited one.

In his study "The Intellectual Transformation from Zaidism to Shiism" Ibrahim Musa goes on to say that "the mobilizing discourse of Ansar Allah employed new vocabulary but did not depart from the Zaidist ceiling in its vision of authority and legitimacy" (Musa, 2021, p. 82).

Economic and Social Incentives for the Movement's Emergence

The ideological genesis cannot be separated from social and economic factors, as Saada suffered from economic marginalization and weak basic services in the 1990s, creating fertile ground for any mobilizing project that promised dignity and justice—especially among the youth and lower classes. The gap between the center (Sana'a) and the periphery (Saada) also widened politically and socially, fueling a tendency

toward a discourse that reconstructs Zaidist identity as a nucleus of resistance against cultural, political, and economic hegemony—both external and internal.

In brief, the data confirms that Ansar Allah does not represent a break from Zaidism, but rather a social and cultural reinterpretation of it within a mobilizing Quranic discourse that responded to the specific conditions of time and place. The Zaidist social structure, tribal identity, history of persecution, and the political transformations following Yemeni unification all contributed to crystallizing the movement as a liberating religious-social project—prior to its transformation into a political authority.

The Six Wars and the Formation of the Jihadi Identity (2004–2010)

Introduction

The six wars that took place between the Yemeni state and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement from 2004 to 2010 represent a pivotal moment in the development of the movement's jihadi and political identity. During this period, Ansar Allah emerged as an armed force, and its discourse shifted from a cultural-religious focus to a mobilized field-based rhetoric.

Although these wars were primarily military in nature, they carried profound sociological dimensions that contributed to reconstructing a sense of historical injustice (mazlūmiyyah) as a powerful mobilizing force. They also helped embed a collective memory—particularly among the people of Saada—centered on the right to resist and defend one's identity, especially when symbolically linked to the events of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Hussein ibn Ali and the Zaydi Imam Zayd ibn Ali in early Islamic history.

The Political and Social Context of the War's Outbreak

The first confrontation began in June 2004, when the Yemeni regime, led by then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh, launched a military campaign against Sayyid Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi and his followers in the mountains of Marran. Although the authorities accused al-Houthi of armed rebellion, contemporary documents suggest that the initial mobilization was not military in nature, but rather rhetorical and cultural. It included criticism of Yemen's foreign policy and objections to Sana'a's alignment with Washington following the events of September 11—points that were articulated in al-Houthi's well-known speeches, referred to as *Malāzim* (al-Darwani, 2025, p. 83).

According to the study *The War in Saada*, “the social context in Saada was already tense due to worsening poverty, stalled development, and the increasing influence of externally backed Salafism, which created a sectarian and social rivalry that fueled the conflict” (Boucek, 2010, p. 8).

The Sequence of Wars and Field Developments

The First War (2004):

This war directly targeted Sayyid Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi and concluded with his martyrdom. Despite its brief duration, it marked the transformation of the movement from a religious current into an armed resistance group. The war also played a symbolic role in shaping the narrative of 'the martyred founding leader,' a theme emphasized in the speeches of his brother, Sayyid Abdul-Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi, who assumed leadership following Hussein's death.

The Second War (2005):

It marked the movement's first organized military appearance, involving the use of ambushes and unconventional tactics that surprised government forces and forced them to halt operations swiftly.

The Third War (2006):

Marked by the expansion of combat beyond Saada to areas near Sana'a, including Bani Hushaish. It also witnessed the movement's growing grassroots support and demonstrated its ability to confront the regular army.

The Fourth War (2007):

It began fiercely in the Matra area, west of Saada, and was characterized by bolder and more comprehensive tactics. This phase also witnessed the emergence of a networked organizational structure built around local field supervisors.

The Fifth War (2008):

This war focused on Dammaj and other Salafi-dominated areas, giving the conflict a sharply sectarian dimension. During this period, the movement began to establish its own mobilizing media, employing imagery of martyrs and a distinct jihadi rhetoric.

The Sixth War (2009–2010):

This war marked the peak of the conflict's geographical expansion, reaching the borders of Saudi Arabia, which entered the war directly in November 2009 through what became known as the 'Scorched Earth Operation.' This phase was pivotal in the movement's transition into a regional actor (Boucek, 2010, p. 8).

The Formation of the Jihadi Identity

These wars contributed significantly to the consolidation of a jihadi identity within the movement's political and cultural discourse. Drawing inspiration from the martyrdom of Imam Hussein in the Battle of Karbala, resistance was redefined—from a right against local oppression to a religious obligation against global arrogance (*istikbār ‘ālamī*). The Yemeni regime was portrayed as a tool of an American-Zionist project, reinforcing themes of sacrifice and martyrdom and placing bloodshed at the symbolic core of the movement's rhetoric.

Researcher Hosseini (2021) observes that "the repeated wars did not break the movement; rather, they granted it field and social legitimacy, especially amid government violations and the campaign's association with an external discourse hostile to political Islam"(p. 174).

Utilizing the Wars in Constructing Collective Memory

The movement utilized the six wars as a tool to construct a struggle-based collective memory through war poetry (zāmil), sermons, and mobilization events—particularly Martyr Week, which became an annual tradition reinforcing the bond between the movement and its social base.

The martyrdom of Sayyid Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi was mythologized as the foundational moment of the movement. This collective memory was institutionalized through schools, religious platforms, alternative media, and zāmil chants, and it was continuously emphasized in the rhetoric of Sayyid Abdul-Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi, who framed the project of the martyrs as central to the movement's mission (al-Houthi, 2018).

The Impact of the Wars on Political and Organizational Transformation

The six wars laid the foundation for Ansar Allah's transformation from a protest movement into a quasi-state organization. The group developed a structured hierarchy, adopted a system of regional supervisors, and established alternative institutions to provide security and basic services in parts of Saada—forming the early framework for what it termed a 'just state.'

The study *The Houthis as an Entrenched Power* notes that the end of the sixth war marked the beginning of the fragmentation of the regime's unified front. The army had become exhausted, and internal disputes emerged within the ruling power over how to manage the escalating crisis (Shujaa al-Din, 2022, p. 7).

In short, the six wars were not merely military confrontations but complex transformative moments that reshaped Ansar Allah's identity—from a cultural movement into an armed group with a mobilizing discourse, an organized structure, and a vision of conflict that extended both locally and regionally.

These wars produced a symbolic and jihadi framework that laid the foundation for the movement's subsequent legitimacy and endowed it with social capital in confronting its adversaries, ultimately facilitating its transition into political authority after 2014.

February 11 and the Rise of Ansar Allah's Political Influence (2011–2014)

Introduction

The so-called February 11, 2011 revolution marked a turning point in Yemen's political history. It held the potential for popular change and the disruption of long-standing power monopolies. However, it also introduced new dynamics that allowed non-traditional actors to reposition themselves within the political field. Among the most prominent of these actors was the Ansar Allah movement, which transitioned from armed opposition to a civilian political force participating in the revolution, and ultimately into a dominant power on the ground.

This chapter analyzes how Ansar Allah engaged with the revolution and the strategies it employed to expand its political influence during the transitional period leading up to its entry into Sana'a in 2014.

Ansar Allah's Initial Position on the Revolution

While most political and revolutionary factions joined the 'Change Square' movement in Sana'a, Ansar Allah was among the earliest to enter the revolutionary squares, motivated by its bitter experience with the former regime and deep mistrust of traditional political parties—particularly the Islah Party.

As the revolution evolved, the movement began to adopt a position distinct from the broader revolutionary discourse. It formed an independent bloc under the name Youth of Steadfastness (Shabāb al-Šumūd), promoting a critical narrative aimed at correcting the revolutionary course and preventing it from being co-opted by traditional alliances—especially after the political parties accepted the Gulf Initiative (Carboni, 2025, p. 8).

Ansar Allah's protests emerged independently in Saada, Amran, and Hajjah, accompanied by rhetoric that warned against using the revolution to settle old political scores. In his speeches, Sayyid Abdul-Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi emphasized that the revolution should target corruption, foreign domination, and subordination—slogans that ideologically overlapped with the principles of the Qur'anic March (al-Houthi, 2018).

Repositioning: From the Margins to the Center

The collapse of state authority following the ousting of President Saleh and the fragmentation of the military created a strategic opportunity for Ansar Allah to expand its presence on the ground. The group took full control of Saada Governorate and gradually advanced into Amran and al-Jawf. Simultaneously, it expanded its social influence through local service committees and popular committees.

On April 3, 2011, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) proposed what became known as the Gulf Initiative as an attempt to resolve the Yemeni crisis. The initiative stipulated that the President would authorize the opposition to form a national unity government with a 50–50 power-sharing formula. The government was to be formed within seven days of the mandate and tasked with creating conditions for national reconciliation and reducing political and security tensions.

The agreement required that Parliament hold a session to grant immunity from legal and judicial prosecution to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and those who worked with him during his rule. Following this, Saleh would submit his resignation to Parliament, and Vice President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi would become the legitimate interim president upon Parliament's approval of the resignation.

President Saleh would then call for presidential elections within 60 days as per the constitution, and the newly elected president would form a constitutional committee to draft a new constitution, which would be submitted to a popular referendum. Upon ratification, a timetable would be set for new parliamentary elections, after which the winning party would be tasked with forming the new government. The initiative designated the GCC states, the United States, and the European Union as sponsors of the agreement's implementation.

According to Eissa (2016), this phase was marked by the movement's ability to combine revolutionary and military legitimacy, effectively integrating revolutionary discourse with the exercise of governance (p.240). Furthermore, Shujaa al-Din (2022) explains that Ansar Allah succeeded in filling the administrative vacuum in areas outside regime control by developing a functional local organizational network based on regional supervisors—an approach that gained public acceptance amid the central state's failure to deliver basic services (p.4).

The Fall of Amran and the Seizure of the Political Arena

In July 2014, Ansar Allah succeeded in seizing control of Amran Province following clashes with the 310th Armored Brigade, led by General Hamid al-Qushaibi, and the First Armored Division under the command of General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar. This victory marked a decisive turning point in Yemen's political landscape, both militarily and symbolically, paving the way for the movement's subsequent advance into Sana'a.

The official narrative of Ansar Allah justified these military operations as efforts to "protect the revolution" and "recover the people's wealth," particularly in light of the government's recent austerity measures and its decision to lift fuel subsidies. These policies provided a strong mobilizing impetus for the movement's mass protests, which resumed in August 2014 at Change Square under the slogan "Down with the Price Hike and the Coalition Government" (Eissa, 2016, p. 238).

The Entry into Sana'a and the Peace and Partnership Agreement

On September 21, 2014, Ansar Allah forces entered the capital, Sana'a, following clashes with the First Armored Division led by General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, and seized control of several key government institutions. Despite the military character of this advance, the movement maintained a discourse centered on peaceful transition and agreed to sign the Peace and Partnership Agreement under the auspices of the United Nations.

Ansar Allah, alongside allied factions such as the Southern Movement, consistently called for adherence to political agreements and the establishment of clear frameworks and reference points for conflict resolution. They also advocated bridging the growing divide between political factions and the central authority. However, the regime failed to respond effectively to these demands and proved incapable of adapting to the rapidly shifting political landscape. Moreover, Yemen's economic system was unable to absorb the accelerating rural-to-urban migration or integrate emerging populations into the urban fabric. These structural failures contributed to Ansar Allah's entry into Sana'a—an outcome viewed by many opposition groups as inevitable, given their belief that the root causes of Yemen's crises lay in a deeply entrenched autocratic and patrimonial system, maintained by a centralized and informal power network designed to monopolize authority and wealth (Eissa, 2016, p. 240).

The Discursive Structure of Revolutionary Victory

During this phase, Ansar Allah adopted a dual discourse:

- ❖ **Revolutionary and Mobilizing:** focused on completing the revolution and overthrowing foreign-backed forces.
- ❖ **Reformist and Service-Oriented:** promised anti-corruption initiatives and the realization of social justice.

The movement also employed a national independence narrative to emphasize that its revolution was free from any foreign agenda—despite accusations by regional and Western powers of Iranian ties. These accusations, intended to discredit the movement in the eyes of the Yemeni public, ultimately failed to diminish its popular legitimacy.

The Political Sociology of Ansar Allah's Expansion

Political divisions among the revolutionary forces—particularly between the General People's Congress (GPC) and the Islah Party—contributed significantly to the emergence of Ansar Allah as a central political and military actor. The failure to implement the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) further deepened public disillusionment with the traditional political elite. Notably, the Islah Party's refusal to form a genuine national unity government that included representatives from Ansar Allah and the Southern Movement intensified the public's frustration. This rejection bolstered the appeal of Ansar Allah's rhetoric, which emphasized revolutionary renewal and the pursuit of social justice.

Field research data indicate that Ansar Allah's expansion was not solely a military endeavor; rather, it was underpinned by a broader grassroots movement and widespread resentment toward the post-revolution political establishment (Al-Khalidi, 2022).

To sum everything, the post–February 11, 2011 rise of Ansar Allah (the Houthis) signified a pivotal transformation in Yemen's political landscape. The movement adeptly exploited the fragmentation of state institutions, divisions within the military, and the declining credibility of traditional political parties to consolidate a new foundation of political authority and territorial control.

Between 2011 and 2015, Ansar Allah strategically integrated revolutionary discourse with effective organizational mechanisms, laying the groundwork for its eventual rise as a *de facto* authority in Sana'a, which culminated in the establishment of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee.

Power as Reality – The Parallel State (2015–2020)

Introduction

Since 2015, Yemen has experienced a profound political transformation following the launch of Operation Decisive Storm and the intervention of the Saudi-led Arab Coalition. This intervention led to a political and institutional vacuum in the capital, Sana'a, and in other northern regions. Ansar Allah (the Houthis) moved to fill this vacuum by forming the Supreme Revolutionary Committee and consolidating its authority—not merely as an armed insurgency, but as a *de facto* governing body equipped with mechanisms of governance, administration, and parallel state institutions.

This chapter offers a scholarly analysis of the methods through which Ansar Allah exercised power during this phase, with particular emphasis on the role of ideological foundations and organizational structures in establishing an alternative governance model—one grounded in revolutionary and administrative legitimacy, as opposed to conventional constitutional legitimacy.

From the Supreme Revolutionary Committee to the Supreme Political Council

In February 2015, Ansar Allah announced the "Constitutional Declaration," a foundational document that called for the dissolution of parliament and the formation of a transitional National Council and a Supreme Revolutionary Committee to temporarily manage state affairs.

This declaration followed the resignation of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and his government. While it faced regional and international rejection, it nonetheless represented a foundational moment for the consolidation of Ansar Allah's authority.

The Supreme Revolutionary Committee

From February 2015 to July 2016, the Supreme Revolutionary Committee assumed responsibility for issuing decisions and appointing state officials in the absence of formal executive institutions. Chaired by Muhammad Ali al-Houthi, the committee functioned as an interim authority designed to fill the political and administrative vacuum.

The Supreme Political Council

As airstrikes escalated and regional dynamics evolved, Ansar Allah moved to formalize its governance structure by establishing the Supreme Political Council in July 2016, in partnership with the General People's Congress (GPC), led at that time by former president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

This initiative aimed to institutionalize the group's authority through the creation of a governing body that would serve as a head-of-state substitute, effectively supplanting the presidency. The council was composed of six members.

As noted in *Houthis as a Rooted Authority*, this shift from a revolutionary committee to a political council represented not only a domestic political maneuver, but also an effort to simulate constitutional governance without conceding to internationally recognized legitimacy (Shujaa Al-Deen, 2022, p. 5).

The Institutional Structure of the Parallel State

Although ministries and official state institutions continued to function nominally during the period of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee, Ansar Allah developed a parallel state structure that relied on unofficial governing mechanisms.

The most prominent of these was:

The Supervisory System

This system constituted the cornerstone of Ansar Allah's governance apparatus. It revolved around the appointment of general supervisors, district supervisors, neighborhood security supervisors, and community committee supervisors across various localities.

These individuals did not appear within the formal state structure—at least not prior to the formation of the Supreme Political Council—yet they exercised broad decision-making powers that often surpassed those of official state representatives. This was largely facilitated by the constitutional vacuum that characterized the period.

As noted in *The Houthis from a Local Perspective*, “the supervisory system led to widespread administrative duplication and centralized decision-making in the hands of the movement rather than in the official state institutions” (Shujaa Al-Deen, 2022, p. 4).

Adapting Formal Institutions

Rather than dismantling the existing state apparatus, Ansar Allah opted to adapt and repurpose its formal institutions to advance what it termed the “political will of the people.” This process involved several key measures:

- ❖ Restructuring ministries in accordance with the ideological vision of Yemen’s faith-based identity, aligning administrative functions with the movement’s doctrinal framework.
- ❖ Reforming educational curricula to incorporate the teachings of the Qur’anic march (*al-masīrah al-qur’āniyyah*) and to reinforce the religious and cultural identity of the Yemeni people.
- ❖ Imposing strict media censorship over press institutions that had previously been affiliated with traditional political parties aligned with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the war against Yemen.

Reconfiguring the Judiciary

Ansar Allah established alternative judicial councils to adjudicate disputes among citizens who had lost confidence in the formal judiciary, which had long been perceived as deeply corrupt.

In parallel, the movement appointed independent figures to the Supreme Judicial Council—an act that was met with opposition from traditional members of the judiciary. This opposition persisted until the establishment of the Government of National Salvation (also referred to as the Government of Change and Reconstruction), which formalized and legitimized many of these judicial appointments.

Sources of Political Legitimacy

In the absence of elections and functioning constitutional institutions, Ansar Allah derived its authority from alternative sources of legitimacy, including the following:

- ❖ Revolutionary legitimacy: Grounded in the events of September 21, which the movement framed as a revolutionary turning point that conferred upon the people the right to self-governance.
- ❖ Legitimacy of resistance: Justified through the group’s role in confronting what it characterized as foreign aggression, particularly from the Saudi-led coalition.
- ❖ Religious legitimacy: Rooted in the movement’s emphasis on Yemen’s faith-based identity and reinforced through religiously charged rhetoric in the speeches of Sayyed Abdul Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi.

Reengineering Society

Ansar Allah’s governance project extends beyond the realm of administrative control into the social and cultural fabric of Yemeni society, aiming to reshape public consciousness through mechanisms of ideological regulation and symbolic power. Among the primary tools employed in this social reengineering are:

- ❖ Summer schools: Structured educational programs designed to inculcate children with the ideological tenets of the *Qur’anic march* (*al-masīrah al-qur’āniyyah*).

- ❖ Martyr's Week: An annual symbolic commemoration intended to reinforce the legitimacy of *jihad*, self-sacrifice, and collective struggle.
- ❖ Mobilization media: A coordinated network of television channels and print media operating under centralized control and adhering to a strict messaging policy aligned with the movement's ideological narrative.

As observed in *Ansar Allah: Discourse and Movement*, the media discourse of the *Qur'anic march* is structured to produce a binary worldview—dividing reality into a “camp of the oppressed” and a “camp of the tyrants” (Al-Ajri, 2017, p. 11).

V. Structural Challenges of Authority under the Supreme Revolutionary Committee

Despite a superficial appearance of cohesion, Ansar Allah's governance project under the Supreme Revolutionary Committee faced a number of profound structural challenges that undermined institutional stability and long-term sustainability. These challenges included:

- ❖ Dual legitimacy: A persistent conflict between the formal institutions of the state and the informal power structures led by appointed supervisors, creating overlapping authorities and administrative friction.
- ❖ Bureaucratic inflation: Exacerbated by the large-scale appointments made by political factions prior to the September 21 Revolution, which strained the administrative apparatus and diluted efficiency.
- ❖ Economic pressures: Intensified by the Saudi-led blockade, the suspension of public sector salaries, and the relocation of the Central Bank to Aden—factors that severely weakened the state's fiscal capacity.
- ❖ Social tensions: Fueled by the influx of external financial support from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to certain actors within Yemen, aimed at destabilizing internal cohesion and provoking unrest.

As several scholars have observed, including Al-Khalidi (2022), the Ansar Allah governance model during this period appears unsustainable in the absence of meaningful internal reforms, as it is built upon a state of exception rather than a robust and inclusive social contract.

In brief, The experience of Ansar Allah in exercising authority between 2015 and 2020 represents a paradigmatic case of a parallel state—one that fuses revolutionary religious discourse with a centralized security and administrative apparatus.

This mode of governance is underpinned by continuous mass mobilization, alternative bureaucratic practices, and a fluid form of legitimacy derived from both symbolic capital and coercive power.

However, the long-term sustainability of this model remains highly contingent upon its capacity to navigate internal contradictions and implement structural reforms capable of addressing persistent economic and social pressures.

The Regional Dimension – From Yemen to the Red Sea and Gaza (2020–2025)

Introduction

Amid rapid geopolitical shifts across the region and the rise of the so-called “Axis of Resistance” as a transnational actor, Ansar Allah has evolved from a primarily local movement into a consequential player within the broader Middle Eastern political landscape.

This transformation has become particularly apparent through the group’s involvement in developments in the Red Sea and its assertive stance on the 2023 Gaza conflict.

No longer confined to the role of a domestic authority, Ansar Allah now operates at critical regional fault lines and is increasingly integrated into alliances that actively challenge U.S. and Israeli influence in the region.

This chapter examines the trajectory of Ansar Allah’s evolution from a localized insurgent group to a strategic actor engaged in reshaping the regional balance of power.

Yemen’s Position in the Region’s Geopolitical Map

Yemen occupies a strategically vital position along the Bab al-Mandab Strait—one of the world’s most critical maritime chokepoints—through which approximately 12% of global trade flows.

Ansar Allah recognized early on the geopolitical significance of this strait, viewing control over it as a powerful tool for regional and international leverage. In response, the group substantially enhanced its naval and maritime capabilities.

As noted in *The Houthi Motivations Behind the Red Sea Crisis*, Ansar Allah does not perceive Bab al-Mandab merely as a commercial maritime corridor, but rather as a key front in a broader geopolitical struggle aimed at liberating the region from what it views as Western hegemony (Carlson, 2024).

Naval Deterrence Tactics – Attacks on Ships (2023–2025)

Since late 2023, Ansar Allah has launched a series of maritime operations targeting commercial vessels in the Red Sea perceived to be affiliated with or supportive of Israel. These actions have been framed by the movement as part of a “sacred jihad” and “the promised conquest,” unfolding in the context of the Gaza War that followed the Al-Aqsa Flood operation.

Motivations for the Operations:

- ❖ To demonstrate material solidarity with the Palestinian resistance, signaling that support extends beyond rhetoric.
- ❖ To directly confront Israeli and Western interests, including bold engagements with U.S. aircraft carriers and Western naval forces operating in the region.
- ❖ To assert a regional leadership role within the broader framework of the Axis of Resistance.

As noted in *The Houthi Motivations Driving the Red Sea Crisis*, these naval operations serve both symbolic and strategic purposes, delivering complex messages to Washington, Tel Aviv, and their Gulf allies (Carlson, 2024, p. 5).

Outcomes of the Naval Campaign:

- ❖ Internationally: The operations prompted widespread condemnation and the formation of a multinational maritime security initiative—Operation Prosperity Guardian—aimed at safeguarding shipping routes. However, some states within the Global South offered cautious praise, interpreting the campaign as part of a broader anti-imperialist stance.
- ❖ Regionally: The campaign bolstered Ansar Allah's image as a consequential and assertive regional actor, no longer confined to Yemen's internal political arena.
- ❖ Domestically: These actions were framed within a resistance narrative to galvanize public support, reinforce ideological commitment, and consolidate internal unity amid economic and political strain.

A Strong Presence within the Axis of Resistance

Ansar Allah's ties to the Axis of Resistance—which includes Iran, Hezbollah, factions within Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, and various Palestinian groups—did not emerge in a vacuum. While informal connections had existed earlier, these relationships have become markedly more explicit, structured, and assertive since 2020.

Manifestations of Coordination:

- ❖ Unified Rhetoric: The adoption of a shared ideological discourse centered on the liberation of Jerusalem, resistance to Zionism, and solidarity with the broader Islamic nation (ummah) underscores a collective narrative binding the members of the Axis.
- ❖ Media Coordination: There has been a discernible exchange and synchronization of media content among affiliated outlets—such as Al-Masirah, Al-Manar, and Al-Mayadeen—amplifying common messaging and reinforcing the cultural and ideological coherence of the alliance.
- ❖ Security Cooperation: Although formal confirmation remains absent, analysts widely infer the existence of security coordination. As noted in *The Resistance Axis and Regional Order in the Middle East*, “the Houthis utilize their symbolic ties within the Axis of Resistance to legitimize their movement” (Wastnidge et al., 2023, p. 21).

Ansar Allah's Position on the Gaza War (2023)

The Gaza War—particularly in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation—served as a symbolic inflection point that publicly revealed and reinforced Ansar Allah's integration into the regional alliances of the Axis of Resistance.

As stated by the movement's leader, Sayyed Abdul-Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi, Ansar Allah emerged as the only Arab force to translate its rhetoric into concrete military and political action.

According to *The Middle East and the Revelatory War – The Al-Aqsa Flood*, the group strategically leveraged the Palestinian cause to legitimize its militant discourse and to position itself as a defender of the oppressed across the region (Amro, 2024, p. 12).

Forms of Support Provided:

- ❖ Official declarations of solidarity issued by various actors across Yemen's political and societal spectrum.

- ❖ Direct military action, including the launch of hypersonic, ballistic, and cruise missiles, as well as drone strikes directed toward Israeli territory via the Red Sea—operations reported by multiple intelligence sources.
- ❖ Coordinated media mobilization through Axis-aligned networks, amplifying the group's message and framing the conflict within a resistance narrative.
- ❖ Mass public demonstrations held in more than 1,200 public squares across Yemen, drawing millions in support of Palestine and reaffirming the movement's grassroots legitimacy.
- ❖ Financial contributions to Palestinian resistance factions, organized and supervised by the de facto state apparatus.
- ❖ Ongoing grassroots mobilization, sustaining popular calls for the liberation of occupied Palestine and embedding the Palestinian cause into Ansar Allah's broader ideological framework.

Regional Deterrence Balance

Ansar Allah has adopted a pragmatically strategic approach to the evolving regional deterrence equation. While the movement maintains a high-pitched resistance rhetoric—particularly in alignment with the discourse of the Axis of Resistance—its military actions are deliberately calibrated in accordance with regional and international political considerations.

- ❖ With Saudi Arabia and the UAE: Military engagement remains limited and bounded by tacit, often unwritten, understandings. Despite periods of hostilities, both sides appear to exercise restraint to prevent full-scale escalation.
- ❖ With Israel and the United States: The movement has intensified its messaging and actions, particularly through maritime confrontations. These include unprecedented engagements with U.S. naval assets—such as aircraft carriers—during both the Biden and Trump administrations, signaling a more direct challenge to Western military presence in the region.

According to *The Houthis and the Management of Instability*, Ansar Allah is actively shaping a hybrid deterrence model that blends symbolic messaging, calibrated military action, and alliance-based coordination across multiple levels (Carboni, 2025, p. 18).

Expanding Diplomatic and Media Presence

Despite formal international isolation, Ansar Allah has managed to cultivate a soft regional presence. This regional engagement strategy has included:

- ❖ Dispatching delegations to key allied states such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria.
- ❖ Informal participation in regional political and religious conferences.
- ❖ Establishing media and political liaison offices in countries like Lebanon, Oman, and Iraq.

According to *Ansar Allah – Discourse and Movement*, the movement increasingly relies on symbolic regional capital to offset its lack of formal international recognition, leveraging ideological affinity and shared narratives across the Axis of Resistance (Al-Ajri, 2017, p. 45).

In conclusion, between 2020 and 2025, Ansar Allah transitioned from a local governing force in Sana'a to a significant regional actor with growing geopolitical influence.

By capitalizing on Yemen's strategic location, deploying resistance-based rhetoric, and actively aligning with the Axis of Resistance, the movement has succeeded in establishing a deterrence equilibrium with key adversaries—including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and the United States.

Reproducing the State and Society – Governance and Internal Transformations (2015–2025)

Introduction

Ansar Allah's takeover of Yemen's capital, Sana'a, and key state institutions marked a pivotal moment of radical transformation in the nature of governance and the state apparatus. The movement began reshaping notions of power and society through a Qur'anic ideological and political framework, resulting in an alternative state model grounded in organizational and doctrinal principles fundamentally distinct from the traditional republican system.

This chapter examines how Ansar Allah restructured governance institutions, societal frameworks, and mechanisms of social and cultural control under its broader project known as *al-Masirah al-Qur'aniyyah* (the Qur'anic March).

The New Institutional Structure

While Ansar Allah maintained the outward forms of the Yemeni state—including ministries, governors, and security agencies—the actual functions of these institutions shifted significantly. They now operate within a faith-based cultural system centered on fighters (mujahideen) who fought against Saudi and Emirati forces. These actors follow an unconventional administrative hierarchy and act as direct representatives of the movement's leader, Abdul-Malik Badr al-Din al-Houthi.

According to "From Zaydism to Shi'ism: A Descriptive-Analytical Study," the administrative structures under Ansar Allah do not conform to formal state regulations but are instead based on internal organizational doctrine derived from the Qur'anic March (Musa, 2021, p. 44).

Reforming Society through an Ideological Lens

Ansar Allah perceives Yemeni society as culturally deviated and seeks to restore it to its original faith-based nature. To this end, the group launched a broad project aimed at reengineering social and cultural values according to its religious ideology, inspired by the Qur'anic sermons of its founder, Sayyed Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi.

Key instruments of this project include:

- ❖ Summer schools: They target children and adolescents, where concepts of loyalty and hostility toward the U.S. and Israel, alongside jihadist mobilization, are inculcated.
- ❖ Voluntary cultural courses for civilian and military employees.
- ❖ Revival of religious occasions, such as Sarkha Day (Anti-American Slogan Day), Martyr's Day, and Mawlid al-Nabawi (Prophet's Birthday).

The study *Ansar Allah in Yemen: Sources of Strength* notes that this cultural project aims to create a new, ideologically programmed and obedient individual who links political loyalty to religious faith (Al-falahi, 2017).

Media and Control of Public Discourse

From the very beginning, the group took control of both state-owned and private media outlets, imposing a unified narrative centered on themes of victimhood, resistance, and a faith-based identity. Any form of normalization with Israel is strictly and unequivocally forbidden.

The media landscape under Ansar Allah's authority is characterized by several key features:

- ❖ The glorification of revolutionary leadership as the embodiment of the people's will.
- ❖ The repurposing of state media into tools for ideological mobilization and political propaganda.

This situation is described in *The Iranian Experience: Transition from Revolution to Statehood* as an “ideological centralization of the public sphere,” wherein only the discourse of the sacred revolution is allowed to exist (Hamada, 2008, p. 61).

Economy

- Following the suspension of salary disbursements and the termination of financial transfers from the Saudi-backed central government, Ansar Allah established a parallel economic system that has managed to maintain a degree of monetary stability. This alternative system is characterized by several components:
- Zakat, institutionalized as a divinely sanctioned legal mechanism aimed at addressing various social needs.
- Public financial contributions to support the war effort, primarily through voluntary donations.
- Informal merchant contributions directed toward resolving local community issues.

According to *The Houthi Group in Yemen*, the movement succeeded in constructing a wartime economy reliant on grassroots donations and the strategic use of charitable activities to sustain its military operations (Ahlam, 2022, p. 35).

In brief, Ansar Allah has reengineered the Yemeni state from within—not through conventional reform, but by establishing an ideologically driven parallel state grounded in doctrinal allegiance and cultural hegemony. This alternative model has profoundly reshaped Yemeni society, including its educational institutions, charitable practices, and media landscape. It represents a non-traditional form of governance that seeks to assert legitimacy through a combination of symbolic authority and institutional control.

Recommendations, and Conclusion

General Findings of the Study

1. The transformation of Ansar Allah from religious protest movement to established authority. The study finds that Ansar Allah evolved from an intellectual and cultural initiative grounded in the principles of the "Quranic March," led by Hussein Badr al-Din al-Houthi, into a formidable military organization and, eventually, a political authority administering state institutions in Sana'a, Saada, and other regions. This transformation was not incidental, nor merely a byproduct of a political vacuum; rather, it was the result of a sustained ideological, mobilizational, and social trajectory that began in the early 2000s.
2. The fusion of religion and politics as a governance model. Ansar Allah offers a distinctive model of governance that fuses religious authority with political leadership. The movement does not distinguish between divine guardianship (*wilayah*) and executive authority; instead, it frames governance as an extension of religious faith and a practical embodiment of *jihad*.
3. Institutional restructuring through the logic of permanent revolution. Although the movement retained the formal institutional architecture of the Yemeni republican state—such as ministries, governorates, and security bodies—it reconfigured these structures within a revolutionary framework aimed at serving the people. Government institutions were transformed into instruments of mobilization and jihad, simplifying bureaucratic processes and enhancing the delivery of basic services.
4. Identity and victimhood narratives as legitimizing tools. Ansar Allah has employed discourses of religious identity and historical marginalization to construct a sustained narrative of mobilization. The notion of external aggression (particularly by the Arab Coalition) and the legacy of Zaydi marginalization have been used as symbolic resources to bolster the group's legitimacy within Yemen's socially diverse context.
5. Control over the symbolic sphere (Education, Media, and Culture) The movement has reshaped Yemeni cultural life by asserting control over education, media, religious rituals, and official discourse. This symbolic dominance has fostered the emergence of a parallel political culture designed to enhance citizen engagement and respond to Yemen's complex social realities.
6. A regional role beyond the national context. Ansar Allah's influence has extended beyond Yemen's borders, particularly through its actions in the Red Sea and its alignment with the Palestinian cause in Gaza. This regional posture positions the group within the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance," marking its transformation from a local political actor into a regional player with strategic alliances and transnational objectives.

Recommendations

- ❖ Develop sociological-analytical frameworks to better understand revolutionary Islamic movements in non-democratic contexts.
- ❖ Promote field-based research on social transformations in areas under Ansar Allah control.
- ❖ Move beyond sectarian or reductionist interpretations. Avoid simplistic or sectarian readings of the Houthi phenomenon. Instead, adopt political sociology tools that examine the movement's structures, discourses, and modes of legitimacy.
- ❖ Any viable approach to resolving the Yemeni conflict must begin by recognizing Ansar Allah as a de facto authority with a coherent ideological framework and functioning administrative apparatus.

- ❖ Dialogue with the movement should be informed by a deep understanding of its intellectual, religious, and theological foundations, rather than being limited to assessments of its political behavior or strategic interests.
- ❖ Design and implement community-based reconciliation initiatives to address the cultural and social shifts introduced by the Houthi project, fostering long-term societal healing and cohesion.
- ❖ Support the revival of independent civil society organizations as essential counterbalances to ideological monopolization and centralized state discourse, thereby preserving pluralism and civic space.

General Conclusion

The experience of Ansar Allah (the Houthis) in Yemen represents a complex model of transformation—from a marginal religious-cultural group to a central political actor that governs and controls state institutions. This transformation cannot be fully explained by military capabilities or political opportunities alone; rather, it necessitates a deep sociological analysis of the cultural, ideological, and social context in which the movement emerged, as well as the structural conditions linked to the fragmentation of the Yemeni state and the decline in the legitimacy of traditional elites following 2011.

The study demonstrates that Ansar Allah relied on a comprehensive epistemological framework—most prominently the Quranic March—which functioned as both a foundational mobilizing tool and a discursive apparatus. This framework played a pivotal role in transforming collective consciousness in northern Yemen and in constructing a new legitimacy paradigm rooted in grievance, jihadist identity, and revolutionary symbolism. Far from serving merely as an instrument of rebellion or resistance, it became the ideological foundation for redefining governance and state administration, culminating in what can be described as an alternative ideological state.

The study further reveals that Ansar Allah has evolved beyond its role as a local actor to become a regional force with strategic influence over the geopolitics of the Red Sea and within the broader framework of the Axis of Resistance. This regional positioning grants the movement considerable leverage, making it a key stakeholder that cannot be excluded from any future political resolution of the Yemeni conflict.

However, the model established by Ansar Allah faces significant structural challenges. The lack of political pluralism, the ideological monopolization of the public sphere, the coexistence of formal and informal power structures, and the enduring economic crisis all pose serious threats to its long-term viability. Additionally, the continuation of an “idea-based state” in the absence of an inclusive social contract risks generating underlying tensions that could erupt into open conflict—particularly in a context lacking mechanisms for the peaceful transfer of power.

Ultimately, the study emphasizes the need to move beyond conventional analytical models in the study of revolutionary Islamic movements. It advocates for the development of new theoretical frameworks that recognize the dynamic interplay between religion, society, politics, and conflict—not as isolated variables, but as interdependent forces shaping such movements. Understanding Ansar Allah, therefore, requires more than sectarian or security-based analyses; it demands a comprehensive sociological lens—one that bridges the symbolic and the material, the ideological and the institutional, and the revolutionary and the administrative.

The Cognitive Model of Ansar Allah's Transformation from Revolution to Ruling (2000–2025)

Component	Type	Description and Impact
Independent Variables		
Variable 1	Intellectual/Ideological	The Qur'anic March as a model for governance and a source of legitimacy
Variable 2	Social/Tribal	The Zaydi environment and the role of the tribe in providing social support to the movement
Variable 3	Political/Historical	The fragmentation of the Yemeni state after 2011 and the collapse of traditional power centers
Intervening Variables		
Mediator 1	Military/Security	The six wars and the construction of a strong organizational military structure
Mediator 2	Regional/International	Foreign aggression that fueled revolutionary legitimacy
Dependent Variable	Political/Organizational	The transformation of the group into a de facto authority with both formal and informal institutions
Causal Relationships		
Relationship 1	Ideology → Religious	Religious discourse legitimizes governance
Relationship 2	Legitimacy → War	External conflict reinforces the legitimacy of resistance
Relationship 3	Society → State	Social engineering based on the group's cultural model

Model Summary:

1. The model is based on the hypothesis that revolutionary ideology, political fragility, and the social environment constituted the objective conditions for Ansar Allah's transformation into a governing authority.
2. Over time, the relationship between war and religious discourse became reciprocal: war justifies the continuation of the discourse, and the discourse legitimizes the continuation of war.
3. While the group established a parallel institutional system to the state, it also reconstructed societal consciousness through education, media, and symbolic events.

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