THE STRATEGY OF HOUTHIS TO SEIZE CONTROL OF YEMEN'S TERRITORY: DISTORTION OF SOCIAL NORMS IN CONFLICT

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Abstract

The Houthis' attempt at seizing control of Yemeni territory initially seemed like a protest against the presence of power. However, the Houthi rebellion grew louder and bolder until it crossed the boundaries of social norms. The Houthi group's efforts experienced increasing strong power dynamics, leading to a rising severe conflict. In line with the background, the researchers formulated three problem formulations: (1) How did the Houthis begin their efforts to seize control of Yemen's territory? (2) What are the factors that make the strategy of the Houthis a distortion of social norms in the conflict? (3) How do the dynamics of the Houthi power over Yemen play out in the distortion of social norms? This research is based on the argument that the Houthis are trying to distort social norms in Yemen. This research is a qualitative descriptive study. The technique used in data collection is reading and taking notes. The data analysis techniques in this study are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. This research indicates that the conflict between the Houthis and Yemen is an organized conflict of interest.

Keywords: conflict, conflict of interest, Houthi, Dahrendorf, social conflict, Yemen

الملخص

بدت محاولة الحوثيين للسيطرة على الأراضي اليمنية في البداية وكأنها احتجاج على وجود السلطة. ومع ذلك، ازداد تمرد الحوثيين بصوت عالٍ وأكثر جرأة حتى تجاوز حدود الأعراف الاجتماعية. شهدت جهود جماعة الحوثيين ديناميكيات قوة متزايدة متزايدة، مما أدى إلى صراع حاد متصاعد. تماشياً مع الخلفية، صاغ الباحثون ثلاث صيغ للمشاكل: (١) كيف بدأ الحوثيون جهودهم للسيطرة على الأراضي اليمنية؟ (٢) ما العوامل التي تجعل استراتيجية الحوثيين تشويهًا للأعراف الاجتماعية في الصراع؟ (٣) كيف تلعب ديناميكيات قوة الحوثيين على اليمن دورًا في تشويه الأعراف الاجتماعية؟ يستند هذا البحث إلى الحجة القائلة بأن الحوثيين يحاولون تشويه الأعراف الاجتماعية في اليمن. هذا البحث دراسة وصفية نوعية. التقنية المستخدمة في جمع البيانات هي القراءة وتدوين الملاحظات. تقنيات تحليل البيانات في هذه الدراسة هي تقليل البيانات وعرض البيانات والاستنتاج. يشير هذا البحث إلى أن الصراع بين الحوثيين واليمن هو تضارب منظم في المصالح.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صراع، تضارب مصالح، حوثي، دارندورف، صراع اجتماعي، اليمن

INTRODUCTION

The Houthis' attempt to seize Yemen's territory initially seemed like a protest over the power imbalance. However, the Houthi rebellion grew louder and bolder until it crossed the boundaries of social norms. The efforts of the Houthi group experienced power dynamics that were getting hotter with the proxy war. The endless war has caused Yemen to become the country with the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. 80% of Yemen's population, about 30 million people, depend on humanitarian aid and protection (Juneau, 2021). The protracted conflict is influenced by Iran, which continuously intensifies its proxy war (Seliktar, 2021). Disputes in the community cannot be separated from power relations in the social system. The nature of power is dominating and contested (Fadilah, 2021).

So far, existing research tends to look at the conflict between the Houthi rebels and the Yemeni government based on three perspectives, namely (1) the motive for Iran's intervention against the Houthi rebels in Yemen's internal conflict to expand its hegemony in the Middle East region (WISUKA, 2019) ; (2) the motive for Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Yemen's internal conflict to dispel the Shia-based Houthi militia (Priambodo, 2017); and (3) violations of international law in the conflict between the Houthis and the Yemeni government regarding war crimes, crimes against humanity, and their consequences for the humanitarian crisis (Salihah & Sidik, 2021). In contrast to the three previous studies, this study focuses on the strategy of the Houthis to gain symbolic power in Yemen.

The purpose of this paper is to complement the shortcomings of existing studies that explore the distortion of social norms carried out by the Houthis in their tactics to gain dominance over Yemen. Accordingly, three questions can be formulated: (1) How did the Houthis begin their efforts to gain power in Yemen's territory? (2) What are the factors that make the strategy of the Houthis a distortion of social norms in the conflict?

(3) How do the dynamics of Houthi power over Yemen play out on distortions of social norms?

This research is based on the argument that the Houthis are trying to distort social norms in Yemen. The distortions of social norms by the Houthis against Yemen include human rights violations, humanitarian crises, economic destruction, and ideological doctrine. With the aim of the Houthis gaining power in Yemen's territory symbolically. The factor distorting social norms by the Houthis against Yemen is the motive for a government coup based on Shia ideology (Firdaus, 2021). The trigger was due to Iran's intervention which denied opposing countries. The dynamics of the Houthis' symbolic power get the opportunity to take over most of Yemen's territory during a power vacuum. Now Yemen is still experiencing difficulties in dealing with the conflict caused by the Houthis.

This research is a qualitative descriptive study, and researchers take data from national and international news such as the BBC, Kompas, INews, and Republika. The technique used in data collection is reading and taking notes. The data analysis techniques in this study are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

Ralf Dahrendorf's Social Conflict Theory

According to Dahrendorf, society has two tendencies: conflict and consensus. At a community level, conflict is a reality that cannot be avoided (Fadilah, 2021). The position of particular groups determines the social conflicts in a society. Likewise, the influence of group interests and conflicts that occur in community are usually identical to various attractions (Tualeka, 2017).

The conflict model, according to Dahrendorf in his 'structural-functional' theory, is classified as follows: (1) Every society is subject to social changes that occur at any time in that society; (2) Every time there are divisions and social conflicts that appear in a society; (3) Every element of society contributes to change; (4) Every

society relies on the constraints of its members (Dahrendorf, 1958).

Dahrendorf states that conflict can be ended by consensus if it is still latent and is likely to experience manifest changes when each group is aware of its interests (Agung, 2017). Conflicts that often occur result in the loss of life for the benefit of particular communities (Azizah & Al Anshory, 2022). As for this study, the conflict between the Houthi rebels and the legitimate Yemeni government indicated that they could not reach a consensus. For example, Zionism emerged as Jewish resistance in Western countries. Then in the twentieth century, the rulers of Zionism associated them with controlling the Palestinian area (Alkhan & Ulinnuha, 2022).

Dahrendorf's conflict theory emphasizes the existence of levels of social structure in society. The structure of society is created from the results of the collective agreement (volonte generate), a determination of differences of opinion and interests, and consensus (a consensus omnium) (Demartoto, 2010, p. 1). Thus social class means an organized or unorganized collectivity of individuals with hidden interests or real interests together with a force-coordinated associational authority structure.

Social class is understood as a collectivity of individuals who have hidden but real interests, both organized and conscious or not. The social class structure coincides with the coercively coordinated union authority structure, so it is not uncommon to experience conflict (Dahrendorf, 1986). Social domination influences social class opposition, as there is an upper class and a lower class.

Conflict of Interest Theory

A conflict occurs when the group in power tries to maintain the status quo while the group in power tries to make changes. Interests in a particular group are continuously assessed objectively by the group concerned and will align with the position of the individuals included. Dahrendraf said that in conflict situations, individuals would act according to the prevailing system and apply for latent roles, namely adjusting to the roles expected by the group (Dahrendraf, 2004, p. 156).

Power has two elements: those who are in power and those who are controlled. The power groups are divided into three types, namely: 1) Quasi group, 2) Interest group (manifest), and 3) Conflict group. A pseudo group is several position holders with the same interests but are not yet aware of their existence. Pseudo-groups are also categorized under the second type of group, namely interest groups. Then these interests gave birth to a third group called social conflict. So that in each group will be further divided into two associations, namely the ruling group and the controlled group. These two groups have different interests. In fact, according to Ralf, they can be united by common interests.

The triggers for the sources of conflict are as follows: 1) Social status in society. (There is a clash of rich-poor, low-ranking officials, employer-labor), 2) Interests (workers and employers, between groups, between parties, and between powers), 3) The existence of domination, injustice, and discrimination (religion). If a conflict in a group occurs continuously and continuously, radical changes will occur. On the other hand, structural changes will happen if the match is violent (Ritzer, 2013, pp. 27-28).

So the core aspect of conflict of interest theory is the relationship between conflict and change. In this case, Dahrendrof considers competition a part of social reality, which can cause instability and development. Conflict theory is understood by understanding that society has two attitudes because every society is subject to change at any time. Hence, the assumption is that social change is everywhere. Society can also show division and conflict at certain times and contribute to disintegration and change because society is based on the coercion of some members over others.

Dahrendrof also said that after a conflict group emerged, the group took actions that caused changes in the social

structure. When the conflict is intense, the changes that occur are radical. If acts of violence accompany the conflict, there will be a sudden change in structure (Ritzer, 2004, p. 157).

The forms of conflict, according to Dahrendrof, are divided into four types, namely: 1) Role conflicts that occur due to differences in roles between community members due to differences in expectations and reality, 2) Conflicts between social groups that occur due to differences in views, goals, how to work, 3). Conflicts between organized and unorganized groups occur due to inequality between organized and unorganized groups, 4). Conflicts between national units include political parties, regions, countries, and international organizations. This conflict occurs because one group perceives the other as hindering and harming its interests (Lauer, 2001, p. 102).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Efforts by the Houthis to Gain Dominance in Yemen's Territory

The ongoing conflict in Yemen features a civil war between Yemen's Sunni government and the Shiite Houthi group, who have wanted greater autonomy in Yemen's power since 2004. The Houthi rebels have emerged with various protests following the collapse of the Yemeni government in managing the country in the economic, political, and so on.

Protests against the Yemeni government began when Yemen under President Ali Abdullah Saleh accepted the United States military and intelligence presence in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. The Houthis are angry with the relationship between the Yemeni government and the United States. As a result, security stability in Yemen cannot be obtained through ongoing protests and demonstrations (Saeri & Charin, 2016). The Houthi rebellion in the form of armed attacks on Yemen's major cities led to the Long crisis. Then there was pressure in 2012 for President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down from office and for power to shift to president Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi (Rahayu & Fauzi, 2020).

In January 2015, the Houthis staged a coup by attacking Yemen's central government buildings and the presidential and prime ministerial palaces of Yemen. Finally, the city of Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, managed to fall into the hands of the Houthi rebels (Rahman & Munabari, 2017). President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, held hostage by the Houthi rebels for several weeks, managed to escape to the city of Aden, then announced the transfer of the Yemeni capital to Aden. When the pressure was getting worse, in March 2015, President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi gave a statement and asked for help from Arab countries to secure Yemen from the Houthis' efforts to overthrow the official government of Yemen, which has sovereignty (Putra, Jamilah, & Irawan, 2020).

Thus, Yemen's power was seized by the Houthi group in 2015, which has a base in Sana'a. For this reason, Yemeni president Abd Rabbo Mansour asked for help from Saudi Arabia and the Arab coalition countries to crush the Houthi rebel bases and restore the legitimate government of Yemen, especially those in Sana'a. However, this assistance actually made the Houthi group even more inflamed and carried out various counterattacks against Saudi Arabia (Fuadi, 2017).

The Houthi group is still the unofficial ruler in the province of Sa'adah and its surroundings. The Houthis successfully controlled various government facilities and local military posts. This group controls some areas in northern Yemen, which can happen because they support the Yemeni troops still loyal to the former President of Yemen, namely Ali Abdullah Saleh (Taufiq & Utama, 2017). The success of the Houthi group in overthrowing the legitimate government is also inseparable from Iran's support since 2009, which also aims to expand Shi'ite ideology (Maulana, 2018).

A common thread can be drawn that the conflict in Yemen is getting more complex with the 'proxy war' of the 'cold war' of the two superpowers in the Middle East, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia

has an alliance with the legitimate Yemeni government. In contrast, Iran has an alliance with the Houthi rebels in the north, precisely in the province of Sa'adah, which borders Saudi Arabia. This decisive intervention from external parties has worsened the political condition in Yemen (Fawaid, 2017).

In November 2016, the Houthis and their political allies succeeded in forming a new government. The Yemeni High Political Council announced the formation of the new government. It has dealt a blow to the Saudi Arabian alliance, which has been bombarding Yemen so far (Taufiq & Utama, 2017). Even recently, the Houthi group launched an attack on Saudi Arabian territory to seize the last strongholds of the legitimate Yemeni government, which has the support of the Saudi-led coalition located north of the city of Ma'rib (Liputan 6, 2020).

Factors of the Houthi Strategy as a Distortion of Social Norms

The strategy of the Houthis is a distortion and misappropriation of human values. Human rights are not considered at all in the launch of his efforts to gain dominance over Yemen. The Houthis did not hesitate to launch attacks on the Yemeni area regardless of the current state of the patent social norms. The United Nations says that Yemen is one of the countries experiencing the worst crisis in the world (BBC, 2018). The protracted civil war and external intervention in the conflict further complicate the political situation. The blockade of air and sea routes has made it difficult for the Yemeni people to survive. It has happened since the Houthi rebels succeeded in overthrowing the legitimate government of Yemen with the help of Iran, so the Yemeni government then asked Saudi Arabia to help attack the Houthi bases.

The Houthis have created a conflict that aims to take over Yemen's power with radical tactics that do not look at the actual conditions of their country. The strategy of the Houthis in this conflict continues to attack the current economic downturn to hold onto power. As a result,

UN humanitarian coordinator Mark Lowcock (2018) revealed that the survey results show the number of Yemenis who survive ultimately on aid is three million higher than expected. In line with these data, the Yemen Health Team said the number of deaths was increasing due to factors related to food needs. The economic crisis further exacerbates Yemen's condition and ongoing fighting around the Hodeidah port on the Red Sea, controlled by the Houthi rebels. The location of the Hodeidah port is crucial because Yemen still imports 90% of its food needs.

The Houthis' overall military and economic power have grown significantly since 2015. This growth results from Iranian support, but much of it has been generated locally. The growing power of the Houthis is benefiting from the enemy's weakness. The Yemeni government under Mansur Hadi is incompetent, corrupt, and fragmented, so it suffers low legitimacy among the population (Juneau, 2021, p. 13). Wednesday, April 14, 2021, the Houthi group again attacked by sending five ballistic missiles and drones toward Jizan from the province of Sa'ada. The debris caused a fire around Jizan University, but no casualties (CNN, 2021). Attack after attack launched by the Houthis towards Saudi Arabia after the ceasefire offer from Saudi Arabia directly demonstrated the Houthis' rejection of the ceasefire agreement.

Iran's diplomatic support for the Houthis for their tactics to gain the autonomy of the Sana'a government increased in 2011 (Terrill, 2014). Iran's involvement is increasingly causing chaos in the Yemeni government, but it is inversely proportional to the condition of North Yemen. Military assistance by supplying the Houthis with weapons has been evident since that year, as has financial support for some of Yemen's southern separatists. The power of the Houthis rapidly increased until they were able to survive five wars waged by the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh and eventually occupied the capital city of Sana'a. The Houthis then built alliances with most of the tribes in the

northern and southern regions of Yemen (Zweiri, 2016). This increase in power is not only the result of local support but also of alleged Iranian and Hezbollah support in Lebanon. This external support allows the Houthis to be a potential springboard for Iran to use its influence in the Gulf states and the region.

Yemen's economy has been in bad shape since before the conflict. A weak economy has hobbled the regime, and conflict has exacerbated the condition. Yemen has few resources to deal with its enemy (Seliktar, 2021). Lowcock revealed that the humanitarian crisis in Yemen is getting worse with the economic crisis. Children in Yemen also feel the effects of the protracted conflict and face daily struggles to survive in the world's worst humanitarian crisis. According to the UNICEF website (2020), four out of five children, around 12.3 million people, depend on aid after five years of conflict. Thousands of children in Yemen die as a result of war or disease and malnutrition with the war. More than 1.7 million children have been forced to leave their homes and live in camps in other parts of Yemen. The country's health services are on the brink of collapse, and the economy is in ruins. COVID-19 in the country adds a new state of emergency that is very worrying after the humanitarian crisis.

The UN Security Council has accused the cause of the crisis in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, of a military offensive by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels. In 2014 the Houthi rebels managed to control parts of Yemen and invaded there. The conflict in Yemen has worsened as a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia with the help of the United States. The United Arab Emirates seeks to restore the government of Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, whom the Houthis toppled.

The Houthi ploy, the world's worst humanitarian crisis, has also launched attacks on health care in Yemen. Healthcare workers are under severe stress and face various pressures while providing life-saving services in Yemen. However, they show considerable resilience, cope, and have needs that remain primarily unaddressed (Elnakib et al., 2021).

The Dynamics of the Houthi Power Over Yemen Play Out in the Distortion of Social Norms.

Initially, Yemen's protracted conflict was caused by the weakness of the central government. The Yemeni government in the capital Sana'a is at war with the Houthi rebels in northern Yemen and the separatist movement in northern Yemen. Yemen's conditions have become increasingly complicated and unfavorable. Not a few parties are also worried about the weakness of their country's defense. This situation has been exploited by the jihadist group al-Qaeda. People's suspicions about the spread of the Yemen conflict, which will always be associated with the Arab-Iranian conflict and Shi'ite Sunnis, have become allegations that are considered valid. Namely, Saudi sided with Yemen, and Iran sided with the Houthis.

As for the difference in social roles between Yemen and the Houthis, in this case, the Houthis are a group that feels they have received injustice and discrimination against Yemen. As a result, an attitude of opposition and division gave birth to radical changes. The Yemen-Houthi conflict in Sana'a is intensive and prolonged. As a result, there was a radical change in the social situation. In this situation, the circumstances carried out by the al-Qaeda jihad group can then be categorized as an organized conflict group.

Iran's intervention primarily fuels the cause of Yemen's protracted conflict. The Houthi rebellion in northern Yemen led by Hussein al-Houthi is a war of identity that northern Yemen wants to establish a state based on the concept of Imamat under the auspices of the Zaidiyah Shiites. The goal is to repeat the glory of the Zaidi kingdom around 1960. The Yemeni government tried to fight the rebels, but the prolonged war resulted in increased losses to the Yemeni side and the Shiite Houthi rebels. Meanwhile, the impact took many civilian casualties.

Iran's intervention in the Houthi-Yemeni conflict is of social interest. However, this condition can also be

categorized as an organized conflict group. Because Iran consciously has organized goals. Iranian motives based on the concept of Imamat have the aim of making structural changes. The Yemeni government also feels radical changes due to the prolonged Houthis.

CONCLUSION

The Houthis' attempt to seize control of the Yemeni region was initially a protest over the power imbalance. However, the Houthi rebellion grew louder and bolder until it crossed the boundaries of social norms. The efforts of the Houthi group experienced power dynamics that were getting hotter with the proxy war. In starting his efforts to gain dominance of Yemen's territorial power. The Houthis portrayed power inequality as the recipient of injustice and discrimination. Thus, the researcher indicates that the Houthi-Yemeni conflict is classified as an organized social conflict of interest.

The leading actor who became the strategy of the Houthis was a distortion of social norms, namely external support from Iran to establish an Imamate state based on the Shia school of thought. Iran's intervention is also the cause of the protracted conflict that strengthens the power of the Houthis. The dynamics of the Houthi power over Yemen have intensified, resulting in changes in social norms. The change that occurred radically was a humanitarian crisis. The structural changes are the government's weakening and the economy's decline.

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