


**The Intellectual-Political Role of the Ansar Allah Movement in the Development of
the Axis of Resistance**

Received Date: 2024/10/27

Accept Date: 2025/02/02

 10.27834/CSIW.2404.1396.1.36.7Mokhtar Sheikhhosseini¹
Iman Mohammadi² **Extended Abstract****1. Introduction**

The Axis of Resistance is a network of formal and informal actors led by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which serves as its ideological and operational core. Over recent decades, it has positioned itself in opposition to hegemonic policies while promoting indigenous intellectual and political capacities across the Islamic world. In practice, the Axis has significantly shaped regional dynamics in West Asia, particularly in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Iraq. Its influence became especially visible following the “Al-Aqsa Storm” operation on October 7, 2023, which reinforced the role of Islamic actors in regional politics.

Within this broader framework, the post-Arab Awakening developments in Yemen created conditions for the rise and expansion of the Houthi movement (Ansar Allah) as a new component of the Axis of Resistance. Today, Ansar Allah has become one of Yemen’s most influential political forces. Rooted in the Zaydi tradition, the movement has evolved over four decades from a small religious current into a prominent regional actor. Initially inspired by Iran’s Islamic Revolution, it began as a cultural initiative to revive Zaydi thought and has since transformed into an integral part of the Axis, playing a decisive role in Yemen’s political transition and broader regional dynamics.

To analyze this transformation, the present study employs Quentin Skinner’s interpretive theory, which emphasizes the necessity of situating

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texts and ideas within their social and political contexts. By reconstructing both the intellectual and political dimensions of Ansar Allah's rise, this framework provides a deeper understanding of its contribution to the Axis of Resistance.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Quentin Skinner's theory as an analytical framework to examine Ansar Allah's intellectual-political context. Skinner poses a central methodological question: *How can an idea be properly understood?*

His methodology incorporates two dimensions:

- Negative dimension: a critique of dominant approaches that rely exclusively on textual analysis or purely on contextual interpretation, both of which he deems insufficient (Nowzari & Pourkhodaghli, 2010: 102).
- Positive dimension: an alternative method that integrates textual study with contextual reconstruction while also uncovering the intentions and purposes of the actors themselves.
- Skinner identifies two forms of contextual reconstruction:
 - Political-social contexts
 - Intellectual contexts (Sheikh Hossainy, 2017: 39)

Accordingly, this study applies Skinner's approach to reconstruct the intellectual and political contexts of contemporary Yemen that facilitated the rise of Ansar Allah, while also accounting for Yemen's geopolitical features as an independent variable shaping the expansion of the Axis of Resistance.

3. Discussion

Ansar Allah's political and intellectual foundations, combined with Yemen's unique geography, enable it to create new opportunities for the development of the Axis of Resistance. These capacities can be categorized into two dimensions:

3.1. Political Capacities

Ansar Allah's political role in the Axis of Resistance can be analyzed across four domains:

- Geopolitical expansion of the Resistance
- Altering the balance of power in international waterways
- Influence on Saudi Arabia
- Political engagement in Africa
- Geopolitical Expansion of Resistance

Geopolitics encompasses the interplay of geography with political, economic, and environmental factors in shaping power relations (Sullivan,

1886: 2; Jafary Veldani, 2005: 3). The Axis of Resistance, composed of multiple actors, has effectively leveraged such factors.

Integrating Yemen's geography into the Axis significantly enhances its strategic reach. As Mackinder argued, control over the rimlands of West Asia combined with maritime access provides the foundation for global power.

Currently spanning from Afghanistan to Lebanon and Syria under Iran's leadership, the Axis controls access to both the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. Often described as the "Shiite Crescent" or "Crescent of Resistance," this sphere of influence is further reinforced by Yemen's location near the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, Bab al-Mandab Strait, and Red Sea. The Bab al-Mandab, one of the world's five most critical maritime chokepoints, sees 50–70 ships daily and facilitates nearly 40% of trade between Asia and Europe/North America. This geography makes Yemen a focal point of regional and global contestation.

3.2. Intellectual Capacities

Ideological foundations are central to the Axis of Resistance, and Ansar Allah plays a key role in this domain. Its intellectual contributions can be summarized in four areas:

- Confrontation with Wahhabism
- Promoting rapprochement with other Islamic sects
- Dissemination of anti-imperialist discourse
- Expansion of resistance ideology in Africa

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

Applying Quentin Skinner's framework demonstrates that Ansar Allah's emergence is rooted in both Zaydi intellectual foundations and shifting political contexts. Key factors include proximity to Wahhabi centers, repression after the fall of the Mutawakkilite state, the Iranian Revolution, the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yemen's alignment with Saddam during the Gulf War, the post-9/11 environment, six wars with the Yemeni state, and the Arab Awakening. Over four decades, these conditions enabled Ansar Allah to transform from a localized movement in Saada into a major actor in Yemen and West Asia.

Drawing on Zaydi religious foundations and Yemen's strategic geography—adjacent to vital waterways, Africa, and global energy suppliers—Ansar Allah has become central to the Axis of Resistance.

- Politically, it extends the Axis's reach from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran to the Horn of Africa and the Bab al-Mandab Strait,

altering the regional balance of power and posing a significant challenge to Saudi Arabia.

- Intellectually, it has blocked the spread of Wahhabism, promoted rapprochement among Yemen's diverse Islamic communities, and advanced an anti-imperialist discourse rooted in Qur'anic principles and the thought of its founder, Hussein al-Houthi.

By articulating an anti-colonial vision with regional resonance, particularly across Africa and the Red Sea littoral, Ansar Allah reinforces the Axis of Resistance as both a political and ideological force in contemporary West Asia.

5. Keywords

Yemen, Ansar Allah Movement, Axis of Resistance, Anti-Hegemony, Zaydism, Geopolitics

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