

Emulating the Islamic Republic

The Houthi Ansarullah movement, inspired by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi's admiration for Imam Khomeini, regards the Islamic Revolution as its intellectual and operational model. Now, with Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi at the helm of the Yemeni revolution, he precisely follows the same approach as the late Imam and Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. Their approach and statements, as well as their views on Islam, the United States, Israel, and Arab countries, align with the perspective of Ayatollah Khamenei. They promote Zaidi Shia culture in Yemen by establishing cultural and social institutions. The pinnacle of the Ansarullah leader's similarities with the leaders of the Islamic Revolution is his reliance on the people. Like Iranian leaders, Badreddin al-Houthi attributes authenticity to the people and sees them as the mainstay of stability in Yemen. For this reason, unlike past Arab regimes, the Yemeni people consider themselves authentic beings who are not to be used as tools, not to be demeaned. Relying on the people has enabled the Yemeni revolution to endure despite an eight-year war, and now, the Yemeni people take pride in their independence.

The leader of the revolution emphasizes the unity of Muslims and constantly advocates for Sunni-Shia brotherhood, seen as a unifying and restraining factor against the conspiracies of Islam's

enemies. Unlike other countries in the region, contemporary Yemen has experienced extreme division. Yemen is the only Middle Eastern country that was split into two separate northern and southern states during the Cold War. Since the 1990s, the Yemeni people have always strived for unity. The unity of Shia and Sunni is another dimension of the unity of the Yemeni people.

Another aspect that the Yemeni leader, like Iranian leaders, focuses on is the dominance of Islam in the people's lives and Yemen's institutions. In the post-2014 revolution education, new books have been written in Yemen, and the books are thoroughly Islamic in content. Yemeni students become familiar with Islam from early childhood through educational and cultural programs. In these books, the virtues of Imam Khomeini and the Islamic Republic are mentioned, introducing the Iranian revolution as the most successful revolution of the century. Holding religious ceremonies, especially the celebration of the Prophet's birth and the martyrdom of the Ahl al-Bayt, is special to the Ansarullah movement. Similar to the Islamic Republic, Ansarullah emphasizes the prohibition of alcohol and narcotics and respecting women.

The martyrdom of Imam Hussain (PBUH) is a model for all Muslims, but the Ansarullah movement has focused a part of its cultural and promotional activities on organizing grand Ashura ceremonies, which have taken on the color of anti-arrogance, anti-oppression, and unity. Recent attempts to disrupt these events and attack mourners have had the opposite effect.

Military capabilities of Houthis

A series of six wars from June 2004 to February 2010 pitted the Houthi rebels against the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Decades of ethnic, political, and religious discrimination against the Zaidis had provided a fertile ground for a profound transformation in Yemen's political history. Yemen's status as the United States' key ally in the fight against terrorism in the Middle East led to the presence of American military and intelligence forces in the country, as well as clandestine visits by some Israeli delegations to Sanaa. This was protested strongly by Hussein al-Houthi and his supporters in the country.

During the conflicts from 2004 to 2010, nearly 4,000 individuals from both sides were killed, and according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 200,000 people were displaced. In the first war, the Houthi rebels had limited weaponry, which led to significant

casualties, but over the course of the six wars, they gradually acquired a substantial arsenal. Arms smuggling and the arms trade were prominent features of the six wars in Yemen. International organizations, such as the United Nations, reported that between 40 to 60 million weapons existed in Yemen, with the majority concentrated in the northern regions of the country, where the Ansarullah and their supporters were present. Most of these weapons were light arms. Ansarullah also seized a significant amount of equipment from the Yemeni army during these wars. However, Ansarullah and their allies learned various tactics and strategies in these wars, particularly guerrilla warfare and ground combat, and their military forces received the necessary training.

In reality, the six wars became a starting point for the transformation of Ansarullah's military power in Yemen. This experience, along with the strengthening of Ansarullah's defensive and drone capabilities, became a threat to the Saudi-led coalition forces and altered the battlefield in favor of Ansarullah and Yemen. In fact, the acquisition of heavy military equipment, alongside a well-trained human force, especially in guerrilla and unconventional warfare from 2004 to 2010, was one of the main reasons for the success of the Yemeni army and the popular committees against the fully armed Saudi military with its mercenary force.

However, with the outbreak of the war in 2015, the situation of the Yemeni army and popular committees changed entirely. Eight years of war experience, reliance on internal capabilities, and support from the Islamic Republic and Hezbollah transformed this country into one of the most powerful armies in the Arab world.

Numbers tell tales

The exact number of forces in the Yemeni army and popular committees is not available. However, what follows are the speculated figures for these forces according to Western and Arab regional media and research centers.

● **Popular Mobilization Organization (also known as the Popular Committees):** With approximately 130,000 personnel employed by the Ministry of Defense, it is considered the new arm of this ministry in Yemen. The Popular Committees were formed by the integration of Ansarullah fighters with other popular forces in 2014. Some research centers have mentioned the number of Popular Mobilization Organization forces to be around 200,000.

● **Houthi Jihad Preparation (also known as the Central Recruitment and Mobilization Authority):** This position operates under the official cover of the GMA and is managed by Abdulrahman al-Hamran, the head of the GMA. Under his guidance, various supervisors in Houthi provinces, "neighborhood affairs managers," and "neighborhood elders" prepare families for military-age men and maintain an up-to-date military human resources system.

● **Houthi Support and Reinforcement Brigades:** These are a parallel reserve force to the Popular Mobilization Organization — similar to Iran's Basij forces — and managed by the head of Jihad Preparation. These brigades were developed by Qassem al-Hamran (known as Abu Kuthar), who previously supervised the Ministry of Youth and Sports. They are responsible for the recruitment of young men.

● **Neighborhood Mobilization (also known as Urban Mobilization):** In mosques and various regions of Yemen, Neighborhood Mobilization was formed, employing young men and teenagers. While focusing on educational and moral issues, it also contributes to military training.

In other words, the Houthis are repeating the methods of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hezbollah for popularizing military forces in their society and creating infrastructure for permanent mobilization. More than ever, the Yemeni army is an ideological force.

Missiles and drones

Yemen's missile and drone capabilities have seen significant development over the years. Long before the Yemeni people's revolution, Yemen acquired Scud missiles from North Korea between 1999 and 2002. In December 2002, following the detention of an American-Spanish maritime group, it was revealed that a North Korean cargo ship was carrying fifteen missiles, fuel, and warheads for Yemen.

However, Yemen was not previously known to purchase larger and longer-range Hwasong-7/Nodong-1 missiles, such as the Toofan missile displayed by the Houthi rebels. These missiles have a range of 2,000 kilometers

and were derived from the Hwasong-3. The Houthi rebels also possess Shaheen-III missiles and a range of solid-fueled short-range missiles (250–700 kilometers).

Iranian-made anti-ship ballistic missiles, namely the Persian Gulf and Asef (300 kilometers) and Falaq (200 kilometers), have been displayed, featuring high tracking capabilities at sea. Yemen also showcased various coastal defense missiles, naval mines, and explosive drone boats to be able to deny access to the strategic Babel-Mandeb Strait.

Sageb missile

● **Sageb missile** are developed based on Russian R-73 short-range and R-27T and R-77 medium-range missiles.

● **Fatter 1 missile:** The Fatter 1 missile is developed from the Russian SAM-6 and is used in short-range Yemeni missiles, including Badr P1 and Badr F, the latter having a range of 160 kilometers.

● **Quds missile:** The Quds missile is a cruise missile with automatic guidance systems, known for its high accuracy in targeting, capable of hitting small-sized objects.

● **Yemeni-made missiles:** Yemen unveiled an indigenous ground-to-ground missile with a range of 1300 kilometers in February 2020. This missile is similar to modern long-range missiles.

● **Qafer missiles:** The Qafer-1 missile is a ballistic missile with a 500-kilometer range and high precision, accurate within 5 to 10 meters. The advanced Qafer M-2 is an upgraded version with a 350-kilogram warhead.

● **Burkan missiles:** The Burkan missiles are advanced versions of short-range Scud missiles from the former Soviet era, with the Burkan 3 estimated to have a range of 1300 to 1800 kilometers. Ansarullah has missiles with a range of over 2000 kilometers.

Drones

Ansarullah has developed various drones with different capabilities. **These drones include:**

● A 30-kilometer range drone that is challenging to detect and intercept due to its small size and low radar cross-section.

● A 15-kilometer range drone used for target observation, battlefield surveillance, and identification of enemy activities. It employs precise tracking systems and imaging techniques.

● A 35-kilometer range drone with advanced imaging technology and mapping capabilities.

● Yemeni forces also use Qasef drones, including the Qasef K2, for operations against the Saudi coalition and Mansur Hadi's mercenaries inside Yemen.

● Samad drones, including Samad 1, 2, and 3, are crucial for the Yemeni army and popular committees. Samad 1 is for intelligence purposes, capable of flying over 500 kilometers and providing real-time target information. Samad 2 is a long-range identification drone, while Samad 3 is an offensive drone with a 1700-kilometer striking range, featuring advanced technology that makes it hard to track. In August 2019, the Yemeni army targeted Abu Dhabi Airport for the first time using a Samad 3 drone. Yemen's missile and drone capabilities have evolved significantly, allowing them to have a formidable presence in the region.

In reality, the Islamic Republic in Yemen has become a reality. The Yemeni people's revolution in September 2014, similar to the Iranian people's revolution in 1979, was for independence, freedom, and the establishment of a government based on Islamic jurisprudence. Now, the Yemeni people's revolution, after enduring 8 years of war and massacres at the hands of the Saudi coalition, is sprouting like a young sapling. This sapling, relying on young and skilled leadership, has led to the formation of a strong government in the northern regions of Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula, and with its formidable military capability, it has managed to stabilize its position in Yemen. Therefore, in any future peace process in Yemen, Ansarullah and the revolutionary Yemeni people will be the main actors.

